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The Plays of George Colman the Younger

Volume I

Edited by
Peter A. Tasch

Routledge Revivals

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Volume One


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INTRODUCTION

Versatile, industrious, talented, George Colman the Younger (1762–1836) followed Sheridan as England's most popular playwright. He wrote not only monologues, farces, pantomimes, comic operas, and straight comedies, but also hybrid three-act anticipations of melodrama. Although he continued dramatic writing until 1824, his best plays came by 1803. As manager and patentee of the Haymarket theatre, he worked with many of the period's best comic actors and actresses and collaborated with three of the leading stage composers: Samuel Arnold, Stephen Storace, and Michael Kelly. Despite these advantages, Colman's plays are now no more than historically interesting because he lacked the nerve of genius. As a writer of entertainments, he met rather than surpassed his audiences' expectations. Theatre-goers saw in his plays a compound—sometimes only a mixture—of sentimentality, naive patriotism, pathos, low humor, and homely virtue. Colman effectively ranged from the pathetic to the humorous rather than from tragedy to comedy. Not a Truewit, he was a capable Witwoud, at his best in *The Heir at Law* and *John Bull*. He aspired to tragedy, but the sombre story *The Iron Chest* demands a Graham Greene, not a blithe spirit. Though Colman lacked the tragic temperament, apparently neither he nor his audiences missed it.

The son of the successful dramatist and theatre patentee George Colman the Elder, Colman as a child met literati like Garrick, Goldsmith, Foote, and Sheridan, as well as the performers from Covent Garden and Drury Lane. His father

plotted an education for him that included Westminster and Oxford, but though he studied Latin and Greek and enjoyed the classics, he was more attracted to the charms of the Haymarket actresses. Therefore Colman was exiled to King's College, Aberdeen University, where he learned French with a convivial tutor, avoided formal studies, and discovered that he would be an author.[1]

Colman's first play, *The Female Dramatist* (16 August 1782), was a two-act musical farce produced by his father at the Haymarket. It was performed once—"*uncommonly hiss'd*"—and Colman destroyed his manuscript copies.[2] The Larpent manuscript survives to testify to his good judgment. Even allowing the anonymous farce to be Colman's apprenticeship, readers can only regret the lost chances for pointed satire. Instead of jabs at Hannah More or Elizabeth Montague, audiences heard puns and generic jokes about Grub Street and aspiring amateur dramatists. Still, at one point Colman rallies his father about his comedy *The Suicide* (Haymarket, 7 November 1778) by having the female dramatist, Mrs. Metaphor, complain that she had begun writing "the Suicide: a fine horrid subject! But some author not blessed with the sublime, and in open defiance of the Tragic Muse produced it as a Comedy. Aye, and it met with success too" (I, iii). A more private joke occurs when Mrs. Metaphor refers to her "Essay on Oeconomy. The sale of that publication will certainly be very considerable especially among the Scotch for I have adopted their favourite maxim and clearly prov'd the utility of the old proverb, 'Charity begins at home.'" Colman's professor at Aberdeen was Roderick Macleod, who controlled George's quarterly allowance and was therefore dubbed "Professor of Economy." When Colman published his first poem, the "Aberdeenites were in general like Rory Macleod, great economists"—only "the prodigal few" bought it, and

Colman was left with a printer's bill for several pounds (*Records*, II, 95, 111).

From a minor actor, John Lee, Colman received advice while writing *The Female Dramatist* in Aberdeen. Besides Lee's "natural judgment, taste, and turn for drollery, he had acquired some knowledge (by acting in provincial Companies) of stage dialogue and effect, which made him a tolerable counsellor. . ." (*Records*, II, 121). Colman also helped himself from *Roderick Random*, appropriating three of the five titles of unfinished tragedies by Smollett's female dramatist (Chapter 39) for his own Mrs. Metaphor's works: "The Last Day," "The Double Murder," and "The Stern Philosopher." Unlike Smollett's bluestocking, however, Mrs. Metaphor is the conventional widow who is too ready to marry. Colman's reliance on Lee's practical theatrical knowledge foreshadowed his successful construction of individual scenes in later plays; his dependence on literary precedent anticipated his consistent habit of drawing upon established types rather than observation for characters.

The butler, Medley (played by John Edwin), misquotes theatrical scraps, and Sarah Gardner, who was first thought to be the author, played Mrs. Metaphor on the benefit night for William Jewell, the Haymarket treasurer. Jewell had escorted Colman to Aberdeen. In 1830 Colman recalled that there were passages "much *too broad* to have escaped the erasing hand of the Examiner of Plays, in the present day" (*Records*, II, 113). As that examiner, Colman would have exorcised occasional "damns" from several of his own plays, but the only scene that Colman might cavil at here is between stagestruck Medley and the maid Slipshod when he wants to show off his parts and the inevitable broad double entendre ensues.

However precise Colman was about his duties as play examiner, he approached playwriting as an enthusiastic

amateur, scribbling the comic opera *Two to One* at Aberdeen while reading Latin and Greek volumes "two or three hours, every day" in the King's College library (*Records*, II, 115). Perhaps Terence's *Adelphi* hovers distantly above Colman's patchwork, but then so do several other comedies. As Colman admitted, he wrote by

> trusting at the beginning of my fable entirely to chance for a middle and an end. I had no materials for a plot, further than the common-place foundation of a marriage projected by parents, contrary to the secret views and wishes of the parties to be united; and which, of course, is to be obviated by the usual series of stratagems, accidents, and equivoques. Alas! what those stratagems, &c., were to be, or how the second scene was to be conducted, I had not any idea, while I was writing the first. [p. 176]

By Christmas (1782) "I found that I had flounder'd through two thirds of a Three-Act Piece. . . ." In February Colman left Aberdeen and settled in Montrose for three months with "a Homer and a Lexicon, that I might rub on with my Greek." Here he wrote the last act and sent *Two to One* to his father. The elder Colman submitted the comedy to the examiner on 14 August 1783, but did not produce it until 19 June 1784. The play underwent considerable alteration, as a comparison between the Larpent manuscript and the printed version (Dublin, 1785) reveals. Of the original sixteen songs, five were dropped; eleven new songs brought the total to twenty-two. Dialogue was refurbished throughout, and the manuscript opening of Act III with Dupely and Sir Thomas was shifted to their second appearance toward the end of the act. Tippet and Townly (disguised as the servant Glibb) now begin Act III.

Samuel Arnold wrote about half the scores, according to Roger Fiske; "the other half consists of folk tunes, most of them English." "Adzooks old Crusty," not initially included, was sung by John Edwin as Dicky Ditto "to a version of 'Yankee Doodle,' and this is the first time the tune was printed in recognizable form."[3] Fiske believes that the tune's "subsequent popularity must be due in large measure to its appearance in this opera" (p. 474). *Two to One* was performed eighteen times[4] during that summer—not bad for "*boy's* play" (*Records*, II, 176). But not particularly good for adult entertainment. Contenting himself with caricatures, Colman traded away interest in his characters for conventional jokes and humor through exaggeration. Read in relation to his other works to see how the type evolves, Dunder Dupely, the cockney man of business who has retired rich to the country, is Colman's most intriguing character. He is described by Townly, one of the two young heroes:

> Ha, Ha! here's a pretty Fellow! Through half his Life he is stuck up in Grace-church Street like the Post in his own Warehouse. Cheats his Customers, fills his Pockets, retires from Business, and for fear his Daughter should be the only Bale of Goods that will not be disposed of, gives a Large Premium to any Man of Family, who will take her off his Hands. Well said old Multiplication.

Dupely defends his "Old City Notions": "Trade, Brother, is the only Road to arrive at Honour and Reputation." "All that constitutes a Man of Honour in my Mind is being a good Man." Colman makes Dupely equate "good" with "rich," however, and as a cantankerous old father he is the butt of jokes. As Colman will do again in later comedies, he has Dupely mistake his daughter's true love for the candidate of his own choice. But the joke of the bourgeois as a

man of mean principle gradually gives way until in *John Bull* (1803) Colman's representative of the true-blue Englishman is a merchant.

On 20 December 1784, confident from the success of *Two to One* that he had "taken the measure of the Town's taste" (*Records*, II, 274), Colman began *Turk and No Turk*.

> I could lead the play-going world in a string. . . . So down I sat again . . . to be most inveterately comical, and even to *outdo* MYSELF: I *did* outdo myself, at a furious rate!—I doubled all the faults of my first composition . . . Instead of splashing carelessly with a light brush, I now deliberately laid it on with a trowel;—to say nothing of the flimsiness and improbability of my Plot, I labour'd so much to sparkle in dialogue, studied so deeply for antitheses, quibbles, and puns . . . that I produced a very puerile and contemtible performance." [*Records*, II, 274–75]

Produced on 9 July 1785, the three-act musical comedy was performed only ten times; Samuel Arnold provided the music, most of it original. "I could not be so blinded by youthful coxcombry," Colman recalled, "as not to suspect that I had been a *little* mistaken in the *measure I had taken of the Town*" (p. 275). Only the lyrics were printed, and Colman destroyed the prompter's copy.

From its title an audience might expect most of the comedy to center on Young Ramble, disguised as a Turk to woo Emily. But the two witty servants (Presto and Fib) are ubiquitous, and Emily's father, the virtuoso baronet Sir Simon Simple, is the easy target of conventional jokes from his wife. The collector Joseph Banks had been knighted in 1781 and perhaps was Colman's model for Sir Simon. He was jibed at in print by Peter Pindar during the 1780's. As

usual, the father is tricked into bestowing his daughter upon the hero.

