

MELODRAMA IN THE UNITED STATES

DURING THE LAST HALF OF

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A THESIS

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CHAPTER

INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the subject

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General history of the subject

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INTRODUCTION

Melodrama is to tragedy what farce is to comedy. As distinguished from tragedy, "It is that form of drama in which the story is of more importance than the personages who are in it."¹ In other words, the plot is emphasized at the expense of characterization; and that plot is usually meager, being rather a series of situations. The purpose of melodrama is to stir the emotions--love of good as personified by the hero and heroine, hatred of evil in the form of the villain, and fear for the safety of the good ones, although the outcome is sure to be favorable for them. Its appeal is to the elemental passions; and its key-note is humanity. Its effect is chiefly dependent upon an external rather than an internal conflict of good and evil forces, with right triumphant and wrong punished, fate and coincidence being used freely. Melodrama is a flexible form of art, one of its chief characteristics being freedom from restraint; yet in its numerous manifestations there are constantly recurring character-types: "a villain, an unhappy virtuous woman, a good man who becomes her protector, and the comic character, who helps the good man rescue the heroine."² These main characters must be labeled at their first entrances. Nothing must be left to inference. Appropriate music frequently accompanies the speech and

¹ Barrett H. Clark, The British and American Drama of To-day (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1915), p. 36.

² Arthur Hobson Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1923), pp. 102-103.

action--"harsh for the villain, soft and sweet for the lovers."³ The conversation is over-sentimental, and the actions are over-dramatic. A character is often directed to "stagger," to "control his emotion with difficulty," or to "speak with pathos." The story is usually a highly improbable and sentimental one, the complications of which are solved by various "God from the machine" devices. A great many asides and soliloquies are used. In general, melodrama, like tragedy, deals with the more serious phases of life, but it usually ends happily.

Such a bastard form of art has melodrama been regarded by the majority of people that its romantic origin has almost been lost sight of. It is not the melodrama itself but rather the exaggerated and illogical form in which it is so often expressed which is to be condemned. Montrose J. Moses tells us, "Ottavio Rinuccini, toward the end of the sixteenth century invented the term melodrama, from the Greek words meaning melody and action, and . . . in its application it related entirely to opera."⁴ The French melodrame developed, during the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, from a combination of spoken words and music. In its inception it was an attempt to bring the drama closer to the people. As is usually the case with dramatic forms, the type existed long before the name applied to it. Melodramas, whatever they were called, were presented on the British stage long before 1802, when Holcroft's Tale of Mystery ap-

³ Garrett H. Leverton, The Production of Later Nineteenth Century American Drama (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1936), p. 106.

⁴ Montrose J. Moses, The American Dramatist (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1911), p. 186.

peared; and on the American stage they were often not clearly distinguished from the domestic drama or the Gothic romance. The French ultimately evolved for melodrama certain laws which came to be used in classifying plays of this type.⁵ Up to the time of Dion Boucicault, in the early 1850's, melodrama in this country was almost conventional in its adaptation and imitation of foreign, especially French, literature. The melodramas of this early period were written less in the tone of the drama than in that of the opera libretto, in which the characters sing loudest and longest in the most dramatic situations, their actions being broad and lacking in subtlety.

To within recent years, the history of melodrama in the United States resembles closely that of melodrama in England; and the two evolved largely from French sources. The ingredients have always been the same, but the objective point of view has altered many times with changed conditions.⁶ In the early nineteenth century, the spirit of national self-confidence and democratic aspiration had found utterance in a great outpouring of literature. This period saw the revolt against the influx of foreign literature and the popularity of the works of Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell, Hawthorne, Poe, and Irving. Interest in American literature was gradually increasing, but no one took any particular interest in the development of truly native drama. Actors and managers preferred to stage dramas whose success was assured. They had little faith in native

⁵ Quinn, op. cit., pp. 102-3.

⁶ Moses, op. cit., pp. 188-89.

dramatists or in native subjects. American drama was awaiting a champion. In the middle of the century there came to this country an Irish dramatist-- Dion Boucicault--who exercised a powerful influence in its favor. With him real American drama, of American settings, characters, and situations, came into favor.

Melodrama was the most popular form of play in the last half of the nineteenth century. The adaptation of foreign material and the use of foreign characters, settings, and situations by no means ceased during this period, but descended to a place of less importance. It is neither with these plays nor with the melodramatic adaptations of novels (except in such cases as Uncle Tom's Cabin, which are too important to be overlooked) that this study is concerned. The melodramas treated are those which proved most popular as judged by the lengths of their runs, and which critics since have considered important. Because of the limited availability of plays of this period, not all such important ones can be discussed thoroughly.

Melodrama has been extremely popular with the American people, not only in the last half of the nineteenth century, but also in the twentieth century. Uncle Tom's Cabin ran from its beginning in 1852 well into the twentieth century. New York, in 1929, witnessed a successful revival of the old-fashioned melodrama.

The romantic rapture, the mysterious glamor of the days when you sat in the gallery and hissed the villains of an old-fashioned melodrama--these are the things recaptured by sophisticated audiences at the Rialto and Lyric Theaters in Hoboken. . . ."The Hoboken Experiment" was inaugurated a few months ago by Christopher Morley,

. . . Clean Throckmorton, Harry Wagstaff Gribble, and Conrad Milliken. With the production of "After Dark, or Neither Maid, Wife, nor Widow," an old melodrama of the 'sixties,' . . . audiences began to rediscover the fun of hissing the villain and vociferously shouting approval at vice punished and virtue rewarded.⁷

O. O. McIntyre's feature column in the Kansas City Times for March 17, 1937, carried the headline, "Tear Jerkers Are Back. Manhattan Playgoers Eating Up Sentimental Stuff. Sweet-Scented Homey Dramas Offer Relief from Sophisticated Stage Fare." The article began, "They are getting some of the good old tear jerking stuff back in the theater as a relief from the highly scented smut that has been passed for sophistication for several years. And even the hardened playgoers are eating it up and asking for more."

Numerous good historical studies of the drama in the United States have been made. In the process of compiling material for this dissertation, none was found dealing specifically with melodrama.

The fifty-year period in the history of melodrama in the United States which is treated herein will be divided into decades, as the usual cycle of social and economic change which results also, with rare exceptions, in marked dramatic trends is usually of that duration. In so far as is possible the plays within each period will be arranged chronologically, except when it has seemed more logical to arrange them according to theme. Each melodrama will be discussed with respect to the characteristics discussed above, with special attention to theme, conflict, leading characters, and

⁷ "Hissing the Villains in Hoboken," Unsigned article in Literary Digest, 101:24, April 6, 1929.

characteristic situations, any changes during each period being noted and, if possible, accounted for. The apparent tendencies at the close of the nineteenth century, with a discussion of a few outstanding twentieth century melodramas will also be included.

In this period, the story... discussed all other... of the... theater... problem... first... Dr. ... passed... appeared... these... first... appeared... these... appeared... these...

CHAPTER I

1850-1859

In this period, the question of slavery and its abolition overshadowed all other interests. According to Quinn, the insistent appeal of the writings of Whittier, Lowell, Emerson, Garrison, and Harriet Beecher Stowe was of much more final significance in the solving of this problem than were all the petitions to Congress and the practical politics that were the weapons of the abolitionists. Of all these writers, Mrs. Stowe made the greatest appeal.¹ Her novel Uncle Tom's Cabin appeared November 20, 1852. Since she could not protect her dramatic rights, numerous stage versions were produced, each of which followed the original story in its essential details.* In August, Charles W. Taylor put on the first at Purdy's National Theater in New York, but it ran only eleven nights.² George L. Aiken's version was first acted at the Museum in Troy, New York, in September, 1852, and after long runs there and elsewhere was performed over two hundred times in New York City from July 18, 1853, to April 19, 1854.³ During part of that time it was given twelve times weekly,

¹ Quinn, op. cit., p. 287.

² Ibid., p. 288.

³ Quinn, "The Early Drama," Cambridge History of American Literature, Vol. I (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1917), p. 227.

* In some minor details changes were made: e.g., in Aiken's version, human blood-hounds were used instead of dogs.

and finally eighteen. Another adaptation by H. J. Conway appeared in Boston on November 15, 1852. Mark Lemon and Tom Taylor put on a version called Slave Life at the Adelphi Theater in London in November, 1852. Two versions were acted in Paris.⁴

No statistician has estimated the number of times Uncle Tom's Cabin has been played in America. Probably no other play in the world has had so many productions. "Right after the Civil War, and into the 70's, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' was a headliner of American drama. In the 80's it became the reliable stand-by of 'rep' barnstormers. It was still going strong in the sticks in the 90's, and the Western tent shows had it until close to 1910 and perhaps later than that."⁵ Quinn says that the play is hopeless from the standpoint of dramatic criticism, but in the catalogue of social forces it remains probably the most potent weapon developed by the literary crusade against slavery.⁶

Aiken's version of Uncle Tom's Cabin, subtitled Life Among the Lowly: A Domestic Drama in Six Acts, is melodramatic to the extreme. The story is quite well represented in the play, but largely just as a series of episodes. Music adapted to the mood accompanies the important actions. Tableaux are numerous, sometimes occupying a whole scene without a word being spoken, to emphasize some dramatic quality. On page five⁷ is found a typically melodramatic stage direction, "Choked with emotion"; on page

⁴ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War, op. cit., p. 288.

⁵ J. Frank Davis, "Tom Shows," Scribner's, 77 (April, 1925), 350.

⁶ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War, op. cit., p. 289.

⁷ G. L. Aiken, Uncle Tom's Cabin (New York: Samuel French, n. d.).

twenty⁸ is another, "Starting back and thrusting his hands into his breast."

Early in the play George Harris is the hero and his wife Eliza the heroine. Entirely good and heroic, both are suffering under the injustices of slavery and are escaping--George first, then Eliza with their small son.

Act I, Scene V.--Snow Landscape.--Music.

Enter Eliza, with Harry, hurriedly, L. 1 E.

Eliza. They press upon my footsteps--the river is my only hope. Heaven grant me strength to reach it, ere they overtake me! Courage, my child!--we will be free--or perish!

(Rushes off, R. H.--Music continued)

Enter Loker, Haley, and Marks, L. 1 E.