The *Morning Post* for 11 July 1785 complained that the work should have been "entitled a *Musical Farce*" (Bagster-Collins, p. 30), and that is the problem. *Turk and No Turk* fails between farce and comedy. Too light for comedy, it has the characters but lacks the active absurdity of *commedia dell'arte*. It is a very talky play with little to say.

Inkle and Yarico (Haymarket, 11 August 1787) was Colman's first great success; up to 1800 it was performed 164 times to tie with *The Duenna* (1775) and *Hamlet* as the fourth most often produced play between 1776 and 1800.[5] The figure is impressive because the other two plays had the full twenty-five years in which to be counted. Samuel Arnold supplied the music for eighteen songs, several of which were cut after the opening performance.[6]

Since *Spectator* No. 11, 1711, when Steele retold Richard Ligon's story, the tale of Inkle and Yarico had been popular.[7] Originally, the Englishman, Thomas Inkle (the name was coined by Steele), sold Yarico, a West Indian who had saved his life, into slavery, even though she was carrying their baby. Steele's purpose was to counterbalance the view of woman as fickle by emphasizing man's inconstancy. Colman's Inkle still values the main chance until the conclusion, but the moral center has shifted from inconstancy to the evil of self-interest. Slavery is the particular instance of setting profit above all other considerations.

To emphasize the sin of self-interest, Colman added Trudge, Inkle's cockney servant and moral master, and Wowski, Trudge's native sweetheart. Not particularly brave, Trudge nevertheless remains true to Wowski even as Inkle tries to sell Yarico. These four characters were not sufficient material for Colman, however, and he transported five

others from central casting to his West Indian locale: Medium, Inkle's fidgety uncle; Narcissa, the romantic, socially respectable heroine of every other English comedy; Sir Christopher Curry, the impetuous, gruff, great-hearted English governor of Barbados; Captain Campley, the unselfish, romantic lead; and Patty, Narcissa's servant, every heroine's intriguing, pert chambermaid.

Trudge, who has the largest part, performs his task as narrator and moral touchstone with unconsciously humorous wordplay, some of which was pruned after the first night. As the loving, pathetic Yarico, Elizabeth Satchell (wife of Stephen Kemble, who in later years made a first-rate Curry) "brought tears into the eyes of the whole audience" (Bagster-Collins, p. 35). John Bannister reluctantly agreed to play the caddish Inkle on condition that Colman "let him repent" (Adolphus, I, 168). That Colman readily did so tends to strengthen his claim that he "never made out a scheme of progressive action before I began upon the dialogue" (*Records*, II, 177). The first-rate scene where Inkle offers Yarico for sale by mistake to his prospective father-in-law, Colman explained, "only occurr'd to me when I came to that part of the Piece in which it is introduced, and arose from the accidental turn which I had given to previous scenes;—as it is not in the original story, it would, in all probability, *not* have occurr'd to me while coldly preparing an elaborate prospectus. . ." (*Records*, II, 180).

Like all of Colman's plays, *Inkle and Yarico* is immediately accessible. Colman never troubled his audiences with ambiguities or complexities. Whereas we might find his works enjoyable despite their ease, early audiences applauded them because of it. Inkle's behavior, for instance, was shaped by his father, who tutored him "from infancy bending my tender mind, like a young sapling, to his will—Interest was the

grand prop round which he twin'd my pliant, green affections; taught me in childhood to repeat old sayings—all tending to his own fix'd principles: and the first sentence that I ever lisp'd was *Charity begins at Home*"[8] (first edition, pp. 71–72). When Sir Christopher rejects such principles, Inkle acquiesces:

> Ill-founded precept too long has steel'd my breast—but still 'tis vulnerable—this trial was too much—Nature 'gainst Habit combating within me, has penetrated to my heart; a heart, I own, long callous to the feelings of sensibility; but now it bleeds, and bleeds for my poor Yarico. Oh, let me clasp her to it while 'tis glowing, and mingle tears of love and penitence. [*Embracing her.*] [p. 72]

Of course Yarico forgives: "Oh Love, you, surely, gave your Yarico such pain, only to make her feel this happiness the greater" (p. 72). After a good cry the characters conclude the comic opera with joyous singing, the music for which is the original of the children's song "Have you seen the muffin man?" (Fiske, p. 478).

Whether you praise or damn sentimentality, acted, the scene is emotionally effective. Colman consistently plays to our desire to think well of ourselves. His characters may err, but they repent and are forgiven. Few of Colman's villains do not convert: Baron Ruthenwolf in *Feudal Times*, Abomelique in *Blue-Beard*. The murderer Sir Edward Mortimer (*The Iron Chest*) wars with virtue but surrenders to it. As Wilford, his sacrificial victim, explains, "Heaven, to whose eye the dark movements of guilt are manifest, will ever watch over, and succour the innocent, in their extremity" (p. 126). No match for Providence, Sir Edward sees his own wretchedness exposed, and he histrionically collapses. Tears and laughter,

characters and audience shared them in the same plays; ideally people left the theatre better disposed toward their neighbors because of their experience.

Ways and Means; or, A Trip to Dover (Haymarket, 10 July 1788), a brisk three-act comedy Colman wrote before *Inkle and Yarico*, was originally in four acts and called *More Ways than Means*.[9] Both plays benefited from the advice of Sir Joseph Jekyll, a barrister and neighbor of Colman's in the King's-Bench Walk. He had the patience, Colman wrote, "to hear me read, at intervals, scenes from" the two works, "and I profited much by his criticism" (*Records*, II, 241). For *Ways and Means* Colman refashioned traditional comic material: two improvident bachelors, the reckless Random and the scrupulous Scruple, love the impulsive Kitty and her older, dutiful sister, Harriet. As in *Inkle and Yarico*, the father—Sir David Dunder—unintentionally brings the lovers together. Each bustling act has its own comedy. In Act I, for instance, Colman takes a crowd of voyagers from France to a Dover inn and allows himself a moment for unaffected patriotism:

> [*French Passenger.*] Briton rule de vave! I tink de vave rule you ma foi, ha! ha!
> [*Second Passenger.*] Right, Mounseer! in the present case, I grant you. Packet sailing—mere plain water agrees best with your folks: but when there is occasion to mix a little of our British spirit with it, why it's always too much for a French stomach. Now that's the time when an Englishman never feels qualmish at all. [p. 3]

Colman, despite indignant critics, loved wordplay; thus he has the comparatively witty servant Tiptoe: "Tiptoe—Tiptoe, Gentlemen, at your service. I have seen better days, no offence to your honours—honest Tiptoe once stood a

little above the world; but now—all the world stands upon Tiptoe" (p. 8). But the favorite comic character in the play was Sir David Dunder, head of his family, whose habit is always to anticipate another speaker's remarks.

Act II presents the moneylender Roundfee and his colleague Quirk, who seem left over from the four-act version because they are useless here. Roundfee was said to be a caricature of a London usurer (Bagster-Collins, p. 38), and perhaps for that reason Colman was reluctant to cut the part entirely. However, in nineteenth-century adaptations both were dropped and the play shortened to two acts.

The best scene of Act III occurs when Sir David breaks up the attempted double elopement. It's good farce; as Colman wrote in his preface, "Laugh and whim were his objects," and the comedy "completely answered his expectations" (p. vi). *Ways and Means* also established John Bannister, who played Sir David, as a comedian. "Well, Jack," the actor Parsons said, "you had got up three-fourths of the ladder before, but you are now at the very top" (Adolphus, I, 198).

As unreflective as the humor usually is within Colman's play, in the preface and epilogue Colman savaged the critics. His initial attack, in the epilogue, seems uncalled for, but from then on Colman skirmished with the London newspapers. *Ways and Means* was performed nine times during the 1788 season after moderate reviews; it remained in stock for another forty or so years.

In 1789 Colman succeeded his father as manager of the Haymarket theatre. Although he did not acknowledge authorship, he chose *The Family Party* (11 July) as the first new farce to produce. *Town and Country Magazine* (July 1789, p. 327) ascribed the work to him.[10]

The Family Party, "a Comic Piece," as it was identified on the title page, is the sort of farce that could be happily produced at a family party. All of the small cast would enjoy

themselves, and if one of them were Bannister as Sir Toby Twaddle, he might excel as a fatuous fop mistaken for a hairdresser by Old Spriggins, the duped, heavy father. The chief interests of the farce are the connections between it and Colman's later work (assuming Colman to be its author) and its sociological value.

Old Spriggins has a shop in the country (it must be quite a shop since he is worth £40,000); like Daniel Dowlas of *The Heir at Law*, he lacks refinement: "Tradesman and Gentleman, is a mixture that will never wear; it's like one of my silk and worsted stuffs, the one *frays out* the other." He wants to know how much his fish—"John Dory"—cost, and whether "beef a-la-daube" is not actually "bubble and squeak." His sister, Mrs. Malmsey, like Mrs. Dowlas, is eager to climb the social ladder: "Nay, nay, Mr. Spriggins, when you come to Bath, you should sink the tradesman in the man of fashion."

Somewhat akin to the merchant father described by Inkle, Spriggins watches the pence. His son, Eton alumnus, Cambridge student, of course fools his father, with the aid of Pinch, the jack-of-all-trades witty servant, and wins the girl and her inheritance. But though he is tricked, it is not Old Spriggins, but newly knighted, affected Sir Toby Twaddle who is the farce's fool. The play uses ploys proved effective in over a century's worth of comedies, but it has shifted the locale of the action from London to Bath and brought the characters down into the middle class. Haymarket audiences accepted *The Family Party* for six performances, but it seems not to have lasted past its first season.

Possibly because of the so-so reception of *Ways and Means* the year before, Colman's major effort in 1789 was a different kind of play, the historical drama *The Battle of Hexham, or, Days of Old* (Haymarket, 11 August). Even before this romantic drama was produced, its genre was difficult to

name. Anticipating its arrival, the *Public Advertiser* (7 July 1789) called it "a novel style Piece. It consists of three Acts, viz. Tragedy, Comedy and Farce" (Bagster-Collins, p. 331, n. 11). The pirated edition reproduced here calls it a comedy; Adolphus, an opera (I, 221). Others, like Nicoll,[11] have referred to it as melodrama, full-fledged or rudimentary. By any name, the work was a new vein that would be mined again by Colman before 1800 in *The Surrender of Calais*, *The Mountaineers*, and *The Iron Chest*.

Pathos, not tragedy, marks *Hexham*. Basing it on the historical battle of 15 May 1464 between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces, Colman concentrated on Queen Margaret and her son's flight from the battle, and the search by Adeline for her husband, Gondibert. The comedy is furnished by Adeline's middle-aged, faithful, but timorous servant, Gregory Gubbins; the farce is reserved for Margaret's fool. Though the pirated edition treats them as prose, many of the speeches are in blank verse. Colman admitted in his preface to the 1808 edition that he imitated Shakespeare at a distance; indeed, the fool's puns, Adeline's decision to dress as a man, and her speech (to cite one of many) in Act II, scene two, illustrate his debt: "Why, why shou'd fortune sport with a weak woman! why, fickle goddess! wanton as boys who, in giddy cruelty, torture a silly fly before they kill it" (p. 33). Though the play is set in the fifteenth century and uses a sort of Shakespearean diction, its affectations are thoroughly 1789. Gondibert, Adeline's lost husband, has taken over leadership of a band of robbers. Both they and he rob as inoffensively as possible—though the robbers sing "like true and noble boys of plunder!" (p. 26). Gondibert, played by Bannister, who preferred compassionate characters, is a man of sensibility to whom Colman gives two dramatic moments: The first occurs when he is reunited with his wife, Adeline, whom he does not recognize until somewhat alarmingly she

exclaims after what seems a long scene: "Oh my dear lov'd lord! here cease those pangs—here, in the extacy of joy, behold your Adeline now rushing to the arms of a belov'd husband" (p. 52). His greatest moment, however, occurs when, not recognizing Queen Margaret, he is about to rob her and her son in the forest. The scene is based on historical anecdote conveniently found in Hume's *History of England*. There Margaret has escaped from robbers who have "despoiled her of her rings and jewels, and treated her with the utmost indignity."[12] Colman's robbers would be incapable of such lese majesty, and Colman picks up the story where Margaret sees, in Hume's words, "a robber approach with his naked sword":

> She advanced towards him; and presenting to him the young prince, called out to him, *Here, my friend, I commit to your care the safety of your king's son*. The man, whose humanity and generous spirit had been obscured, not entirely lost, by his vicious course of life, was struck with the singularity of the event, was charmed with the confidence reposed in him; and vowed not only to abstain from all injury against the princess, but to devote himself entirely to her service. [Hume, II, 413]

Gondibert too advances with his sword drawn, and the queen pleads, "O Heaven! my boy! strike not on thy allegiance!—Save him, I charge thee, fellow—save my son, the son of thy anointed king" (p. 37).

Ever one to tap the spring of patriotism, Colman gives the closing speech to Queen Margaret, one that his audiences were free to apply to George III and their own happy time: " . . . if in future times—no doubt 'twill be so—thy king unites his people to his confidence, and his command-

ing virtues, mild, yet kingly, shall draw the breath of rapturous loyalty from the [gilt] palace to the clay-built cottage, then will thy realm indeed be enviable" (p. 57).

However dreadful some of the language and the story may seem now with its mixture of comedy, pathos, and songs (the music by Arnold), *Hexham*, well produced and well acted, was presented twenty times during its first season and was popular for at least twenty years.[13] It encouraged declamation, and its use of music and its reliance on superficial emotional responses—from easy laughter to tears of sensibility—positioned this work (in hindsight a pioneering effort) at the head of a new tradition in English drama, which from the perspective of the early 1790's could have been either melodrama or romantic opera. In fact, because of other influences melodrama became the new genre, and English opera after 1800 continued to be relegated most often to afterpieces and minor works.

Colman's second three-act what-d'ye-call-it, *The Surrender of Calais* (Haymarket, 30 July 1791), was founded on Froissart's anecdotal account. As in the French chronicle, neither the French nor the British are villains. Six citizens of Calais agree to Edward III's condition that Calais will be spared at the cost of their lives. Before they are executed, however, Edward's queen, Philippa, successfully intercedes for them. Colman never specified his source, but Hume is again probable. Though doubting that the incident took place, Hume paraphrased Froissart's narrative:

> Froissart: *Sir John of Vienne:* Now our succours have failed us and we be so sore strained that we have not to live withal, but that we must all die or else enrage for famine, without the noble and gentle king of yours will take mercy on us: the which to do

we require you [Sir Walter of Manny and Sir Basset] to desire him to have pity on us and to let us go and depart as we be. . . .[14]

Hume: . . . we are perishing with hunger; I am willing therefore to surrender, and desire as the sole condition, to ensure the lives and liberties of these brave men, who have so long shared with me every danger and fatigue. [II, xv, 174. Hume cites Froissart, liv, i, chap. 146.]

Colman:

My gallant men are perishing with hunger:—
Therefore I will surrender.

But, conceive me,
On this condition;—that I do secure
The lives, and liberties, of those brave fellows,
Who, in this galling and disastrous siege,
Have shared with me in each fatigue and peril.
[p. 38]

More faithful to the story than would be many Hollywood productions, Colman added—as would many Hollywood productions and for the same reason—a double love subplot, an Irishman (played by John Johnstone, who made a career out of acting Irishmen), and, with Arnold's music, several catchy songs. As in *The Battle of Hexham*, the romantic heroine—this time named Julia—disguises herself as a man and escapes detection by the one she loves. Both heroines have faithful retainers; Julia's is the Irishman O'Carrol, on whom Colman must bestow dreary exposition to explain why he is with the French. The comic relief—a scene of gallows humor before the six hostages are freed—and the blank verse are vaguely "Shakespearean"; the latter, however, is, in the worst sense of the word, timeless. Hazlitt paid

Calais doubtful tribute in 1816, commenting that it is "as interesting as a tragedy can be without poetry in it," adding parenthetically, "for such it really is *till it is over.*"[15] The sentiments, to invoke an eighteenth-century criterion, are noble. It is easy to dismiss the facile emotions until one reads Hazlitt's response to the undistinguished performance he reviewed in 1816: *Calais* "has considerable pathos, though of a kind which borders on the shocking too much. It requires accomplished actors to carry it off. . . ." There are "several scenes . . . which 'not to be hated,' should be seen at the greatest possible distance that the stage allows. One advantage . . . of our overgrown theatres is, that they throw the most distressing objects into a milder historical perspective" (VIII, 332).[16]

Whatever the genre, Colman never peopled his plays with individuals; in this drama all the types are heroic, so, victor or victim (except some anonymous pusillanimous citizens of Calais who are demolished by Eustache de St. Pierre, the crusty old patriot), everyone vies to be admirable.[17] *Calais* was initially more popular than *Hexham*, with twenty-eight performances during its first season and, like *Hexham*, eighty-seven by 1800 (Hogan, p. clxxiii).

In 1791 the reactions to the French Revolution, epitomized by the writings of Burke and Paine, reverberated through London even if they were unheard at the Haymarket. Colman was innocently celebrating an incident 444 years old while France was exploding. Though not political, Colman did congratulate his British audience for not being French:

> *Julia:* . . .
> The parent sits at helm, in grey authority,
> And pilots the child's action:—for my father,
> You know what humour sways him.

Ribaumont: Yes, court policy:
Time-serving zeal: tame, passive, blind obedience,
To the stern will of power; which doth differ
As wide from true, impulsive loyalty,
As puppet-work from nature. O! I would
The time were come—our enemy, the English,
Bid fairest first to shew a bright example—
When, 'twixt the ruler and the ruled, affection
Shall be reciprocal: when Majesty
Shall gather strength from mildness; and the subject
Shall look with duteous love upon his Sovereign,
As the child eyes its father. [p. 41]

Colman ends the play with a rousing choral tribute to the British armed forces in sentiments that did not go out of fashion until World War I. No wonder *The Surrender of Calais*, according to Elizabeth Inchbald in 1808, was "considered by every critic as the very best of all the author's numerous and successful productions."[18]

Some of Colman's most engaging dialogue appears in ephemerae sandwiched between the great slabs of ambitious productions. *Poor Old Hay-Market or Two Sides of the Gutter* (15 June 1792), a charming prelude in answer to James Cobbs's laments in *Poor Old Drury!!!*, works because Colman needed no literary or dramatic models to write it. He knew London theatres firsthand, and assuming his audiences were reasonably aware of staging and acting problems, he let them in on a few in-house jokes.

The small size of the Haymarket theatre, which precluded grand displays, both pleased and frustrated Colman: "But here—damn it man, here, we shall see all the actors faces:—we shall have no bawling:—and they'll speak as cursed easy and natural as if they weren't acting at all" (p. 2). Audiences also wanted pantomimes: "A grand Scene, and a

fine shew—it's worth a whole cargo of countenances or a cartload of lungs. Talk of fine writing! Pish! Stage Room and a Procession for my Money! . . . But here!—only clap a Child on a Bulldog, and he'll look like Gulliver taking an Airing in Lilliput" (p. 2). Colman plays off both desires. Possibly this prelude interests only theatre historians with its purely local concerns, but the techniques remain a modern preoccupation.