Hal. We'll catch her yet; the river will stop her!

Marks. No, it won't, for look! she has jumped upon the ice! She's a brave gal, anyhow!

Loker. She'll be drowned!

Hal. Curse that young 'un! I shall lose him after all.

Loker. Come on, Marks, to the ferry!

Hal. Aye, to the ferry!--a hundred dollars for a boat!

Music.--They rush off, R. H.

Scene VI.--The entire depth of stage, representing the Ohio River filled with floating ice. Set on bank on R. H. and in front. Eliza appears, with Harry, R. H., on a cake of ice, and floats slowly across to L. H.--Haley, Loker, and Marks on bank, R. H., observing--Phineas on opposite side.⁹

Haley, who has bought Tom and little Harry, is the villain of the first part of the play; and Phineas Fletcher, turned Quaker for love of a woman, is the comic character who aids Eliza and George in their escape.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

With Act III Uncle Tom, the ever dutiful and righteous old slave, becomes the hero, with little Eva St. Clare, the angelic white child whose untimely and pathetic death called forth floods of tears, as the heroine.

The death of little Eva occurs in Act III, Scene IV.

Eva. (Feebly smiling.) Oh! love! joy! peace! (Dies.
Tom. Oh! Bless the Lord! it's over, dear mas'r, it's over.

St. Clare. (Sinking on his knees.) Farewell, beloved child! The bright eternal doors have closed after thee. We shall see thy sweet face no more. Oh! woe for them who watched thy entrance into heaven when they shall wake and find only the cold, gray sky of daily life and thou gone forever. (Solemn music, slow curtain.¹⁰)

The final scene, Act VI, Scene VII, is a tableau, a sort of epilogue to the play.

Scene VII.--Gorgeous clouds, tinted with sunlight. Eva, robed in white, is discovered on the back of a milk-white dove, with expanded wings, as if soaring upward. Her hands are extended in benediction over St. Clare and Uncle Tom, who are kneeling and gazing up at her. Impressive music.--Slow curtain.¹¹

One of the best known of all villains on the American stage is Simon Legree, the Yankee slave owner, in the last part of the play. There is no redeeming feature in the man's make-up. Forever with the whip in his hand, he starts his persecution of Uncle Tom when the old Negro refuses to whip Emmeline.

Oh! You want to be killed, do you? Now come here, you Tom, you see I told you I didn't buy you jest for common work; I mean to promote you and make a driver of you, and to-night

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 60.

you may jest as well begin to get your hand in. Now jest ye take this yer girl and flog her; ye've seen enough on 't to know how.¹²

This begins the conflict, which terminates in Legree's whipping the old Negro to death.

Hark ye, Tom! Ye think, 'cause I have let you off before I don't mean what I say; but this time I've made up my mind, and counted the cost. You've always stood it agin me; now, I'll conquer ye or kill ye! one, or t'other. I'll count every drop of blood there is in ye, and take 'em, one by one, 'til ye give up!¹³

A soliloquy, typical of the melodrama, is found in Act V.

Scene III.-- A Rude Chamber.

Tom is discovered, in old clothes, seated on a stool, e.-- he holds in his hand a paper containing a curl of Eva's hair. The scene opens to the symphony of "Old Folks at Home."

Tom. I have come to de dark places; I's going through de vale of shadows. My heart sinks at times and feels just like a big lump of lead. Den it gits up in my throat and chokes me till de tears roll out of my eyes; den I take out dis curl of little Miss Eva's hair, and the sight of it brings calm to my mind and I feel strong again. (Kisses the curl and puts it in his breast--takes out a silver dollar, which is suspended around his neck by a string.) Dere's de bright silver dollar dat Mas'r George Shelby gave me de day I was sold away from Kentucky, and I've kept it ever since. Mas'r George must have grown to be a man by this time. I wonder if I shall ever see him again.

SONG--"Old Folks at Home."¹⁴

Another melodramatic characteristic of Uncle Tom's Cabin is that the villain, Legree, is brought to justice at the end of the play. Early in the play, Mr. St. Clare was killed by Legree while the former was try-

¹² Leverton, op. cit., pp. 79-80.

¹³ Loc. cit.

¹⁴ Aiken, op. cit., p. 46.

ing to break up a fight between him and Gumption Cute, a comedy character. Cute and Lawyer Marks come to arrest Legree for the crime.

Cute. Now's the time to nab him.

Marks. How are you, Mr. Legree?

Leg. What the devil brought you here?

Marks. This little bit of paper. I arrest you for the murder of Mr. St. Clare. What do you say to that?

Leg. This is my answer! (Makes a blow at Marks, who dodges, and Cute receives the blow--he cries out and runs off L.H. Marks fires at Legree, and follows Cute.) I am hit!--the game's up! (Falls dead. Quimbo and Sambo return and carry him off laughing.)¹⁵

Legree was the embodiment of everything cruel and evil. In his youth he had been cruel to his mother, and had taken to drink, swearing, and bad companions. He was brutal, entirely merciless, lustful, and had a violent temper. So thoroughly bad was he that his death at the close of the play was hailed with glee not only by his slaves, but also by the audience.

Little Eva loved her home and everybody with whom she came in contact, and was in turn loved by everyone who knew her. She was intelligent and very religious. She foretold her own death, and looked forward to it with joy. Her chief concern was that the slaves should be freed.

Uncle Tom was entirely trustworthy and honest, self-sacrificing and kind. He was quite religious and good, preferring to die rather than to do wrong. Modesty and obedience were among his virtues. His cruel death at the hands of Legree was the major catastrophe of the play.

Uncle Tom's Cabin is melodramatic in story, in action, in the dialogue, and in the characterization. It has, however, no conflict between

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

hero and villain for love of the heroine. The conflict lies, rather, in the major social problem of the day--slavery.

A number of the best melodramas of this period dealt with this same problem. In J. T. Trowbridge's Neighbor Jackwood, a dramatization of his novel of that name, appearing first at the Boston Museum, March 16, 1857, the central theme is the pursuit, capture, and rescue of Camille, an octrooon slave from Louisiana, who is protected by a Vermont farmer, Neighbor Jackwood, and is finally purchased, freed, and married by Hector Dunbury. Trowbridge altered the novel somewhat, exaggerating such characters as Enos Crumlett, the Yankee who assists in the slave's escape and yet is willing to betray her hiding place for money. The play is significant for its representation of Northern resentment against the Fugitive Slave Law. Many of the scenes are melodramatic. Neighbor Jackwood ran for three weeks at its first production, and was played for eight weeks on the Boston stage.¹⁶

Best of the plays dealing with slavery was Dion Boucicault's The Octrooon, or Life in Louisiana, first performed at the Winter Garden, New York, December 5, 1859, and continued until January 21, 1860.¹⁷ It was played in many places in the United States for years, and also in London. Boucicault borrowed the outline of his plot from The Quadroon, a novel by Mayne Reid. The skill with which he balanced the abstract belief in the evils of slavery with the concrete sympathy for Southern characters won the sympathy of Northerners and Southerners alike.¹⁸ The Octrooon is free from

¹⁶ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War, op. cit., pp. 289-90.

¹⁷ Quinn, editor, Representative American Plays (New York: The Century Co., 1917), p. 432.

¹⁸ Loc. cit.

propaganda, presenting one of the most tragic situations in human history, in which the taint of blood condemns a woman who is loved by one man to be sold as the property of another whom she hates.

George Peyton is the young Southern heir to a plantation, which is about to be sold for debt. The Northern contrast is provided by the two New England overseers, Salem Scudder, who has encumbered the estate by his visionary projects, and Jacob McClosky, who has deliberately plotted to obtain possession of it by dishonest means. George loves Zoe, the natural daughter of his uncle, the former owner. Boucicault's sense of the dramatic is indicated in the very . . . title The Octoroon, for the less negro blood which runs in the veins of the slave, the more tragic is her situation. . . Dora Sunnyside, a neighbor's daughter, also loves George. . . McClosky is anxious to intercept the mail which will convey to Mrs. Peyton and her nephew some financial aid. He kills a negro who is carrying the mail and is caught in the act by a self-acting camera. . . . Zoe's refusal to allow George to marry her, even though she loves him, Dora Sunnyside's attempt to buy Zoe at the auction, though she knows it means the end of her own hopes, Salem Scudder's condemnation of himself, are long to be remembered. The slave auction and the burning of the steamer Magnolia, on which McClosky has been imprisoned, may have appealed to the theatrical instinct of the audience, but the sympathy for human suffering carried the play even more surely into popular favor. . . The dialogue and characters of the play made one feel for the South, but the action proclaimed against slavery and called loudly for its abolition.¹⁹

George Peyton, the hero, is fascinating because he is young, attractive, and just back from Paris. He is kind to his old aunt, and considerate of the slaves. Although he loves Zoe passionately, he is willing to give up that love and his own happiness to marry Dora, whose money will save the estate and the happiness of many. He refuses to lie to her, however, ad-

¹⁹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War, op. cit., pp. 372-75.

mitting that since his return he has had a serious love affair, from which he has not recovered. His goodness and unselfishness inspire the love of all his associates.

Scudder says of Zoe, the heroine,

Guess you didn't leave anything female in Europe that can lift an eyelash beside that gal. When she goes along, she just leaves a streak of love behind her. It's a good drink to see her come into the cotton fields--the niggers get fresh on the sight of her. If she ain't worth her weight in sunshine you may take one of my fingers off, and choose which you like.²⁰

Zoe reveals her own character a little later in the play when she has discovered the illegality of the papers granting her freedom, by saying,

I had rather be a slave with a free soul, than remain free with a slavish, deceitful heart. My father gave me freedom--at least he thought so. May heaven bless him for the thought, bless him for the happiness he spread around my life. You say the proceeds of the sale will not cover his debts. Let me be sold, then, that I may free his name. I give him back the liberty he bestowed upon me; for I can never repay him the love he bore his poor Octoroon child, on whose breast his last sigh was drawn, into whose eyes he looked with the last gaze of affection.²¹

Although she loves the Peytons and is willing to be sold for them, she refuses to sacrifice her honor and virtue to become the mistress of McClosky, in order to save them from financial ruin. She sacrifices her love for George to persuade him to marry Dora, who loves him and whose money can save the estate. In the end, because she overhears George say he would rather see her dead than the property of McClosky, who has bought her, she

²⁰ Dion Boucicault, The Octoroon, from Quinn, Representative American Plays, op. cit., p. 436.