Colman breaks down the barrier between audience and performers with unaffected dialogue. At one point he has a "Man in the first row of the Pit" literally interrupt Parsons: "Mr. Parsons, speak out—we can't hear a word you say from the back of the Pit" (p. 11). Parsons replies, "Eh? come, come—what you've put in a deaf Carpenter there to quiz me at Rehearsal Sir, and laugh me out of my System" (p. 11). The intramural jokes suggest an easygoing relationship between the performers and Colman. Toward the end of the prelude, for example, Mrs. Webb comes onstage: "Well, Wrighten, here we are. Oh the Little Theatre after all for my Money—we are all lost in the Winter—but here. Oh shall I once more shew my Shapes—once more be distinctly view'd by a candid and discerning Publick. To skip over the Huge bounds of their vile rambling Winter Stages dwindles a woman into a mere mite in a cheese! Eh! Mr. Johnston. What say you?" "Say—why by Jesus my dear Queen of the Fairies, I say that we little ones now, stand a chance of being seen, that's all" (p. 13). The joke was apparent to Haymarket audiences—Mrs. Webb, "than whom, actress of more weight never made the boards groan . . . turned her corpulence to account by playing Falstaff."[19] Johnstone jovially ends the prelude with a song, presumably whichever one was current, since Colman did not include one in the manuscript. *Poor Old Haymarket* was performed eight times.[20]

John Philip Kemble as Octavian was responsible for the

success of the inappropriately named *The Mountaineers* (Haymarket, 3 August 1793). Early reviewers, admitting that he was onstage a comparatively short time and then only during the latter half, found Kemble's performance overwhelming. It probably took their attention away from the play, because without Kemble this romantic melange falls apart. Not prone to understatement, Colman created three pairs of lovers, any one set of whom would have sufficed. The story of Octavian and Floranthe began in *Don Quixote* as that of Cardenio and Lucinda. Virolet and Zorayda resemble Cervantes's Ruy Perez de Viedma and Zoraida. Sadi and Agnes are satellites of Zorayda and supposedly provide a comic parallel to the other two pairs of romantic lovers. Although Cervantes is cited as source for Zorayda and her lover, Dryden's *Don Sebastian*, and especially the comic opera carved from it, *The Captive* (Haymarket, 1769), are closer in spirit and plot than Cervantes's version.[21]

If Colman contemplated unifying his play with the theme of lovers versus fathers, he failed. He also tossed in a goatherd who has lost a daughter because he forbade her marriage to a penniless swain. This prompts the distraught Octavian to hyperventilate, "Thou hast driven forth thy inn'cent child / Thro' the wide globe, a friendless wanderer!" (p. 50). The Agnes-Sadi story is filled with sentiments about the joys of Christianity, including wine, which await the converted Sadi, who seems always to be reflecting depressingly on his "copper complexion." Virolet and Zorayda are—well—boring. Audiences who liked Mrs. Goodall in the breeches part of Adeline (*The Battle of Hexham*) would love her as Floranthe seeking Octavian (Elizabeth Kemble played the similarly garbed Julia in *The Surrender of Calais*). The mountaineers are both the useless muleteers of Act II and the "Goatherds and other Pastoral Characters, male and female,"[22] who exist only to sing. John Johnstone appears,

inevitably, as the honest Irishman Kilmallock to delight the audience with his brogue and a song "in character." He was a "self-taught rough-and-ready Irish tenor with an extensive falsetto" (Fiske, p. 629); it was a hard audience who could ignore the refrain of his song in *The Mountaineers*:

> *'Twas dear dear what can the matter be!*
> *Och! blood and ouns! what can the matter be!*
> *Och! Gramachree! what can the matter be!*
> *Bother'd from head to tail!* [p. 33]

Kilmallock serves as an excuse for Colman to praise Britain; Sadi, the Moorish guard of the slaves, remarks, "Were I to chuse, now, I would deal with a dozen blushing captives, rather than one Irish or English. There is, as it were, a sort of a steady, cool method of freedom about these Islanders, (as if it grew to 'em) that keeps its dignity better than any other nation in Christendom" (p. 11).

The Mountaineers is a play more worthy of Bayes than Colman, but unlike the hapless Bayes, Colman did create a memorable part in Octavian for Kemble, Kean, and other nineteenth-century tragedians. Indeed, Kean's last words were "Farewell Flo—, Floranthe!"[23] During its first season the play was performed twenty-seven times.

It is no use fussing that Colman is not Fielding or Foote, both of whom provided alternative, "beyond the fringe" theatre. If the satirical blood ran thin by the time Colman bought the Haymarket (1795), he replaced it with a transfusion of geniality. *New Hay at the Old Market* (Haymarket, 9 June 1795) in form is a remote descendant of *The Rehearsal* and Fielding's *Pasquin* and a closer relative to the preludes of Garrick and Colman the Elder. Colman laughs at the huge size of the winter theatres and at theatrical conventions including the "*Humane Footpad*"—his own Gondibert fits the description: "a freebooter of benevolence" who "plunders

with sentiment" (p. 11). He would draw the same type again in *The Iron Chest* as Armstrong. Colman as Haymarket manager jibed at the pantomimes and spectacles produced at the winter theatres, but in 1798, for Drury Lane, Colman contributed a successful one of his own, *Blue-Beard*. At first this "Prelude," which was performed thirty-two times during the summer of 1795, had two scenes, the second of which cheerfully joshed performers in general and let Caulfield as Apewell imitate popular actors. Revised as *Sylvester Daggerwood* in 1796 as an afterpiece, it retained its popularity mainly because of the team of Bannister and Suett as, respectively, Daggerwood, the provincial actor, and Fustian, the author of a tragedy. As Mr. Sylvester Daggerwood, of the Dunstable Company, Bannister made familiar a speech, excerpts of which were repeated long after he retired: "My father was an eminent Button-maker, at Birmingham; and meant to marry me to Miss Molly Metre, daughter to the rich Director of the Coalworks, at Wolverhampton: but I had a soul above buttons, and abhorred the idea of a mercenary marriage. I panted for a liberal profession. . ." (p. 10).

Almost everything that could go wrong in producing Colman's next play, *The Iron Chest* (Drury Lane, 12 March 1796), did. First, Sheridan, the major patentee of Drury Lane, asked the wrong person—Colman—to adapt Godwin's political, philosophical novel, *Caleb Williams*. No doubt impressed by Colman's romantic dramas, especially *The Mountaineers*, in which Drury Lane's Kemble had done so well as the anguished Octavian, Sheridan probably assumed a similar treatment of the novel would provide another successful vehicle for his popular actor-manager. But Colman gutted it, purposely omitting its politics and even denying he had seen any:

> I have cautiously avoided all tendency to that which, vulgarly, (and wrongly, in many instances,) is termed

> Politicks; with which, many have told me, *Caleb Williams* teems.
>
> The stage has, now, no business with Politicks: and, should a Dramatick Author endeavour to dabble in them, it is the Lord Chamberlain's office to check his attempts, before they meet the eye of the Publick." [*Advertisement*, first edition, p. xxi]

More succinctly, Colman later wrote, "I had nothing to do with the political tendency of the book, which is thought by many to inculcate levelling principles, and disrespect for the laws of our country" (Peake, II, 257). As Colman made dramatically clear in his plays, degree and respect for the law were the legs upon which he stood. A theatrically successful adaptation was still possible, but Colman tried to tie the three-act structure of comic and serious scenes to a story that was only tragic. Furthermore, to insure that no one would think inequities still existed in Britain, he set the story in Charles I's reign and again devised dialogue, poetry, and simplemindedness that libelled an age.

Colman wrote *The Iron Chest* piecemeal, sending scenes to the theatre as he finished them. Becoming ill, he lost touch with the play's production. His composer, the able Stephen Storace, also sickened and then died before opening night. Rehearsals were ragged as actors absented themselves. Kemble seems to have tired of the piece, or succumbed to illness, or resented a possible joke at his expense by Colman. As Sir Walter Scott explains it, Colman originally called Edward Mortimer, Philip, and included the following speech:

> Philip is all deep reading, and black letter;
> He shews it in his very chin. He speaks
> Mere Dictionary; and he pores on pages
> That give plain men the head-ach. "Scarce,
> and curious,"

> Are baits his learning nibbles at. His brain
> Is cram'd with mouldy volumes, cramp, and useless,
> Like a librarian's lumber-room.

Scott believed that Kemble thought the lines ridiculed his "antiquarian lore,"[24] and though Colman changed the name (see first edition, p. 43), Kemble was not mollified. Samuel Arnold claimed "that Kemble winced several times at descriptions which appeared *personal*" when Colman read part of the play over dinner. The two men then drank together for about a day and a half. Finally Kemble said, "'Phoo, George, you're a fool,' and never spoke another word. A coach was ordered an hour or two after, and he returned home" (Peake, II, 422). Whatever his excuse, Kemble popped opium pills before the opening performance and gloomed his way through it. By the end of the night Kemble and another actor had both apologized to the audience for the poor showing. Yet another problem was that the play ran four hours because neither Colman nor Kemble had the opportunity or desire to cut it during the final rehearsals (the sick Colman was absent from the theatre during the last week until three hours before the first performance).

All the performers except Bannister as the hero Wilford (Colman's version of Caleb Williams) were condemned in reviews. Despite Colman's surgery in which the playing time was cut to two and a half hours (Bagster-Collins, p. 92)—the faithful old (senile?) family retainer, Adam Winterton, for instance, was removed—the play did not recover from its first night; and after three more performances Drury Lane gave it up. Godwin was irked that Colman had not invited him to see the adaptation of his novel,[25] but he was better off missing it. When Colman revived *The Iron Chest* at the Haymarket (29 August 1796), he restored Winterton. With Elliston as Mortimer, the play proved a success. Kean and

other nineteenth-century actors also proved good Mortimers.