²¹ Ibid., p. 448.

poisons herself, just before the news arrives that the estate is saved, thus making the play a tragedy.

Jacob McClosky is almost as villainous as is Simon Legree. He has deliberately and dishonestly obtained possession of a large share of the estate before the play opens. He tries to persuade Zoe to become his mistress, promising to save their estate for the Peytons if she will. Soliloquizing early in the play, he reveals much of his character:

Curse their old families. They cut me up--a bilious, conceited, thin lot of dried up aristocracy. I hate 'em. Just because my grand-father wasn't some broken-down Virginia transplant, or a stingy old Creole, I ain't fit to sit down to the same meat with them. It makes my blood so hot I feel my heart hiss. I'll sweep these Peytons from this section of the country. Their presence keeps alive the reproach against me that I ruined them. Yet, if this money should come! Bah! There's no chance of it. Then, if they go, they'll take Zoe--she'll follow them. Darn that girl; she makes me quiver when I think of her; she's took me for all I'm worth.²²

When alone on the stage again, he says,

Fair or foul, I'll have her--take that home with you! (He opens desk.) What's here--judgments? yes, plenty of 'em; bill of costs; account with Citizens' Bank--what's this? "Judgment, \$40,000, 'Thibodeaux against Peyton,'"--surely, that is the judgment under which this estate is now advertised for sale--(He takes up paper and examines it) yes, "Thibodeaux against Peyton, 1838." Hold on! whew! this is worth taking to--in this desk the judge used to keep one paper I want--this should be it. (Reads.) "The free papers of my daughter Zoe, registered February 4th, 1841." Why, judge, wasn't you lawyer enough to know that while a judgment stood against you it was a lien on your slaves? Zoe is your child by a quadroon slave, and you didn't free her; blood! if this is so, she's mine! this old Liverpool debt--that may cross me--if it only arrives too late--if it don't come by this mail--Hold on! this letter the old lady expects--that's it; let me only head off that

22 Ibid., p. 439.

letter, and Terrebonne will be sold before they can recover it. That boy and the Indian have gone down to the landing for the post-bags; they'll idle on the way as usual; my mare will take me across the swamp, and before they can reach the shed, I'll have purified them bags--ne'er a letter shall show this mail. Ha, ha! -- (Calls.) Pete, you old turkey-buzzard, saddle my mare. Then, if I sink every dollar I'm worth in her purchase, I'll own that Octoroon.²³

In another soliloquy he further reveals the extent of his villainy. He slips up on the Negro, who is sitting in front of Scudder's self-acting camera, the Indian being off-stage:

Yonder is the boy--now is my time! What's he doing; is he asleep? (Advancing.) He is sitting on my prize! darn his carcass! I'll clear him off there--he'll never know what stunned him.

(He takes Indian's tomahawk and steals to Paul.... strikes him on the head--he falls down dead.)

Hoowaw; the bags are mine--now for it!--(Opening the mail-bags.) What's here? Sunnyside, Pointdexter, Jackson, Payton; here it is--the Liverpool postmark, sure enough!--(Opening letter--reads.) "Madam, we are instructed... so that you may command immediate use of the whole amount at once, if required. Yours, etc., James Brown." What a find! This infernal letter would have saved all....But now I guess it will arrive too late--these darned U. S. mails are to blame. The Injun! he must not see me. (Exit rapidly.)²⁴

The Indian, who is for some time accused of Paul's murder, finally becomes the means of bringing the villain to justice. Because of his love for the Negro, he pursues McGlosky in his escape, overtakes him, and, the audience is led to believe, kills him in a fight.

The characterization of The Octoroon follows closely the melodramatic form, with its typical hero, heroine, and villain. The story itself is melodramatic, and so, often, is the conversation and action, as in the

²³ Ibid., p. 441.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 444-45.

following typical scene:

Zoe. George, leave me! I would be alone a little while.
George. Zoe!

(Turning away overpowered.)

Zoe. Do not weep, George. Dear George, you now see what a miserable thing I am.

George. Zoe! ...

Zoe. Go now, George--leave me--take her with you. (Exit Mrs. Peyton and George.) A slave! a slave! Is this a dream--for my brain reels with the blow? He said so. What! Then I shall be sold!--sold! and my master--O! (She falls on her knees, with her face in her hands.) No--no master but one. George--George--hush--they come! save me!²⁵

Another major social problem which was beginning to give concern to the public in this period was the drink evil. One of the most influential expressions of the revolt against hard drinking was expressed in William W. Pratt's dramatization of T. S. Arthur's novel, Ten Nights in a Bar Room, a melodrama which is produced occasionally even to-day, having appeared only a few years ago in movie form. It tells the life story of a saloon keeper and one of his first patrons. Morgan's little daughter Mary is killed by a glass thrown from the saloon where she comes to find her father. He reforms and becomes an influential citizen. The saloon keeper, Slade, becomes more and more disreputable until finally he is killed in a fight with his equally degraded son. Romaine, an observer, moralizes on the evils of liquor. Although the play is obviously propaganda, there is yet something curiously fascinating about it, and its influence felt wherever it was played, even in its revival at Wallack's Theater, New York, in 1928, seventy years after it first saw the gas-lights.

Music is used extensively in this play, often in the form of ballads sung by the characters. When Morgan is beginning the descent to his dread-

²⁵ Ibid., p. 448.

ful ruin, his little daughter, finding him in the saloon, sings, "Father, dear father, come home with me now."²⁶ Swichel, after he has "sworn off" drinking, sings to the tune of "Yankee Doodle" a farewell to drinking.²⁷

Morgan having become the slave of drink, little Mary comes to the "Sickle and Sheaf" for him one night. Slade, the bar-keeper, has ordered the drunkard from the inn. Morgan refuses to go.

(Slade throws glass--it passes Morgan out R.--glass crashes off R.--Mary screams--runs in R., forehead bloody--falls C.)

Mary. Father! dear Father! They have killed me! ...

Morgan. ...Villain, your career of landlord shall be short; for here I swear, by the side of my murdered child, you shall die the death of a dog!

(Soft music. Morgan seizes Slade--they struggle; at last Morgan throws him into L. H. corner--rushes to get stool, and raises it to strike Slade--is held back by Willie and Green. Tableau.)²⁸

While Mary is suffering from her injured head, the drunkard falls victim to delirium tremens. His affliction affords another occasion for the use of music and tableau. As he falls, center, "Mrs. Morgan kneels over him. Mary sits in bed, with her hands raised in prayer. Soft music. Tableau."²⁹ When, after several days, he has recovered, little Mary tells of dreaming that her father had reformed.

Mor. That dream, my dear child, shall become a reality; for here I promise that, God helping me, I will never go out at night again for a bad purpose!

Mrs. M. Do you indeed promise that, Joe?

Mor. Yes, and more.

Mary. What?

Mor. I'll never go into a bar-room again!

²⁶William H. Pratt, Ten Nights in a Bar-Room (New York: Samuel French, n.d.), p. 13.

²⁷Ibid., p. 40.

²⁸Ibid., p. 22.

²⁹Ibid., p. 27.

Mary. Never?

Mrs. M. Do you indeed promise that?

Mor. Yes; and what is still more, I will never drink another drop of liquor as long as I live.

Mrs. M. Oh, husband, this is indeed happiness! (Kneels by Mary's side.) Look! look at our dear child! Her eyes are fixed--she is dying!

Mary. Yes, mother; your Mary has lived long enough--the angels have heard Mary's prayer! Father won't want any one to follow him, for he will be good, and sometime we shall all be together. Don't you remember the little hymn you taught me? It all comes to my mind now, although I had not thought of it before for a long time. Everything looks so beautiful around me; I don't feel any pain now. Good-bye, father; I sha'n't have to ask you to be good to mother now. (Kisses him.) Good-bye, mother. (Kisses her.)

"We shall meet in the land where spring is eternal,

Where darkness ne'er cometh--no sorrow nor pain;

Where the flowers never fade--in that clime ever vernal

We shall meet, and our parting be never again."

(Mary dies; Morgan falls on the couch. Mrs. M. sobs over the body. Slow music. Tableau.)³⁰

No more melodramatic scene is found in the play than that in which the villain Slade is killed by his own son.

(Slade seizes him--Frank throws him into L. C.--Slade starts toward him--Frank throws him off, and hits him on the head with the bottle--Slade falls L. C.--Frank appalled. Music.)

Rom. Frank Slade, you have killed your own father!³¹

Ten years from the time when Mary sang "Father, dear father, come home with me now," the Morgans are established in a happy home, with Mr. Morgan as a respectable business man, the Demon Rum forever banished from his life.

Ten Nights in a Bar-Room ranks along with Uncle Tom's Cabin as one of the most effective instruments for influencing the human mind produced

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

³¹ Ibid., p. 43.

in the last seventy-five years.

John Brown's raid occurred October 16, 1859. On December 16, Mrs. J. C. Swayze's dramatization of the event, Ossawattonie Brown, was put on at the Bowery Theater. The play is frankly a melodrama, emphasizing the heroic qualities of Brown and showing, one after another, scenes in which his sons are killed, until finally he is made prisoner at Harper's Ferry. The complications of the love story are finally solved by the discovery that the heroine, Alice, is not John Brown's daughter.³²

Deserving of mention because of their popularity are two other melodramas of this period which are beyond the scope of this dissertation because they are not typically American in all respects. Dion Boucicault's The Poor of New York, an adaptation of Les Pauvres de Paris by Brusebarre and Nus, was successfully played in the United States and in England in 1857. Tom Taylor's Our American Cousin, produced in 1858, was playing at the Ford Theater when Abraham Lincoln was shot. It represents an Englishman's idea of the American farmer of the period. The setting is in England, where the Americans are visiting relatives.

Most important, then, in this early period, were the two melodramas of slavery, Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Octoroon, and the one showing the evils of drink, Ten Nights in a Bar Room, all three of which continued to be played successfully for many years. The success of the slavery plays lay in their appeal to both North and South through the presentation of lovable Southern characters at the same time that the action called loudly for aboli-

³² Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War, op. cit., p. 290.

tion. All the melodramas from 1850 to 1859 moralized and satirized the current social practices and problems, reflecting the attitudes and opinions of the audiences which viewed them. Every melodramatic characteristic was represented in each one--a sentimental story treated in a highly unrestrained manner; conversation interspersed with frequent asides, soliloquies, exclamation points, gasps, sighs, and expressions of deep emotion; frequent tableaux; music adapted to the mood often accompanying the action; and conventional characters, including a very bad villain, and a very good hero and heroine who were usually victims of circumstances over which they had no control, and were rescued and made happy by means of some "God from the machine" device. Each character was easily recognized upon his first entrance on the stage. The hero was always thoroughly virtuous, humane, and sentimental, being at times almost too soft and acquiescent when his own happiness was at stake. The heroine was a struggling, sacrificing, oppressed, beautiful, useless, and entirely honorable and virtuous young thing. The villain was a menace to society in general, and especially to the hero and heroine. He always had a long, black, waxed mustache, wore boots, had a large, black hat, and carried a whip. One of the fundamental requirements of the melodrama was that he should never reform, but should get what he deserved, it being decidedly preferable that he die. Another requirement was that all should end well for the hero and heroine. It is the writer's belief that this requirement was met in the case of Uncle Tom and of Zoe, because for them the happy ending was death.

CHAPTER II

1860-1869

Because of the Civil War, the "sixties" were practically barren of plays. Those which appeared were written in haste, and few were even printed at all. Almost all the plays were strongly melodramatic.

The first original drama to be produced in the Southern Confederacy was The Guerillas by James D. McCabe, Jr., performed first at the Richmond Varieties, December 22, 1862, with a successful run of a week. The Southern pride in purity of descent from the older American stock is manifest in the hero, whose grandfather was a veteran of the American Revolution. General Fremont is one of the villains. The destruction of homes and other property by the guerillas who operated in the western part of Virginia during the war forms the motive of the play.¹

The most important play of the period, and probably the only one which has survived, is Augustin Daly's sensational melodrama, Under the Gaslight. Since its first appearance in New York, on August 12, 1867, it has been revived many times, and has proved to be one of the most popular melodramas written in English. It was played in London in 1868 under its own name, and was later adapted as London by Gaslight.²

The first scene is laid in the luxurious parlor of the Courtland

¹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1936), Vol. I, pp. 6-7.

² Ibid., pp. 11-12.

home, where Ray's extreme devotion to Laura is shaken a little when he learns that she is really of low birth. While Ray is still there, the villain, Byke, whom Laura has not seen since childhood, appears, requesting to speak to her. She promised to see him the following morning. She decided that Ray should be told her story.

Laura. (Taking both of Pearl's hands in her own.)

Pearl, he must know everything. . . he must know everything, I tell you; and you must relate all. He will question--he will ponder--leave him nothing to ask.

Pearl. If you wish it, but--

Laura. I desire it; speak of me as you will--but tell him the truth. (Ray enters hastily, L.) Stay with her. Don't follow me. (Exit R.)³

Impulsively, after hearing the story, Ray writes Laura a letter telling her that his position in society will not permit him to marry one who is "the daughter of obscurity and crime."⁴ But before he can leave the room, Laura enters, and he realizes that his love for her is too great for him to give her up. Alone on the stage, he says,

I've been an ass. No, I wrong that noble animal. The ass recognized the angel, and I, like Balaam, was blind. But I see not. After all what have I to fear? (Takes letter from pocket.) No one knows of this. (Puts it in his pocket again.) Let things go on; we'll be married, go straight to Europe, and live there ten years.⁵

The letter, however, falls out of Ray's pocket during a party at Delmonico's. The woman who picks it up, finding it unsealed, reads it. She spreads the news at once, and when Laura enters, she finds that she is

³ Augustin Daly, Under the Gaslight (New York: Samuel French, n.d.), p. 8.

⁴ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵ Ibid., p. 11.

treated as a social outcast.

For several months Ray searches for her, after her disappearance, and finally finds her in the basement where she has been living with Peach-blossom, one of the comedy characters who helps to foil the villains and to unite the hero and heroine. He persuades her to return to Pearl at least for a brief visit, only to have her snatched away by the villains, and the search begins all over again.

Byke. (Throws Peach, over to Judas, L.) Take care of that brat. And as for you, daughter,--come with me.

Laura. Daughter!

Byke. Yes; it is time to declare myself. Paternal feeling has been too long smothered in my breast. Come to my arms, my child, my long-estranged child! (Takes out dirty handkerchief and presses his eyes with pretended feeling.)

Laura. God! Is there no help coming? (She attempts to escape. Byke seizes her.)

Byke. What, unfilial girl! You take advantage of a father's weakness, and try to belt! (Clutching her by the arm.) Come, go with me; and cheer my old age. Ain't I good, to take you back after all these years?

(Picture--Quick Curtain.)⁶

Byke is a villain cast from the traditional mold, stopping at nothing to gain his ends. With his pretense of being Laura's father, he gets the court to place her in his power.

Byke. Where is the judge? O, where is the good, kind judge? ... O, sir, forgive my tears. I am a broken-hearted man! ... Ah, sir, you are very good to a poor distressed father whose existence has been made a desert on account of his child... I want my child.... She is here sir,--here--my darling, my beautiful, and so unfilial--so unnatural....

Laura. It is all a lie! He is not my father.

Byke. Not your father? O, dear, Oh, dear, you will break my heart.... She was taken from me years ago, when she was a little child, by rich people who wanted to adopt her. I refused--they

⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

paid me--I was poor--I was starving--I forbore to claim her-- she was happy, but they turned her forth four months ago into the street. I could not see her suffer--my child--the prop of my declining days. I begged her to come--she refused. My enemies had poisoned my daughter's mind against me, her father. I am still poor. I taught school, but I have saved a little money only for her.... My child, try to remember the words of the good judge, "You must learn to love me as a daughter should."⁷

Old Judas is the female villain who aids Byke. When they discover that someone has taken their boat from the North Pier, it is she who throws Laura, bound, into the river to avoid being captured with her, but "Ray leaps into water after Laura."⁸

For some time Laura lives again with Pearl, unknown to anyone else but Ray. However, when her presence there is in danger of being made known, she runs away. Coming to a little, out-of-the-way station and finding that there is no train until morning, she persuades the signal man to look her for the night in the signal house, where she will be safe from anyone who might be pursuing her.

Snorkey is modeled directly after the comic servant of the French melodrame. He keeps Ray informed as to Laura's plight, and helps him to find her. When Snorkey is following Byke, attempting to foil the villain's plans to rob the Courtland house, he is captured and bound to the railroad track just outside the station where Laura is locked.

Byke. (Fastening him to rails.) I'm going to put you to bed. You won't toss much. In less than ten minutes you'll be sound asleep. There, how do you like it? You'll get down to the Branch before me, will you? You dog me and play the eavesdropper, eh! Now do it if you can. When you hear the thunder under your head

⁷ Ibid., pp. 24-27.

⁸ Ibid., p. 52.

and see the lights dancing in your eyes, and feel the iron wheels a foot from your neck, remember Byke. (Exit L. H. E.)

Laura. O, Heavens! he will be murdered before my eyes! How can I aid him?

Snorkey. Who's that?

Laura. It is I. Do you not know my voice?

Snorkey. That I do; but I almost thought I was dead and it was an angel's. Where are you?

Laura. In the station.

Snorkey.Listen to me, Miss, for I've only a few minutes to live.

Laura. (Shaking door.) God help me, and I cannot aid you.

Snorkey. ... I'm not afraid... but for the sake of those you love, I would live.... They are on the way to your cottage-- Byke and Judas--to rob and murder.

Laura. (In agony.) O, I must get out! (Shakes window bars.) What shall I do?

Snorkey. Can't you burst the door?

Laura. It is locked fast.

Snorkey. Is there nothing in there?--no hammer--no crowbar!

Laura. Nothing! (Faint steam whistle is heard in the distance.) O, Heavens! The train! (Paralyzed for an instant.) The axe!!!

Snorkey. Out the woodwork! Don't mind the lock--cut around it! How my neck tingles! (A blow at door is heard.) Courage! (Another.) Courage! (The steam whistle heard again--nearer, and rumble of train on track. Another blow.) That's a true woman! Courage! (Noise of locomotive heard--with whistle. A last blow; the door swings open, mutilated--the lock hanging--and Laura appears, axe in hand.)

Snorkey. Here--quick! (She runs and unfastens him. The locomotive lights glare on scene.) Victory! Saved! Hooray! (Laura leans exhausted against switch.) And these are the women who ain't to have a vote!

(As Laura takes his head from the track, the train of cars rushes past with roar and whistle from L. to R. H.)⁹

In the end, Peachblossom reports that Judas has met her death by falling over a cliff when her horse ran away. Byke, caught in his theft by Snorkey, reveals to the household that Pearl, not Laura, is really the child of low birth, the two having been exchanged in their cradles for the purpose of extortion in later years. Ray and Laura are then united, and

⁹ Ibid., pp. 42-43.

Byke is warned to leave the country, instead of losing his life as did all the villains of the previous decennial period.

Although the heroine, the supposed secret of her birth exposed, has left her home of luxury and the lover for whom she is no longer good enough, has lived in a basement and supported herself and Peachblossom, has been captured by Byke and placed in his custody by the court, has been thrown in the North River, and has battered her way out of the signal house to save Snorkey, she emerges from it all unscathed, to be united finally with her lover. Through all her numerous troubles, she remains ever virtuous, sweet, and brave.

Under the Gaslight is as thoroughly melodramatic as a play can be. The plot may be summed up by saying that two villainous extortionists, who have, years before, exchanged a rich girl and a poor girl in their cradles, now come to collect, nearly ruining the love affair of Ray and Laura. The play is a series of sensational episodes, in which coincidence plays a very large part. The characters are the conventional types of hero, heroine, male and female villain, and male and female comedian, who aid the hero and heroine. The action and the conversation are both highly melodramatic. Tableaux, soliloquies, asides, and music suited to the mood, persist in this play, just as they did in the previous decade.