The Iron Chest is an example of actors triumphing over material. As Hazlitt said in his review, despite all the flaws Kean made his performance, if not the tragedy, indelible: "The last scene of all—[Edward's] coming to life again after his swooning at the fatal discovery of his guilt, and then falling back after a ghastly struggle, like a man waked from the tomb, into despair and death in the arms of his mistress, was one of those consummations of the art, which those who have seen and have not felt them in this actor, may be assured that they have never seen or felt any thing in the course of their lives, and never will to the end of them" (VIII, 344–45).

Edward Mortimer is a morbid, neurotically intense, riven man. Obsessed by honor and guilt-ridden because he has secretly, dishonorably killed an ignoble enemy, Mortimer is alert for the slightest ambiguity in the speeches of others that might expose him. His neurosis compels him to confess in order to shift the burden of guilt onto an innocent whom he then will sacrifice—a vicarious expiation. Mortimer is fit for tragedy or a horror story since his guilt would force him to renew the cycle; he is not part of a trivial story of love in the forest. I think that one reason why Colman packed *The Iron Chest* and his earlier romantic dramas with comedy and other business is that he could not sustain the tragic note. *The Iron Chest* is Colman's most serious work—Mortimer and Wilford are bound in mortal struggle—but Colman is too unsure of himself or his audience to concentrate on them. Instead he gives us the pleasant tale of Samson and Blanch, the pathetic story of Samson's parents, the familiar picture of the surly robbers and their humane captain, the garrulous Winterton, and the very English squire, Mortimer's brother Fitzharding. The vein of outrage is pres-

ent, but Colman deliberately avoids tapping it. This same timidity keeps him from politics and, conversely, promotes his jingoism. When *The Iron Chest* was performed, habeas corpus had been suspended for two years, and Parliament voted that spring (1796) overwhelmingly to continue its suspension; despite this, Colman wrote the following speech for Fitzharding:

> Friend, I will stoop
> To prop a sinking man, that's call'd a rogue,
> And count him innocent, 'till he's found guilty.
> I learn'd it from our English laws; where Mercy
> Models the weights that fill the scales of Justice,
> And Charity, when Wisdom gives her sentence,
> Stands by to prompt her. 'Till detection comes,
> I side with the accused. [pp. 105–06]

Samson replies with a joke, "All undiscover'd rogues are bound to pray for you," and the possibility that Colman was being political despite his preface evaporates.

The notion of justice—fair play—held by Mortimer's brother contrasts with Mortimer's—conservation of honor. After Mortimer nullifies the threat to his honor, he seeks no further punishment of Wilford. At that point Fitzharding's indignation at seeing Wilford supposedly violate the rules of fair play takes over, and as a consequence Mortimer is balked. He can neither exonerate Wilford nor allow Fitzharding to prosecute him. Was it exigency of plot or recognition of the psychological urge toward self-destruction that prompted Colman to place Mortimer's blood-stained knife in Wilford's trunk? All of Colman's other works suggest that here he wrote more than he recognized, and the discovery of the knife is no more than a *coup de theatre*.

Occasionally when Colman attempted terror he achieved only the ludicrous, as in Wilford's speech: "[Sir Edward's]

coming. —No. The old wainscot cracks, and frightens me out of my wits: and, I verily believe, the great folio dropt on my head, just now, from the shelf, on purpose to encrease my terrors" (p. 62). While Colman tried to create bonds of terror and revulsion to grip Mortimer and Wilford, he rested on convention for the remaining characters and for the play's humor. No matter how much delicacy of feeling and language the late eighteenth-century dramatists promulgated, the same dreary jokes from antique comic types dutifully appeared, whether warranted or not. Old men lust after young maidservants, and pert abigails retail secondhand aphorisms: "I would [Sir Edward and Helen] were wedded once, and all this trembling would be over. I am told your married lady's feelings are little roused in reading letters from a husband" (p. 59).

The best thing about *The Iron Chest* was Colman's preface to the first edition. Here was no reliance on old jokes and conventional types, but rather a sustained exasperated attack on Kemble. In a postscript about two months later Colman cheered the success of his play at the Haymarket, "I am gratified completely." He ended his postscript with a fillip for his critics: "My language will, I trust, be found more liberal than the jargon of my opponents; and my *arguments* fully as *convincing*. Thus I address them: 'Gentlemen!!! Pshaw! Pish! Pooh! Ha, ha, ha! Your obedient, G. Colman the Younger.'"[26] He withdrew the preface and the postscript from the third edition.

Even though performances at the Haymarket and later at Drury Lane vindicated Colman's belief in *The Iron Chest*, he never again tried tragedy. His next presentation—again at Drury Lane—almost slipped away unnoticed by contemporary reviewers and later stage historians. A letter by Colman to Arnold early in 1797 unintentionally misled Peake and others to believe that *My Night-gown and Slippers* was not

performed. Colman's work had been refused permission because of the "actors, who gave a scrambling and improper jumble the year before last in the Haymarket, on which the Bishop wrote to suppress all entertainments except Oratorios in Lent" (Peake, II, 275). Convinced that the three monologues ("two of them were intended to be *spoken* . . . and the third to be sung . . .") would not be staged, Colman "put them into a kind of Crambo-vehicle, to make them connect,"[27] and they were published on 3 April 1797 as *My Night-gown and Slippers* (Hogan, p. 1957). Lent passed, and at a benefit for Palmer at Drury Lane (28 April) the three pieces were presented: "The Maid of the Moor" by Suett; "The Newcastle Apothecary" by Palmer; "Lodgings to Let for Single Gentlemen" by Suett. On 8 May Munden performed "The Newcastle Apothecary" at the Haymarket, and on 19 April 1799 (Drury Lane) Suett again performed the "Lodgings" (Hogan, pp. 1957, 1985, 2163). *My Night-gown and Slippers* has recently been inaccurately termed a "trivial and rather scurrilous monologue."[28] Trivial, yes; but it is *three* monologues, none of them scurrilous. Popular, the printed edition soon sold out, and in 1802 Colman added other verses and published *Broad Grins*.[29] Summarizing Colman's career in 1871, George Buckstone predicted, "The writings by which George Colman's name will go down to posterity are his inimitable Tales in Verse." The first one he instanced was from *My Night-gown and Slippers*: "Where is the schoolboy who has not committed to memory 'The Newcastle Apothecary'—reprinted in a hundred different volumes of selections?"[30]

Colman's light verse generally piqued the serious-minded reviewers; his poems may lack the verbal bravado of Thomas Hood's, but they belong in the same tradition. As for the lyrics in his plays, one superb song at least is still

quite rightfully performed: "Oh, Miss Bailey! unfortunate Miss Bailey!" (*Love Laughs at Locksmiths*, 1803).

Because melodrama became such a popular, recognized (often only to be scorned) genre, Colman is included historically as one of its heralds. But his comedies are dismissed, by Thorndike for instance, who wrote happily, "Each piece is a gallimaufry of gambols."[31] They may be rightfully neglected, but one of the reasons stems from a distaste for puns—false wit. Thorndike, again, granted that Colman designed his plays "with the greatest talent for winning applause," but undercut even that suspect praise by continuing, "whether by pun or pathos, low or high comedy, song, sentiment or spectacle" (p 481). In other words, Colman gave his audiences whatever would please them. Colman's importance may be conveniently limited to melodramas; but more validly, even if less demonstrably, his comedies and verses like *My Night-gown and Slippers* should be seen as helping form a hallmark of the Victorian comic spirit, that penchant for punning and sociable humor that *Punch* embodied in writings and drawings. Colman helped make acceptable and desirable the puns of many nineteenth-century authors such as Cuthbert Bede—and Lewis Carroll. One of those comedies that serious-minded critics liked despite themselves was *The Heir at Law*.

The Heir at Law (Haymarket, 15 July 1797) is to great comedy as *The Iron Chest* to tragedy. With both plot and characters Colman filled a proved prescription. But temporary relief is often more satisfying than existential dilemmas. It is a comfortable, edifying, genial comedy; laughter at the newly rich Daniel and Deborah Dowlas is tempered by recognition that they are decent folk. Their son Dick, torn between his natural goodness and suddenly acquired condescension, momentarily leans toward keeping rather than

marrying his country-bred sweetheart, Cecily, but no one need worry that his inclination may be permanent. Johnstone played a more attenuated Irishman (Kenrick) than usual as the sentimentalized faithful old servant to the bereft Caroline Dormer (the real heir's fiancée). The scene between homespun Dowlas and crusty Stedfast, who confuses him with the original Lord Duberly, is very funny, even if the source of humor is the hoary convention of mistaken assumptions. Colman used the device in, for instance, *Inkle and Yarico*, *Ways and Means*, and *The Family Party* and would again in *The Poor Gentleman* and *John Bull*.

Dr. Peter Pangloss ("L.L.D. . . . A Double S") is Colman's triumph. Related only by name to Voltaire's philosopher and by type to Cowley's Sententious Gerund (Bagster-Collins, pp. 106–07), this would-be tutor is happy to do any service for pay, but none of the satire that habitually suits such tutors fits Pangloss. He and his quotations from authors—Hesiod to Swift—are the comedy's main source of humor. Sometimes they are accurate, or, as in his final speech, Pangloss adapts an author for the occasion: "Again must I retire to Milk-alley, and spin my brain for subsistence. *'Panglos's occupation's gone!'*—Shakespeare—Hem!" (p. 65). The deprecatory "Hem" is Pangloss's tick. Even the noble sentiments with which the play is laced and the attendant sentimentality are easily borne; but Pangloss's opportunism is so ingenuous that Moreland's sententious dismissal of him is too harsh: "I suspect there are some amongst those to whom youth is entrusted who bring the character of a tutor into disrepute—and draw ridicule upon a respectable situation, in which many men of learning and probity are placed" (p. 65).[32]

The same sort of decency that was the underlying theme of *Inkle and Yarico*, however clumsily phrased, again supports this comedy. Caroline somewhat incoherently apostrophizes

it: "Oh, nature! spite of the inequalities which birth, or education have placed between thy children — still nature with all thy softness, I own thee!" (p. 18). Never a Jacobin or a leveller, Colman observed the proper forms demanded by society, but implicitly felt the larger principle of brotherhood. Because he was not troubled by the incompatibility of the two, he could write harmless comedy.

Unlike the speeches in his serious plays, in *The Heir at Law* Colman used language that might have been spoken offstage. Mrs. Dowlas, for instance, even as she aims for refined manners draws on proverbs and wise sayings, including one coined by Colman: "Well, praise the bridge that carried you over" (p. 3). Her husband originates an expression still used to disparage old news told as new, "Lord help you — tell 'em Queen Anne's dead, my lady" (p. 4). Through Dick Dowlas, Colman betrays his own education: Dick reads a letter from his father, " 'Dear Dick this comes to inform you, I am in a perfect state of health, hoping you are in the same' — Aye, that's the old beginning" (p. 23). This is a pleasant remembrance of Pliny the Younger: "There is nothing to write about you say. Well then, write and let me know just this, — that there *is* nothing to write about; or tell me in the good old style if you are well. That's right. I am quite well" (*Letters*, Book I, Letter 11, translated by William Melmoth).[33]

Despite carping by some critics that Colman had borrowed characters from Thomas Morton's *Cure for the Heart Ache* (10 January 1797) — Bagster-Collins (p. 108) finds the charge unproved — *The Heir at Law* was performed twenty-eight times during the summer of 1797. The comedy remained in the standard repertory for over one hundred years, Bagster-Collins noting a performance in 1906 (p. 110).

However enjoyable *The Heir at Law* may be, we could look away briefly from it to see what happens to similar

material when treated by a genius. The decent married couple, newly rich through inheritance, the supposedly drowned heir, and the tutor all reappear in Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*. No evidence suggests that Dickens knew Colman's comedy; the comparison only confirms Colman's stanza in *My Night-gown and Slippers*:

> Buoy'd on a sea of fancy, Genius rises,
> And like the rare Leviathan surprises:
> But the *small fry* of scribblers! — tiny souls!
> They wriggle through the mud in shoals.

After *The Heir at Law* Colman did not write a five-act comedy for almost four years. He returned to Drury Lane for his next work at the request of Michael Kelly. Endeavoring "to establish" his "name as a composer, by furnishing the music," Kelly promised Colman "a couple of hundred pounds" for what turned out to be less than a week's work, writing *Blue-Beard; or, Female Curiosity* (Drury Lane, 16 January 1798).[34] Kelly had brought the French programme of Grétry's *Barbe bleue* back from Paris ("the music . . . was very good; but so different are the tastes of a French and English audience, that when I produced my 'Blue Beard' at Drury Lane, I did not introduce a single bar from Grétry. Mrs. C[rouch] . . . wrote down the programme of the drama, with a view to get it dramatized for Drury Lane").[35] Colman took credit for the script: "The following Trifle is not a Translation from the French, nor any other Language," he began in his preface to the first edition: "I have an exclusive right to all its imperfections" (p. iii).

Kelly, according to Fiske, "was in no way equipped for composing dramatic music" (p. 572); but the lyrics of two of his songs gained different sorts of fame: Ibrahim, the father of Blue Beard's prospective bride, sings the following refrain, "'Tis a very fine thing to be Father-in-Law / To a very

magnificent three tail'd Bashaw!" (p. 35). The couplet was popular enough to be admitted to Bartlett's and other books of quotations.[36] The third verse of the same song begins, "At the Head of Affairs, / Turn me out, then who dares—" (p. 35). London audiences heard these lines as a political allusion to the younger Pitt (Bagster-Collins, p. 117). The opening duet, sung by Selim and Fatima, has the line "Pit a pat, pit a pat, Pit a pat" (p. 2), which inspired a partisan at the Dublin Theatre to roar, "Arrah, by my shoul! then, my honey, down with *Pitt* and up with Pat!" (Bagster-Collins, p. 117).

In a speech that probably fed British resentment against the French, Selim, the martial hero, defies Abomelique (Blue Beard): "When Power is respected, it's basis must be Justice. 'Tis then an edifice that gives the humble shelter and they reverence it:—But, 'tis a hated shallow fabrick, that rears itself upon oppression:—the breath of the discontented swells into a gale around it, 'till it totters" (p. 8). This declamation, good for all times and all climes, may sound prefabricated, and it is part of a thread that runs through many of Colman's plays; but in 1798, when France and Britain warred, the speech should have thrilled patriotic audiences.

Mainly, as befits a pantomime—Colman called it a "dramatick romance" on the title page of the first edition—the spectacle is the thing. Because of its scenic effects, rapidity of action, and comedy generated by Ibrahim and, to a lesser extent, Shacabac, this dramatized nursery tale[37] is more properly English pantomime than melodrama, although historians plausibly associate it with the latter genre. Colman praised "*Young Greenwood* (a Scene-Painter of Nineteen!)" who showed "Design, and Execution of uncommon promise:—And *Johnstone*, a *classical* Machinist, (a *rara avis*, alas! in Theatres) . . . I have made the Dialogue and Songs (such as they are) subservient to the above-mentioned

Artists" (preface, pp. v– vi). Colman pays his tithes to sentiment with occasional contributions: Selim. "What are you?" Shacabac. "What every man should be — a Friend to Virtue in distress wherever I meet it" (p. 48); usually, however, the prose lives down to Colman's estimation.

Between 1798 and 1800 Colman wrote three inconsiderable but differing kinds of plays and greatly helped fashion another. *Blue Devils* (Covent Garden, 24 April 1798), an afterpiece, is a one-act translation of Patrat's farce *L'Anglais, ou Le Fou Raisonnable*. *Feudal Times; or, The Banquet-Gallery* (Drury Lane, 19 January 1799), another afterpiece, is a two-act bravura spectacular of melodramatic hokum. *The Review; or, The Wags of Windsor* (Haymarket, 1 September 1800) is a musical farce that does nothing more than allow Colman's comedians to practice their routines.

Colman advertised rather oddly that his *Blue Devils* was a "loose version" of Patrat's work, "the title of which is forgotten by the Translator." However, as Bagster-Collins points out, *Blue Devils* is a "fairly close translation" (p. 120).[38] Possibly what prompted Colman to translate this filler was the speech by Megrim: "Let a man, of any nation, under the sun, attack the glory and liberty of Old England, and he is my enemy: — let his distress call for my assistance, and he becomes my countryman" (p. 23). The farce reads badly, no longer French but not absolutely English. Performed once at Covent Garden, it played nine times at Haymarket during the summer of 1798 and then well into the nineteenth century, Bagster-Collins noting (p. 339) that acting editions were published as late as 1860.

Again receiving £200, Colman tried to repeat the successful formula of *Blue Beard* in *Feudal Times*, casting Bannister as Martin, a more brave version of Shacabac, and Kelly, who had played Selim, as the romantic hero, Edmund Fitzallen. Suett (the comic father-in-law of the three-tailed

Bashaw) played a drunken porter; the heroine remained Mrs. Crouch; the servant (promoted from slave), Mrs. Bland. To say that the story is no worse than many Errol Flynn movies is a euphemistic version of Adolphus's magisterial summary: "Well then, if serious criticism must not approach," he began, referring to Colman's perfatory disclaimer, "let an off-hand sentence from mere impulse serve. 'Feudal Times' is an absurd, improbable, ill-contrived farrago, utterly unworthy the talents and fame of the author; void of invention, either in plot or character; and not elevated one step above the ordinary Christmas pantomime for which it professes to be a substitute" (II, 37). This proto-melodrama, with music by Kelly, was performed thirty-nine times (Bagster-Collins, p. 126) before yielding the stage to other annual farragos of equal worth.

The comic's slapstick is never far away in *The Review*. Johnstone's Irish Looney Mactoulter and John Emery's Yorkshire John Lump are zanies who broadly cast their clumpish humor in dialect as servants to Mr. Deputy Bull (guardian to the heroine, Grace Gaylove[39]) and the romantic hero, Captain Beaugard. The choicest part, however, was that of Caleb Quotem, played by Fawcett, but originally written by Henry Lee in his unsuccessful *Throw Physic to the Dogs* (Haymarket, 6 July 1798; Fawcett acted Quotem). Colman (who presented his farce under the pseudonym of Arthur Griffinhoof of Turnham Green) acknowledged that he had lifted material from Lee, but maintained that most of the borrowed dialogue came — with permission — from Thomas Dibdin's character Doctor Scarecrow, in *Sunshine after Rain*. If any plagiarism had occurred, Colman declared, it was by Lee, who had "*taken*, alter'd, and christen'd anew" a character whom Colman had only "*borrow'd*" from Dibdin. Naturally, then, Lee claimed his play antedated Dibdin's farce. Eventually Lee took Colman's depredation generously,

writing that he "felt honored that lacking wit himself, he was 'a cause that wit is in other men' " (Bagster-Collins, pp. 340–41).