The success of Under the Gaslight was probably a result, in part, of its absence of reference to the War, except that Snorkey was an ex-soldier, making it relieving entertainment for war-weary minds.

Eliza, in Boucicault's After Dark, produced in 1868, is another heroine who is willing to sacrifice everything for the man she loves. When

her husband's happiness seems to depend on her disappearance, she jumps into the river to drown herself, but is rescued by Old Tom, the conventional comedy character in somewhat modified form. Her speech as she throws herself from the bridge is indicative of her character: "Oh, merciful heavens, forgive me for what I am doing! Farewell, George! farewell, wicked world, it is for his sake! his sake!"¹⁰

The hero is, of course, Eliza's husband. There are really two villains, Chandos Bellingham and his tool, Dicey Morris. They force the hero to their will by means of a forged paper which they hold over him, but their efforts are foiled by Gordon Chumbley. When Chumbley meets the two villains to force them to give up the paper, they drug him and tie him to the tracks in a railroad tunnel, from which he is rescued just in time to avoid his death.*

The Red Scarf, by Augustin Daly, was first played at Conway's Park Theater in Brooklyn, in 1869, and was repeated at the Bowery Theater. It is a story of life on the Arcostock among the New England mills. Gail Barston, the hero, is trapped by his rival. Harvey Thatcher, the owner of the Dark Falls Mills, and is bound to a log that is to be sawed in two. Harvey then sets fire to the mill so that all trace of Gail will be lost and he will be supposed to have deserted May Hamilton, with whom both men are in love. She arrives in time to save the hero, of course.¹¹

In 1866 Daly adapted Charles Reade's powerful study of jealousy into a stirring melodrama which he called Griffith Gaunt.¹² His A Flash

¹⁰ Leverton, op. cit., p. 79.

¹¹ Quin, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

¹² Ibid., p. 10

* This scene was taken directly from Under the Gaslight. In the law suit which followed, it was ruled that the scene was the property of Daly, and could be used only by him.

of Lightning was produced at the Broadway Theater, June 10, 1868, and ran until August 3. The main plot was based on Sardou's La Perle noire.¹⁵

The melodramas of this period differed from those of the 'fifties in that the popular ones seldom dealt with social problems. This scarcity of social themes was probably due to the desire for relaxation from the cares of war. The absence of negro characters is noticeable, and is to be expected as a result of emancipation. No child heroines, such as Little Eva and Mary Morgan, appear. The hero and heroine are still victims of circumstances over which they have no control, with mechanical and illogical devices used to save them. The villains are no longer labeled as "Yankee" slave owners or over-seers, but are as blackly evil as ever, commanding no admiration whatever either from their associates or from the audience. It is worthy of note that in these plays, as in others which were to follow, the villain was often exiled instead of being killed, as was Byke in Under the Gaslight.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 15.

CHAPTER III

1870-1879

Horizon, "an Original Drama of Contemporaneous Society and of American Frontier Perils, in Five Acts and Seven Tableaux, by Augustin Daly, as acted at the Olympic Theater for the first time March 21, 1871,"¹ ran for two months. Its heroine is Med Van Dorp, a girl of doubtful goodness, who tells all her men friends that she loves them. As a small child she had been taken West by her father when he left his rich wife. Since then, Mrs. Van Dorp has adopted a son, Alleyn, but she has never given up hope of finding her daughter. Alleyn, just from West Point, has been dispatched to the Far West, where he meets Med and falls in love with her, not knowing that she is his foster sister. The villain of the play is Wannemucka, a civilized Indian, whose love Med does not return. He initiates an Indian attack on the boat in which she, with a number of other white people, is being transported down the river. This siege is unsuccessful for the Indians, but later they find the women unprotected and capture them. These women are rescued through the cunning of John Leder, the bad man who protects Med after her father is murdered by the Indian. Knowing who she is from a packet of letters found in her father's hut, but not knowing that

¹ Augustin Daly, Horizon (New York: Printed, as Manuscript Only, for the Author, 1885), title page.

young Van Dorp is her foster brother, Loder tells Alleyn Med's secret, but only after the latter has confessed his love for the girl. Wannemucka meets his death at the hands of Loder.

At the beginning of the play Mrs. Van Dorp says of her husband, "Little Margaret loved him! loved him more than me. God forgive us all."² She says, concerning Alleyn's going West, "(Going to Al. and putting her arm about his neck.) My hope and belief are, that Alleyn will never forget he is a Christian, even among the lawless settlers of the West."³

When Wolf, Med's father, Loder, Wannemucka, and a "Heathen Chinese" have been ordered from Regue's Nest as undesirable citizens, the following melodramatic scene takes place:

(Loder enters from the gate, pulling Wolf. His daughter, Meddie, follows, clinging to him in fear. After a while Wannemucka follows them out moodily.)

Loder. (As he enters.) I tell you, governor, it's neck of nothing. The town's up, and we've got to go!

Wolf. (Staring about him.) Go! (Vacantly.) Where?

Med. Oh, anywhere from this dreadful danger. Father, father, do try and think. Rouse yourself! Do try and understand our peril.

Wolf. Ps'hi! My throat's as hot!--Have you got a drop in your flask, Loder?

Lod. Don't think of liquor now, governor. Brace up! Be a man!

Wolf. I'm past it. I'm a gone body, Loder. I feel it here (head) and here (heart). Nothing in me. Let 'em kill, curse 'em. I've travelled thousands of miles, like a madman, for years. Perhaps I'll get a madman's rest now. (Points to ground.) The gravel

Lod. If you can't take care of yourself, think of your daughter! If you stop here, they'll shoot you, maybe. I've tried the obstinate dodge, and nearly squalled for it. If you're dead, what becomes of her?

Wolf. Margaret! Meddie! Dear little Med! You won't leave me?

² Ibid., p. 10.

³ Ibid., p. 14.

Med. Never, father, while I live. You will go with us. It may not be far. We may find another and kinder settlement; if not, we can go to the Fort.

Wolf. I'll not budge a foot. I'm a desperate man, and I'll dare 'em to do their worst.....

Med. Oh, father, don't! Let us fly together! Oh, Heaven, what will become of me?

Lod. (Approaching.) Whatever happens, little girl, no harm shall come to you while I have breath and blood to spend.⁴

Finally deciding to flee after all, Wolf is shot by Wannemucka, who says, "Now Injun have white princess."⁵

Frequent use of music is made in this play. At the beginning of Act Three, "the curtain rises to a chorus of the darkies loading up"⁶ a flatboat on the river. When Rowse enters with the little Indian child hanging onto his coat-tails, the directions are for "Music 'Little Indians.'"⁷ There is "Gentle Music"⁸ when Med and Loder enter after a long tramp to reach the boat. As the boat pushes off, there is a "Song by Boatmen."⁹ Throughout the second and third scenes of the third act there is music, sometimes faint, at other times louder. Near the end of the play,

Onata and the Indian girls break into the following low chant: ... As the chant is dying away, the distant sound of a drum mingles with it, at first unperceived by the Indians. The music dies away, and the drum continues.¹⁰

⁴ Ibid., pp. 28-29.

⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

⁶ Ibid., p. 34.

⁷ Ibid., p. 33.

⁸ Ibid., p. 40.

⁹ Ibid., p. 44.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 64.

The characteristic hero, heroine, and villain are present in this play, a new type of villain being introduced--the Indian. The villain's reward is death, at the hands of the character whose business it is to bring the hero and heroine together. There is much use of exaggerated action and over-sentimental speech. Music and tableaux continue to be used.

Davy Crockett is the work of a nephew of the actor, James E. Murdock, who allowed his name to be added to that of the playwright, so that he became known as Frank Hitchcock Murdock. The first performance of this play took place in Rochester, New York, in September, 1872.

The story is based on the tradition of the old Tennessee trapper and hunter, who died in defence of the Alamo in 1836. The strong, simple trapper, unable to read, but with a keen sense of right, is the hero of the piece. The heroine is Eleanor Vaughn, a young girl whom he had known as a child, but who has been educated abroad. The villain is a neighboring squire, father of Neil, the young man whom Eleanor is to marry, who holds over the head of Eleanor's guardian some notes of dubious quality--a device so familiar in melodrama. Davy overcomes the obstacles which keep him and Eleanor apart by carrying her off on the swiftest horse in the neighborhood.

Particularly melodramatic is the scene at the end of the second act, which takes place in Davy's hut after he has saved Eleanor from freezing:

Eleanor. What is it?

Davy. Keep still and listen. (A howl is again heard.)

Eleanor. I hear a long, low cry as of some animal in distress.

Davy. Ah, you hear it then. I was right, wasn't I? That it is again.

Eleanor. What is it?

Davy. That's wolves.

Eleanor. Wolves--(Screams.)

Davy. Don't be scared--

Eleanor. But--is there no danger?

Davy. Ain't I here?

Eleanor. Yes, but they are so dreadfully near.

Davy. Yes, they tracked you in the snow and smell blood.

Eleanor. Blood!

Davy. Take it easy, girl. This door is built of oak, I built it--and--blazes, the bar's gone.

Eleanor. Gone? (Wolves howl all round cabin.)

Davy. Yes, I split it up to warn you and your friend--Rouse him up. The pesky devils is all around the house.

Eleanor. (Goes to Neil.) Neil--help! help! (The wolves throw themselves against the door and bark.)

Neil. I tell you, uncle, if the girl says no, there's an end of it--

Eleanor. My God--he is delirious--

Davy. What!

Eleanor. 'Tis true--nothing can save us.

Davy. Yes it can.

Eleanor. What?

Davy. The strong arm of a backwoodsman.

(Davy bars the door with his arm. The wolves attack the house. Their heads are seen through the opening in the hut and under the door.)

Curtain. 11

Here, again, plot, conversation, and action are melodramatic, and the characterizations are of the conventional type.