The Review was written, "or rather put together by Colman in sudden haste at Dr. Arnold's table in Duke-Street." "Songs which Dr. Arnold had by him, ready cut and dried, were adapted, and even characters introduced to sing them" (Peake, II, 286). The musical farce played ten nights during its first season, and with the extraneous couple, Charles Williams and Phoebe Whitehorn, omitted, it remained a "stock after-piece for over fifty years" (Bagster-Collins, p. 133).

Colman not only adapted plays himself, he also doctored works for others before they were performed. One of his successful operations was Henry Heartwell's comic opera *The Castle of Sorrento* (Haymarket, 13 July 1799), itself an acknowledged adaptation of Domenique Della Maria's opera *Le Prisonnier* (1798). "To Mr. Colman," Heartwell wrote in his preface, "for the most encouraging conduct, for many happy alterations, for the most liberal aid of Scenery and Dress it is indebted . . ." (p. iii). Fawcett, to whom the comic opera is inscribed, helped measure the work for the Haymarket stage. He played Blinval, the lead role; as governor of the castle in which Blinval has been imprisoned, a "rough Diamond," "ould O'Rourke, O'Donnel," Johnstone again "oched" and "honeyed" his way through two acts. Thomas Attwood "churned out" the music (Fiske, p. 577).

Colman's first five-act comedy since *The Heir at Law* was *The Poor Gentleman* (Covent Garden, 11 February 1801), a good example of formulaic writing. The types rarely threaten to lapse into individuals, and the comedy arises from both dialogue and situation. Colman exploits English country dialect and the use of tags ("Do you take?" Ollapod

asks after his witticisms, and he says, "I owe you one," in recognition of wit from others). The audience laughed at the sight of Lucretia MacTab, the vain old maid who is "left in a ditch" by Ollapod, and when the distressed Lieutenant Worthington mistakes Sir Robert Bramble for a bailiff.

Momentary melodrama occurs when Sir Charles Cropland attempts to force himself upon the heroine, Emily. But Frederick, the hero, thwarts him. The scene may be a foretaste of nineteenth-century melodrama, but it is not much different from the scene in *Thomas and Sally* (1761) when Thomas saves Sally from the menacing squire. A fifth-act duel is cancelled after Sir Charles proves his nobility by abruptly forsaking his vices.

There is only the appearance of a five-act story; actually the comedy is composed of a number of well-constructed, busy, independent scenes. No causality insists on inevitable actions or immutable order. Sir Robert, for instance, decides to help Worthington before he meets him because the squire always helps deserving people. Frederick rescues Emily from Sir Charles because he has lost his way returning home and accidentally comes across them. "Virtue rewarded is the major theme of the play," Bagster-Collins wrote (p. 134), which is probably true in the absence of any others. Perhaps more appealing to Colman would be the theme that virtue naturally resides in English men and women of every social rank. Plainly Lucretia MacTab has allowed affectation to usurp virtue's place. Considering that Colman studied briefly in Aberdeen, it is strange that she is Colman's only Scot in his plays.

Lieutenant Worthington and Corporal Foss owe some of their character to Sterne's Lieutenant Le Fevre, Uncle Toby, and Corporal Trim. Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* provides types for Sir Robert (Matthew Bramble), Frederick (Jerry

Melford), and even Lucretia (Tabitha). But Colman is not indebted to any one work for the source of his dramatic personae.

The Poor Gentleman was performed twenty-five times during its first season. Bagster-Collins writes that Colman's share in the profits was £645.16.9. "It is doubtful," he adds, "if there was another dramatist in England except Sheridan who could boast so large a fee for a comedy" (p. 138).

A formal declaration of war with France was two months away when *John Bull* opened at Covent Garden on 5 March 1803; but since the peace of Amiens the year before, Napoleon had renewed his anti-English policy by, among other measures, encouraging the Irish under Robert Emmett to rebel. Colman was no more a political writer in this comedy than he was in *The Iron Chest*, but whether by coincidence or design he rejuvenated the ninety-one-year-old personification of England who had been born during the earlier war against Bourbon ("Baboon") France.

Although *John Bull* is Colman's best comedy, recent opinion has labeled it everything from inane to immortal.[40] Thorndike found it well-made claptrap (p. 492), and to the extent that scenes are pointed toward the audience for applause, the play technically is "claptrap." But it is a well-made *comedy*, more than inane, less than immortal. Apparently Colman wrote it act by separate act to the last act, and then drink by drink, completion and collapse occurring together.[41] The result, however obtained, is a triumph of stability, a *British* hearts-of-oak comedy that celebrates in form and theme *English* four-square, sturdy, bourgeois complacency even as the spirit of fairy-tale romance hovers about it. *John Bull* may seem manufactured from various bolts, rather than created from whole cloth, but the seams are artful. All of the strands that constitute *John Bull* are under

control: verbal humor, upper-class villainy, virtuous action, sentimentality. They are woven through the five acts in differing proportions until in the last scene of this most unsubversive of comedies Colman, following dramatic prescription, has all the characters grouped onstage, their differences reconciled.[42]

Most of the broad humor—which even sober Mrs. Inchbald found irresistible[43]—was left to London's favorite stage Irishman, Johnstone, who played Dennis Brulgruddery, landlord of the impoverished Red Cow inn. Both his wife and his beer are sour; she could have run any number of public houses in Fielding's novels. The Hon. Tom Shuffleton is an engaging parasite who is *au courant* with the New School of Irresponsibilities—the same ones that were practised a century earlier. In this celebratory comedy, however, the Hon. Tom is rewarded with a noble wife who has £4,000 a year. His plan to send the naive Mary to a London brothel to await his pleasure seems less vicious in the play than in the telling of it. To Colman's credit, marriage will not corrupt Shuffleton's perfect selfishness: "I won't do any thing to make [my wife] unhappy for these three weeks" (p. 98).

Job Thornberry is Colman's embodiment of John Bull. Like Arbuthnot's creation, Job is an "honest plain-dealing Fellow, Cholerick, Bold. . . ." He is "quick, and [understands] his business very well," but is apt to be too trusting, and generous.[44] Believing in equality under the law, Job demands justice for his daughter Mary, who has been seduced by Frank Rochdale, the weak but well-meaning son of Sir Simon, baronet and justice of the peace. Job's scene with Sir Simon (V. ii) when he sits in the "chair of justice" because the magistrate has left it is the finest in Colman's career. By allowing Mary and Frank to marry, Colman temporarily redeemed English theatre from Mrs. Grundy and

the depressingly long-lived tradition of the permanently fallen woman. Mercifully absent is the often attendant "to make her an honest woman" tag.

Peregrine is Colman's contrast to Thornberry in that most of his actions stem from disinterested virtue (repaying Job is the exception). His history, being the stuff of romance, is more exciting than he is. His revelation that he is the rightful baronet befits his role as *deus ex machina*. He is like Bunyan's Mr. Great-Heart, but fortunately for the comedy he has not too many lines like: "Ha! the voice of a female in distress! Then 'tis man's business to fly to her protection" (p. 10). Peregrine threads the strands together, reuniting Job and his daughter, reconciling Mary and Frank, foiling the Hon. Tom. Walking out of the sea at the right moment with a chest full of money and hinting about his heritage, he could have been a hero in another play: Lillo's tragedy *The Fatal Curiosity*. Peregrine is a divine character from Greek drama whom Colman has imprisoned and made all too mortal. Despite his unremittingly active virtue, Peregrine does not often take center stage; that is reserved for Job, the quintessential Englishman.

Sentimentality, which trivializes a person, place, or condition by substituting an appealing ideal for the actual, is generally subordinated to the comedy, but it forms Colman's delineation of national character and contributes to the theme of justice that underlies *John Bull*. Colman has Peregrine distinguish between the English and the Irish when he comments with innocent patronizing about Bulgruddery:

> . . . he has been anxious, I find, for poor Mary, and 'tis national in *him* to blend eccentricity with kindness. John Bull exhibits a plain, undecorated dish of solid benevolence; but Pat has a gay garnish of whim around his good-nature; and if, now and then, 'tis

> sprinkled in a little confusion, they must have vitiated stomachs, who are not pleased with the embellishment. [p. 69]

Benevolent John Bull may be, but there are limits to his tolerance: "no one deserves forgiveness," Job declares in the final speech of the play, "who refuses to make amends, when he has disturb'd the happiness of an Englishman's *fire-side*." One way to disturb that happiness is by injustice: "English equity is dear to my heart," says Peregrine in the penultimate speech. "Respect the rights of honest John Bull, and our family concerns may be easily arranged." Like the biblical Job, Thornberry confidently seeks justice: "We are all equals in the eye of the law; and rot me, if I won't make a baronet's son shake in his shoes, for betraying a brazier's daughter" (p. 73). When Job is about to be violent, Peregrine commands: "Nay, nay; cease to grasp that cane. — While we are so conspicuously bless'd with laws to chastise a culprit, the mace of justice is the only proper weapon for the injured" (p. 93). Finally, Peregrine says that he is claiming his title because he "found a brother neglecting, what no Englishman should neglect — justice and humanity to his inferiors" (p. 98). As in *The Heir at Law* Colman maintained the traditional belief in a societal hierarchy built on "birth and education" while affirming his confidence in the equality granted to all under English law, which was presumed to be based on natural law. This ability to accept simultaneously subordination in society and equality under the law was peculiar to the English and kept them from revolution.

John Bull was played forty-eight times between 5 March and 23 June 1803 (Bagster-Collins, p. 159); Colman conservatively made £850, though Bagster-Collins also quotes larger sums others reported (p. 160). *John Bull* was Colman's most popular and best-written play.

After *John Bull* Colman wrote other successes, but never another play that promised a glimpse of literary — as opposed to theatrical — quality. No matter their kind, his dramas relied on established conventional characters and familiar plots. Despite their resemblance to melodrama, some of Colman's plays are only accidental pioneers of that genre; he never tried writing a formal melodrama after the form was recognized. His comedies are genteel; his farces, rudimentary. Many of his plays were both sentimental and patriotic, not offensively, just simply.

If Colman contributed little to the literary history of English drama, he nonetheless was important theatrically because he catered to the best performers of the time. His generally uplifting plays, well produced and well performed, consistently pleased audiences who felt no remorse at not seeing great art. Superficial though Colman's plays were, they entertained; and by entertaining, Colman helped foster the harmless comic wordplay and self-satisfied humor that came to characterize Victorian comedy. "He wrote to make mankind laugh," a reviewer summarized in 1812,[45] and that is something — as Kenrick remarked in *The Heir at Law*, unintentionally fathering a cliché — "not to be sneezed at."

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Notes

1. Works most often cited in this essay about Colman: Jeremy F. Bagster-Collins, *George Colman The Younger — 1762 — 1836* (New

York: King's Crown Press, 1946), hereafter referred to as Bagster-Collins; George Colman, The Younger, *Random Records* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1830), 2 vols., hereafter referred to as *Records*; Richard Brinsley Peake, *Memoirs of the Colman Family* (London: Bentley, 1841), 2 vols., hereafter referred to as Peake; John Adolphus, *The Memoirs of John Bannister, Comedian* (London: Bentley, 1839), 2 vols., hereafter referred to as Adolphus.

2. *Records*, II, 112–13. Dates of performances are from Bagster-Collins, unless otherwise noted.

3. Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 474. "Adzooks old Crusty" (not "Adzooks so crusty" as Fiske has it) became Dicky Ditto's second song, after which he exited:

Adzooks old Crusty,
Why so rusty,
Stupid, queer, and mumpy;
Egad if you don't mend your manners,
Somebody will lump you.
Lumpy, thumpy, thwack, and bump,
Pummel you, and bump O!
Humpy, stumpy, make your mump,
Kick about your rump O!

Did little Dicky,
Ever kick ye?
No—I'm always civil:
Then why should you for my politeness,
Wish me at the Devil?
Crusty, rusty, flout and pout,
Did I ever kick ye?
Fusty, musty, turn me out,
Oh poor civil Dicky!

A receipt I'll give,
But as I live,
I'd rather give him blows, Sir.
At St. Giles's he was bred,

Although he wears fine cloaths, Sir;
Noodle, doodle, ugly muns,
Here's a pretty rig, Sir;
Daggers, pistols, swords and guns,
Oh! I'll hop the twig, Sir.
[pp. 27–28, Dublin edition]

4. Philip H. Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, vol. 3 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 423. Hereafter cited as *Dictionary*.

5. *The London Stage, 1660–1800. Part 5: 1776–1800*, ed. Charles Beecher Hogan (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. clxxii.

6. Bagster-Collins found thirteen songs in his (unidentified) edition, p. 329, n. 21. Tinkering with stage texts is endemic.

7. Laurence M. Price, *Inkle and Yarico Album* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1937). Bagster-Collins (pp. 329–30, n. 26) reprints an unsubstantiated charge of plagiarism against Colman from the *Oracle and Public Advertiser* (14 September 1797). The paper claimed that the actress Mrs. Powell had a "Play, called *Incle and Yarico*" in her possession, "the plan of which, several of the Speeches, and the Duet" prove Colman to be "a most audacious Plagiarist." A comic opera with the same spelling of "Incle" was written by Bickerstaff and Dibdin for Covent Garden in 1767; it has not turned up. See my *The Dramatic Cobbler* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971), pp. 123–24.

8. Since Colman used the same axiom in *The Female Dramatist*, possibly he was still exorcising autobiographical material. More apparent is the satiric treatment accorded Inkle's merchant father, an approach that changes to sympathy and admiration in Colman's later plays.

9. *Dictionary*, p. 424.

10. Cited by Hogan, *London Stage*, II, 1172.

11. Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama, 1660–1900*, vol. 3, *Late Eighteenth Century Drama, 1750–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), 247.

12. David Hume, *The History of England*, vol. II (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1866), 413.

13. Fiske, p. 559.

14. Jean Froissart, *The Chronicles of Jean Froissart*, trans. Lord Berner, selected, ed., and introd. Gillian and William Anderson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1963), p. 109. Colman could have read Froissart in French; Berner's translation (1523–1525) has been modernized by the Andersons, and I use it for convenience, having compared it with the old spelling.

15. William Hazlitt, *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. A. R. Waller and Arnold Glover, vol. 8 (London: J. M. Dent & Co., 1903), 331–32.

16. Hazlitt's sensitivity would be severely tested by Georg Kaiser's *Die Buerger von Calais* (1914), in which Eustache de St. Pierre kills himself to set an example of self-sacrifice. Kaiser also used Froissart, but obviously changed the story.

17. The admirability of such a character as the hero Ribemont led one critic to call him "unhistorical." See Peter Thomson's excellent "The Early Career of George Colman the Younger," in *Nineteenth Century British Theatre*, ed. Kenneth Richards and Peter Thomson (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971), p. 76. If anything, Froissart's Ribemont is even more chivalric than Colman's and is later freed by King Edward and given a string of pearls.

18. *The British Theatre; or, A Collection of Plays*, with biographical and critical remarks by Elizabeth Inchbald, 25 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1808 *et seq.*), xx, 5.

19. John Doran, *"Their Majesties Servants." Annals of the English Stage, from Thomas Betterton to Edmond Kean*, vol. 2 (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1865), 204.

20. *Dictionary*, p. 424.

21. Bickerstaff and Colman both spelled Zorayda the same way, as opposed to Cervantes's "Zoraida," but Colman acknowledged only Cervantes as a source: *Records*, II, 182.

22. So described in Inchbald's edition, III. iv. 65.

23. Doran, II, 413.

24. Sir Walter Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works*, vol. xx (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1835), 215.

25. Samuel Rogers, *Reminiscences and Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, ed. G. H. Powell (London: R. Brimley Johnson, 1903), p. 193.

26. Conveniently found in *Broad Grins, My Nightgown & Slippers and other Humorous Works of George Colman the Younger* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1898), p. 35. The "Memoir of George Colman" is by George B. Buckstone.

27. From Colman's preface to *My Night-gown and Slippers; or Tales in Verse* (London: T. Cadell, Jr., and W. Davies, 1797). On the Larpent copy of the printed text someone has added "An Interlude called . . . Theatre Royal Drury Lane April 20th 1797."

28. *Dictionary*, p. 425.

29. Colman's account of why he added verses is in his "Advertisement" to *Broad Grins*, reprinted in 1898, p. 66. See note 36.

30. Buckstone, p. 57.

31. Ashley H. Thorndike, *English Comedy* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1929), p. 481.

32. This harshness may stem from Colman's feelings about his tutor in Scotland, the actor John Lee. In his *Records* (II, 116–31) Colman wrote that Lee was executed for forgery: "Such was the disgraceful death of a man gifted by nature, polish'd by execution, accomplish'd in vice;—and whose name may serve with those of some other Heroes, both in and *out* of the Newgate Calendar, 'To point a moral, or adorn a tale' " (p. 130). Colman continued, "I *now* contemplate his memory as undeserving of pity" (p. 131). From the same era of his life Colman drew upon his memory of William Jewell for Dowlas: "I am much indebted to him for furnishing me (though unconsciously) with various expressions, which I have put into the mouth of Daniel Dowlas. . ." (p. 73).

33. To betray my lack of education, I found this comparison in various Bartletts and other books of quotations.

34. Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences*, ed. Roger Fiske (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 246.

35. Kelly, p. 178.

36. When Colman wanted a new edition of *My Night-gown and Slippers*, his two publishers protested, "(and they asserted it both together with great emphasis), 'you have but three tales.' I told

them carelessly it was enough for the greatest *bashaw* among modern poets, and wished them good morning" (Buckstone, p. 66). Even Colman was abashed, "I began to think my pun was a vile one. . ." (p. 66).

37. Charles Perrault, *Histoires ou contes du temps passé avec des moralités*, 1697.

38. Colman's cavalier view of his "obligations to the Parisian Stage" is in his *Records*, II, 182: "there is much adulteration in those few light Dramas which I have imported from abroad; and my versions of them may be call'd (as Sneer says in The Critick) 'not *translations*, but only *taken from the French*.' "

39. Maria Gibbs, who played the original Grace Gaylove, was Colman's second wife, either legally or in fact. No record of marriage seems to exist, but Bagster-Collins quotes 1809 as a wedding date (p. 215). Gibbs was also the first to play Molly Beezom in *New Hay*, Blanch in *The Iron Chest*, Cecily in *The Heir at Law*, Emily in *The Poor Gentleman*, and Mary in *John Bull*. She joined the Haymarket company in 1793. Colman's first marriage was to Catharine Morris, who played Harriet Metaphor in his *Female Dramatist*. They separated in 1801 or earlier.

40. Nicoll: "Dennis Brulgruddery is all that saves" *John Bull* "from sheer inanity. . ." (IV, 184). *Dictionary*, p. 425: "his immortal *John Bull*."

41. Bagster-Collins, p. 150.

42. Lord Fitz-Balaam is "ruined," but no one much cares.

43. In her "Remarks," vol. 21.

44. John Arbuthnot, *The History of John Bull*, ed. Alan W. Bower and Robert A. Erickson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 9.

45. Bagster-Collins, p. 326. *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 154, blesses Colman's sneeze.


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