Dion Boucicault is the author of Civil War melodrama, Belle Lamar, produced at Booth's Theater, August 10, 1874. The setting is the Shenandoah Valley during the spring of 1862, and the play opens with the sentinels singing on either bank of the Black Adder River. Belle Lamar is a Southern girl who is divorced from her husband, Colonel Philip Bligh, U. S. A., be-

11
 Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 106-7, citing Davy Crockett.

cause of their sectional sympathies. When the fortunes of war bring them together, they discover that they still love each other. In command of the Union forces, he is ordered to hold a bridge over the river by which Fremont is to join McDowell and Banks to crush Stonewall Jackson. Belle finds out the plan from Marston Pike, a Union officer who loves her, and informs Jackson. She is captured with Pike's pass in her possession, while trying to intercept dispatches to Bligh. At her trial as a spy, Belle, Bligh, Pike, and Stuart, a Confederate officer, all vie with each other in sacrificing themselves for honorable motives. After the court martial refuses to condemn her, Bligh gives her another pass to leave the lines. She places her husband in a difficult position by giving it to Pike and Stuart to save them. Jackson attacks Bligh at White Stone Gap, but Fremont arrives in time to save the day for the North. Belle and Bligh are finally reconciled. Boucicault shows that in a conflict in a woman's heart between love of country and love of man, the latter wins. Man, on the contrary, sacrifices love of woman for love of country.¹²

Philip says,

I have never loved! There is not in the sum of all your sighs enough to fill my bosom with one breath. Women to you are toys, as a child you cry for them: such is the measure of your puny sorrow. Would you know how men do love--can suffer? Listen. Not long ago, I met one to whom all that was good and noble in me went forth at once to know if her virtue could equal her beauty. And as my soul stood beside hers, I thanked God that he has made a woman so perfect and had given her to me; for she loved me and became my wife--not my companion--but my happier, better self, my pride, the casket where I stored my best loved follies, my secret hopes, my jewelled dreams. Brief ecstasy! The war broke out and I was summoned to my duty. She was of Southern family; they had espoused the cause of Secession with vehemence, and their blood ran hot in her veins.

¹² Ibid., pp. 382-83.

Pointing to many officers who deserted their flag, she urged me to follow their example. I refused. She left me; fled to her family in the South, and waited for me to join her there. What I suffered God and I alone know; but He led me to the altar of my country, and, standing beside it, I plucked out my heart, and offered up a human sacrifice. That is why I have none to pity you.¹³

Use is made in Belle Lamar of tableaux and music. The first act opens on the banks of a stream with sentinels on duty in Federal uniforms.

The directions read:

Music. Pause. Distant bugle. Sentinel's song. (Irish) After singing his two verses, his head falls in reverie on his rifle. A pause. From the other side of the river is heard a distant voice replying. It is a sentinel on the Confederate outpost singing to himself.

Then to explain the purpose of the singing, the author adds: "These two songs, sung on opposite sides of the river by the two, should be sung tenderly and not intended as defiances."

The music here is clearly intended to sentimentalize the scene, just as it is at the beginning of the third act with the soldiers gathered around the campfire: "Chorus of soldiers, round the fire singing, 'Tenting on the Old Camp Ground.' Slow curtain after first eight bars. Quartette. Two verses. Second for encore."

At the end of the play, when the Federal troops are making a desperate stand against tremendous odds, the arrival of reinforcements is announced by, "A distant military band is heard--'Johnny Comes Marching Home.'" The last scene of the play is intensified by "Drums, bugle calls, and regimental music."¹⁴

¹³ Levarton, op. cit., pp. 78-79, citing Belle Lamar.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 107-8.

A tableau is called for in the scene of Belle's capture:

Her coat is torn off, her hair dishevelled, her limbs bleeding. She stands at bay, the soldiers guarding her. Honor runs to her and, falling at her feet, clasps her dress. Philip, aghast, stands gazing at her, she at him. Marston has fallen into a chair, with his head buried in his hands. When Belle faces Philip--Tableau and Quick Curtain.¹⁵

Moorecroft, or The Double Wedding, by Bronson Howard, opened at the Fifth Avenue Theater on October 17, 1874, and ran only until November 3. It is a melodramatic treatment of the subject of slavery, based on a story by John Hay.¹⁶

One of the outstanding melodramas of the nineteenth century is East Lynne, an adaptation from the novel of that name by Mrs. Henry Wood, produced in 1874. Although it is an English play, its popularity was so great that a brief outline of its plot is worth considering.

Mr. Carlyle, a lawyer, purchases East Lynne, the former home of Lord Mount Severn, and marries Lady Isabel, only daughter of the late Earl. Miss Cornelia Carlyle, a snappish old maid, from the beginning renders her sister-in-law very miserable by her interferences in domestic matters. Miss Barbara Hare, who was long secretly attached to Mr. Carlyle, gets him to lend some money to her brother, a fugitive from justice. Sir Francis Levison, an unprincipled villain, instills into Lady Isabel's mind the belief that her husband is unfaithful to her, in proof of which he leads her where she may witness the interview between Carlyle and Barbara. Maddened with jealousy, Lady Isabel elopes with Levison. He soon deserts her and her

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 101-2.

¹⁶ Moses, op. cit., p. 84.

child. She is reported as dead, but returns to East Lynne, disguised as a governess. There she witnesses the death of her son William, and she herself dies in the presence of Barbara, now Mrs. Carlyle, and her husband. The story is melodramatically pathetic.¹⁷

Augustin Daly's The Dark City, produced at the Fifth Avenue Theater on September 10, 1877, is a melodrama with conventional situations, centering around the suppression of a will disinheriting an elder daughter in favor of her step sister. A highly melodramatic scene is the one in which the villain cuts the rope by which the hero is descending from the roof of Sybil's lodging house.¹⁸ The play failed, and brought Daly's career at this theater to an end.*

In Bronson Howard's melodrama, Only a Tramp, produced in 1878, the audience is asked to sympathize with a weak but amiable man, Tom Goddfroy, who has squandered his fortune and who cannot support his wife and child, both in danger of starvation because of a strike among the employees of Whitworth Lawrence, president of an iron manufacturing concern. Rhoda Goddfroy divorces Tom, drunken and hopeless, to marry Lawrence. Years later Tom returns, a debonair tramp, still willing to drink, joins apparently in a robbery of the Lawrence home in order to protect his daughter, and kills Lawrence in the struggle which ensues. He is convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged, but is pardoned by the governor. Howard later re-

¹⁷ Mrs. Henry Wood, East Lynne (New York: Fitzgerald Publishing Corporation, n.d.).

¹⁸ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 18.

* With but two exceptions, all the rest of Daly's plays, which he continued to write until the end of the century, were produced in his own theater.

vised this drama, modifying its melodramatic qualities, changing the hero to a German baron, and calling it Baron Rudolph.¹⁹

The Banker's Daughter, by Howard, was first produced in 1873, in Chicago, as Lillian's Last Love. It appeared in the revised form at the Union Square Theater, September 30, 1878.²⁰ At the beginning of the play Lillian Westbrook, daughter of a wealthy New York banker, has just quarreled with her fiancé, Harold Routledge. In obedience to her father's earnest solicitations, she marries John Strebelow, a wealthy man of noble and honorable nature. She respects her husband, idolizes her daughter, and is, in fact, comfortable and happy until she encounters her former lover in Paris. They have a private meeting, and quickly discover that they were deceived by Lillian's father, who wished her to marry Strebelow in order to save his own credit. However, after declaring their unchanged love for each other, they resolve never to meet again.

But they have been overheard by Count Corajac, a rejected suitor of Lillian, who forces Harold into a duel and kills him. Just as the fatal thrust is given, Strebelow and Lillian appear on the scene, and Lillian's grief at Harold's death causes her to betray her feelings for the murdered man. Although she believes fully in her, her husband decides that a separation is necessary, but allows her to take the child with her. After seven years they meet again and a reconciliation is effected through the child.²¹

Herne and Belasco revised the melodrama Camilla's Husband, by

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 49-50.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 43-44.

²¹ Lewis C. Strang, Players and Plays of the Last Quarter Century, Vol. II (Boston: L. C. Page & Company, 1893), pp. 149-50.

Watts Phillips, given in London in 1862, and produced it as Marriage by Moonlight, which opened June 30, 1879. The play retained its English setting and characters, and was not a success.²²

These two playwrights collaborated again to produce the play which was first called Chums, and later Hearts of Oak, patterned somewhat after an English domestic melodrama, The Mariner's Compass. The success of this play, first presented at the Baldwin Theater, San Francisco, September 9, 1879, encouraged its authors to take it East. A few months later it opened at the Grand Opera House, Chicago, and won an immediate success. Later Herne bought out Belasco's interest, and continued to present the play throughout the country for the next seven years.²³

In this play, a friend persuades Terry Dennison that his love for Chrystal, his ward, is returned and that he should ask her to be his wife. She, however, is in love with his foster son, Ned Fairweather, and when Terry speaks of him, "Chrystal smiles, takes a letter from her bosom, shakes it, unseen by Terry, kisses it and replaces it in her bosom."²⁴ A few minutes later, the following conversation ensues:

Terry. ...Just now I wanted to be alone with you, I wanted to talk with you about--about--

Chrystal. (Innocently,) About--what?

Terry. About-- (Goes towards her, hesitates, chews a straw, finally blurts out.) Ned!

²² Ibid., p. 131.

²³ Julie A. Herne, "Biographical Note," in Shore Acres and Other Plays (New York: Samuel French, 1928), pp. xv-xvi.

²⁴ James A. Herne, Hearts of Oak, in Shore Acres and Other Plays, op. cit., p. 264.

Chrystal. (Overjoyed, but without showing it.) Ned? ...
 (Aside.) Dear Ned! (Feels in her bosom as if to assure herself the letter and picture are still there.)

Terry. (Aside.) I must tell her. (Aloud.) Yes, Ned; the day after to-morrow'll be his birthday, and I've been preparing a bit of a surprise for him. I just thought I'd make this his last voyage to sea. I've had a new sign painted for the old mill--it reads "Dennison and Fairweather," and the first sight that catches his eye on reachin' home'll be his name and mine, as business partners. What d'ye think of it?

Chrystal. (Who has been eagerly drinking in every word, which she must be careful not to let him see, turns to him with tears in her eyes.) Oh! Terry, how generous--how like--you--only you--

Terry. But that's not all. . . suppose we were to just stagger him with another surprise--

Chrystal. What other surprise? (She is almost frantic now with eagerness to know, half imagining her hopes and his thoughts are one.)

Terry. Why--a sort of matrimonial birthday--a weddin' atween--

Chrystal. Yes-- (Eagerly.) Yes--between--whom?

Terry. Can't you tell?

Chrystal. (Pretending to be puzzled.) No--no--

Terry. Why, Chrystal--don't you know--haven't ye seen--that--

I--

Chrystal. (Chilled--immovable.) Well!

Terry. I--I--love you. (Music.)

Chrystal. (With a smothered cry.) Love me? (Slight pause, then as if comprehending,) Love me--why of course you do. (Laughs hysterically.)

Terry. Understand me--not as a friend--not as a brother--as a husband--

Chrystal. (With a cry.) Husband! (Turns her face slowly from him without moving her body, speaks dreamily.)

Terry. (Approaches her, takes her hand, turns her towards him.) Answer me--you will be my wife--won't you? Think how happy the news'll make Ned when he returns.

Chrystal. (Aside. Stifling her sobs.) Happy--Ned happy--ah!

Terry. Still silent! (He releases her hand and turns up stage; at the same moment Chrystal with a suppressed cry, turns as if to call him back; simultaneously he turns and comes to her. As he speaks, he nervously crushes his hat between his hands.) Forgive me, Chrystal--I'm only a rough, grizzly beary sort of fellow at best--I don't know how to talk to a girl like you, don't know how to tell her what I think or feel, yet I must say suthin'--...if you touch me, big and strong as I am, I tremble all over...--if you speak to me, I tingle with pleasure. I'm only happy when I'm near you...--I have loved you ever since you were a little child... when I used to carry you in my arms along the beach, your little

sunburned face pressed close to mine, and your arms clasped fast about my neck. But for the last five years you've been pretty much all my life. Oh, Chrystal, if I could only make you understand--(She starts and gives a low cry.) There now I've frightened you--I was wrong to ask you to speak--don't speak, don't answer, only hold out your hand, as a token. (Chrystal is half turned from him, kissing Ned's picture and sobbing over it; she slowly extends her hand to Terry without looking at him; he seizes it and covers it with kisses.)

Terry. God bless you--my own little wife.

Chrystal. (With a passionate burst of tears, throws herself on the rock left, and unconsciously drops the picture.) Forgive me,--Ned, forgive me--

Terry... (A distant signal gun sounds off right. Terry starts.) A signal of distress!

(He dashes up the cliff, left, and gazes out to sea. The storm increases, and the scene grows darker and darker.) ... A vessel drifting headlong on the rocks! Quick-- (Thunder and lightning, the storm grows heavier.)

Chrystal. The station, the rocket, the life-line-- quick! ... (Runs off left,.) ...

Terry. ... (There is a tremendous crash.) She's struck upon the reef! (He rushes down to pick up his coat and sees the picture Chrystal dropped. ...) There is a vivid flash of lightning. My God, it's Ned! Can it be that she loves him? (There is another lightning flash.) Yes--here are the two locks of hair-- (Lightning flash.) One his, the other hers. (He staggers.) Oh! I see it all! Duty has impelled her to sacrifice herself to me-- while all the time her heart was Ned's. (Enter down left a group of wreckers, and men and women mill-workers. ... They stand looking anxiously out to sea. At the same time Owen and Chrystal appear at the top of the incline on the left. Owen adjusts the life-saving apparatus.)

Owen. (Peering through a spyglass.) ... (There is a flash.) My God--the "Nantucket"--

Chrystal. (With a shriek.) ... --Ned's ship! Lost--lost! (Half faints.)

Owen. (Up at the cannon.) Now, Terry, all's ready.

Terry. (He is dazed and hesitates.) If I should miss--

Owen. Why man--Terry, there's no time to lose! Come--quick!-- come--

Chrystal. Terry--quick for my sake-- (At the sound of her voice, he starts, rushes up the cliff, aims and fires the rocket. There is a tense pause, then a faint cheer is heard from the wrecked ship, off right. The rain descends in torrents. All the men and women standing on the beach raise their hands as if in prayer.)

(Terry clutches at his throat as if choking.)

Terry. Thank God--thank God-- (Quick Curtain.)²⁵

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 267-71.

In a very melodramatic scene, Chrystal persuades Ned that they must sacrifice their love to make Terry happy, because he gave them both a home when they were left orphans in childhood. They convince Terry that their love is fraternal, and Ned goes away. After two years, the married couple are shown in their happy home, and then Ned returns. Chrystal has determined to be true to her husband, but she and Ned find it difficult to make the great sacrifice a second time. Terry overhears them:

(There is a pause, then Terry comes slowly on from the left. He is pale, haggard, older, and altogether changed from the light-hearted man of the previous acts. He staggers right, as if to follow Ned and Chrystal. Then, unable to stand, he leans, overcome, against a tree, on the right. Owen Garroway follows Terry on, and stands left, as if thunder-struck. The sailors' song dies away in the distance.)²⁶

Terry determines to go to the Arctic, and makes Ned promise to stay "to be a protector to my Chrystal, a father to my child." He also requests that, "If after waiting five years, there comes no word or token from me, I want you to make Chrystal your wife."²⁷

Six years later, Ned has persuaded the reluctant Chrystal that his promise to Terry should be fulfilled, and the wedding takes place in a country church, in whose yard is a monument bearing the inscription, "Sacred to the memory of Terry Dennison, Erected by Chrystal and Ned."²⁸

(A pause. Music. Then Terry enters through the churchyard gate, upper left. His eyes are sightless, his hair is perfectly white, his face haggard. He wears a sailor's suit, old and worn, and a faded bandanna is wound about his head. He walks with a slow, uncertain gait, feeling his way with a stick. ..)²⁹

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 304-5.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 308.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 311.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 313.

He learns from little Chrystal, who is playing outside the church, of his tombstone and of the wedding. A few days later, at the home of Owen, he dies after his little daughter has called him "father," at his request, and under the impression that he has brought a message from her real father, who has died in the Arctic regions. It is only after Terry's death that Chrystal recognizes him. The play ends with Ned and Chrystal together, the mutual love which they have done their best to conquer, rewarded at last, and "the chorus, singing the 'Mill Song,' dies away in the distance as the curtain slowly descends."⁵⁰

The plot, conversation, and actions in this play are those of a typical melodrama. Music is used to heighten the dramatic situations. Asides and soliloquies appear frequently. And the hero and heroine are united at the end of the play, after surmounting innumerable insurmountable difficulties. But a new type of character is introduced to play the role of the villain--a man entirely good, whose personality pervades the atmosphere of the whole play, and to whom both hero and heroine are so bound by duty that they must necessarily sacrifice their own happiness when it interferes with his. This character is typical of Herne's plays, as will be seen later, but does not represent a distinct trend in the character of the villain, although it was an element in the change which did occur.

My Partner, by Bartley Campbell, produced at the Union Square

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 329.

Theater, September 16, 1879, is a melodrama of the frontier. It was played for years, was translated into German and presented in Berlin, and was also given in London. Its theme is the breaking up of the friendship of two partners for love of the same woman. Joe Saunders, the hero, is a big-hearted miner, rough in manner but gentle in spirit. Ned Singleton, Joe's partner, betrays Mary Brandon under promise of marriage. Joe, overhearing their conversation, makes Ned agree to marry her. Joe tells Ned that they must part. When they have divided the gold they have held jointly, Ned turns away for a moment and Joe secretly adds part of his own share to his partner's portion. He refuses to shake hands with Ned, the hurt having gone too deep. Almost immediately after Joe leaves the cabin, Scraggs, a man who nurses a grudge against the Brandons, enters and attempts to dissuade Ned from marrying Mary, telling him she had been Joe's mistress. In the fight which follows Ned's accusing him of slander, Scraggs stabs him with Joe's knife. In a few minutes, Joe, regretting that he had not parted from Ned as a friend, returns to find his partner murdered. Joe is accused of the crime, but is saved by Wing Lee, a Chinaman.³¹

Campbell's next melodrama, The Galley Slave, which opened the season of 1879 at the Chestnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, is set in Europe.³²

Campbell's Fairfax opened at the Park Theater in New York on December 8, 1879. It is a melodrama portraying Southern character in its ro-

³¹ Quimm, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 119-22.

³² Ibid., p. 122.

matic aspects, but without especially significant pictures of Southern conditions. The heroine is Mrs. Marrisgold, a young wife who is brutally treated by her husband, and who believes she has killed him in a struggle over their child. She becomes the governess of Edward Fairfax's child, and he and she fall in love. Dr. Guy Gaylord, the friend of Fairfax, knowing of Mrs. Marrisgold's past, believes he should prevent the marriage, but she so thoroughly convinces him of her integrity that he refuses later to believe even her own testimony against herself.³⁵

The melodramas of this period were often dramas of frontier life. Included in this group are Horizon, Davy Crockett, and My Partner. One of the most popular plays of this decade, Belle Lamar, had for its subject the Civil War. An unhappy marriage was made the basis for the plot complications of Horizon, Belle Lamar, East Lynne, Only a Tramp, The Banker's Daughter, Hearts of Oak, and Fairfax. None of the plays attempted to moralize, however, as did those of the 'fifties. The frontier plays were a result of the growing interest in westward expansion. The Civil War was now far enough in the past that dramatists could see its possibilities as subject matter for plays instead of its horrors. The abundance of material written about broken homes may have been a result, in part, of the War; in part, of westward exodus; and in part, of the growing interest in "woman's rights."

The heroines of this period were often unhappy married women. Otherwise, they remained much the same as in previous periods. The heroes re-

³⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

mained practically the same as before. The chief changes in characterization were to be found in the villains and in the comedy characters. In Horizon, the villain was an entirely new type--an American Indian. It has already been mentioned that there is no bad man in Hearts of Oak. Its "villain" fore-shadows the coming of the villain who had the appearance of a respectable member of society. The comedy characters found in the melodramas of the 'seventies are seldom used to procure laughs. They are more sympathetic, more serious-minded, but their original purpose is still retained--that of aiding the hero and heroine to "get to-gether."

Use is still made of dramatic music, asides, soliloquies, and tableaux. Conversation, especially with Herne, is becoming, for the most part, more natural.

CHAPTER IV

1880-1889

Bartley Campbell's melodramas continued to be popular in the early 'eighties. His The White Slave, presented at Harerley's Theater, April 3, 1882, and at the Grand Theater, London, August 18, 1884, is a vivid melodrama laid in Kentucky. It is based definitely on The Octoroon, but Liza, the supposed Octoroon, turns out to be white. Separation, which opened at the Union Square Theater on January 28, 1884, is a melodrama laid partly in New York and partly in Normandy. Its theme is the puritanical prejudice against the theater. A mother is forced to leave her husband and child when she refuses to obey her husband's injunction that she not sing for charity, even at an amateur performance.¹

Four popular melodramas of this period, outside the limits of this study but deserving of mention, are David Belasco's American Born, Henry Guy Caleton's Victor Durand, and Steele MacKaye's Paul Kauvar and Hazel Kirke. The first, given at the Baldwin Theater, San Francisco, July 10, 1882, is an adaptation from British Born by Paul Merritt and Henry Pettitt.²

¹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 122-23.

² Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. II (New York: F. S. Crofts & Co., 1936), p. 323.

The second is evidently German in tone, for the villain, who imperils his own safety by bringing about the recapture of the husband of the woman he loves, is Baron de Mersac. This play ran at Wallack's Theater, beginning December 16, 1864.³ Paul Kauvar, played at the Standard Theater, December 24, 1867, is a melodrama of the French Revolution. Hazel Kirke, produced first on February 4, 1880, at the Madison Square Theater, is a revision of an older play of MacKays's, An Iron Will. It is a domestic drama laid in England.⁴

In his first published play, William Gillette collaborated with Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett to produce Esmeralda, from a story of that name by Mrs. Burnett. This melodrama ran continuously from October 29, 1881, until October 7, 1882, and held the stage as long as 1900. Later it was played in London as Young Folks' Ways.⁵

The first act takes place in the mountains of North Carolina. Mrs. Lydia Ann Rogers, who has lived in the little town of 'Lisbethville and consequently knows the ways of the world, dominates her husband and daughter, Esmeralda. She is about to sell the farm to Drew, a speculator, for five hundred dollars, when Dave Hardy, a young neighbor who is in love with Esmeralda, suspecting that Drew has discovered ore on the land, prevents the sale. Lydia Ann succeeds, consequently, in leasing the farm for a small fortune, and then heartlessly tells Dave they are through with him:

³ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 203.

⁴ Ibid., p. 126.

⁵ Ibid., p. 215.

Mrs. R. ...You've heard what I said about the life we've lived?

Dave. (After a pause, slowly realizing the truth.) You said, you'd done with it!

Mrs. R. So I did. I've done with it, and so has she, and with everything that belonged to it.

Dave. (Staggers back a little, looks blankly at Mrs. R. and then at Esm.) And--I--belonged to it!

Mrs. R. And we've done with you. (Pause.)

Dave. My God! (Quickly covering his face.)

Esm. Dave!

(...Dave soon recovers himself, seems to decide on something.)

Dave. (Turning to Esm.) Esmeraldy, this ain't--you ain't nothing to do with this? (Sorrowfully.) I ain't no cause to ask it.

Esm. There's no need, Dave.

Dave. Very well, then.

(... Takes Esm.'s hand in his and brings her forward.)

Dave. (C.) Here we stand,

Mrs. R. (R. After pause.) You mean that you are going to take her?

Dave. Yes, ma'am, that's what I mean.

(Mrs. R. stands in amazement for a few seconds; suppressed indignation; she suddenly starts and walks up and down L. C.)

Mrs. R. (Confronting Dave.) ...Are you so foolish as to think that if she'd seen other men, handsomer and better educated and richer, she'd have chosen you?

(Dave, startled, looks blankly before him.)

Esm. (By fireplace.) Dave, don't listen to her.

Mrs. R. He will listen to me because he knows I'm right.

Dave. (Staggers back.) Esmeralda, I ain't mistrusting you, but she's spoke true for once. What am I, to some against men like that?

Esm. You are the man I love.

Mrs. R. Are you the man to stand in her way--to rob her of what she might have?

Dave. No--no--that ain't me--I--I love her.

Mrs. R. Take her if you're the man to ruin her life for her as mine's been ruined for me. ...If you act like a man now, she'll always remember it of you. If you stand in her way--look that the time doesn't come when she'll remember that. ... (Grinly and fiercely.) If you love her--show it. Here's your chance.

Dave. ... (His head drops. Desparingly.) There's one thing I can do, I can wait. She can be as true to me away as if I held her in my arms every day. And--if the end's what it might be--I shall know I've done her no wrong and acted a man's part. (Turns to Esm.) Esmeralda--

Em. (R.) Dave--Dave--

(Mrs. R. steps between them, Dave covers face with hands, staggers to door and turns, L. C.)

Dave. It's not the end--I don't believe it. True hearts can't be parted by things like this--but for a little while. Good-bye--good-bye.

Rog. Mother, let me call him back. (Pause. Dave exit L.F.)

(Mrs. R. moves in front of door and stands with her back against it. Rogers crosses R.)

Em. (Looking up, runs toward door L. C. calling.) Dave--
Dave--(Stops before Mrs. R. and turns in despair behind arm-chair--utters cry of despair.)

Rog. (R. C. tremblingly holding out his arms.)

(Em. falls upon his breast.)

Curtain.⁶

Emeralda is taken abroad, and in Paris Mrs. Rogers arranges a marriage between her and the Marquis de Montessin. Other than this attempt at marrying Esmeralda to a French noble, there is no foreign atmosphere in the play. The second and fourth acts take place in the studio of an American artist in Paris, and the third act takes place in the Rogers home there. Dave comes over, and it is discovered that the ore is on his land, instead of on Rogers'. The Marquis, hearing that Esmeralda is really poor, elopes with a wealthy girl. After Esmeralda's health has broken under the strain of separation from Dave and of trying to comply with all her mother's whims, Mr. Rogers, knowing that Dave is in Paris, takes matters into his own hands, and takes Esmeralda to Dave. Mrs. Rogers, however, discovers that is happening and follows her husband and daughter to the studio.

⁶ Frances Hodgson Burnett and William H. Gillette, Esmeralda (New York, Samuel French, n. d.), pp. 18-20.

Mrs. R. (C.) I'm just in time, am I? and not a minute too soon. I've heard the whole story and I'll put a stop to this. ...You thought I wouldn't find out, did you? He hasn't gone back to North Carolina, has he? ... I've come to find him and I'm going to do it. Where is he? ... In there? And Esmeralda down stairs waiting to be brought up, and you--you, you. Let me see him--that's all I want. (Mrs. R. goes toward door R.; Rogers gets there before her and waves her back.)

Rog. Mother, kinder quiet down.

Mrs. R. (R. C. staggers back; looks at him) Wh-- what do you mean? What's taken you? How dare you stand up there and brave it out? It's the first time. What's got into you? I hain't had my way with you for twenty-five years to be beat like this. Let me pass I tell you....

Rog. No, we've tried it your way awhile. We've had money and foren languidges--an ile paintings--an--an Markises--we've tried elevating ourselves to a higher spear--an--what's come of it? ... We've seed the world. We've been gay, and we've left home behin, and friends and neighbors we growed up with--an Esmeraldy's heart's nigh broke--an Dave is brought to death's door--and the little house they was to have lived in an' loved each other in is a standin empty in North Car'liny. ... But I'll bring them two young hearts together and let em beat side by side as the Lord intended--an no one shayn't hurt nor separate em, so help me--North Car'liny. ...

Mrs. R. And you'll give up all I've done and all I've worked for--what's to make up to the girl for it--what's she going back to anyhow? Answer me that.

Rog. Mebby it ain't much, mother, and mebbe it's a good deal. She's going back to home and love.

Mrs. R. Then I tell you she shan't. Do you think I'll give up that easy? Did I ever give up before? I'll end this some way or die for it. (Down L. C.)

(Enter Esmeralda, alarmed as she has heard her mother outside. Goes to her father C., who meets her half way. ... Dave appears in door R. Esmeralda utters a cry and starts toward him. Mrs. R. catches her arm and endeavors to drag her back.)

Esmeralda. Let me go. I'm not afraid now. Not all the world should keep me from him. (Esmeralda dashes Mrs. R. aside, crosses R. and rushes into Dave's arms.)

Dave. I thought you'd gone back on me, Esmeralda, but you was true--you was true.

(Rog. goes to Mrs. R., L. C., and lays a hand pleadingly on her.)

Rog. Mother, don't grudge it to em.

Mrs. R. No grudge it to them? (Fiercely.) No, I won't. Let them have what they got and welcome. He came over here to marry a rich girl, did he--and he's got her--thanks to you--with all she's worth. ... (Triumphantly.) --I've got a letter--

Nora. I heard of a letter like it once before. . . and it was from North Carolina--name of the man who wrote it, George Drew ... and it was about some land that didn't turn out so well as was expected. Is yours anything like it?

Mrs. R. (Astonished.) You--you've known it all along.

Dave. Mrs. Rogers, I've known it myself, and if you'll let me speak--

Mrs. R. You've known it? Oh, of course you knew you were going to marry a beggar instead of an heiress. You have traveled half the world over for pure love, haven't you? ... You--you're to blame for it all. But for you I'd have sold the place out and out--but for you that girl would have been married to a marquis by this and settled for life--but for you we shouldn't have been disgraced and mocked and laughed at.

Esm. And but for him of course the vein of ore would have been carefully arranged by nature to meet all demands and wouldn't have worked out and infamously turned up in another man's farm and made a millionaire of him.

Mrs. R. Another man's farm? Who's the man? Who is he?

Dave. (C. Simply.) Mrs. Rogers, I'm the man.

Mrs. R. (L. C., gasping and falling back.) You! YOU! You?

Dave. Yes, and what's mine is Esmeralda's and her father's and her mother's, and so you see the thing stands just about where it did--an' you're no poorer than before--only Esmeralda belongs to me.

(Esm. crosses to Dave. Draws Esm. to his breast.)⁷

The hero and heroine are of the usual type, but the villain of this play is an entirely new type--a woman. The audiences revel in her final defeat, but she is neither killed nor banished. Instead, her punishment is that she will never again be able to dominate her family. Mr. Rogers serves as the comedy character who aids the hero and heroine.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 53-57.

The actions, much of the conversation, and many of the situations are highly melodramatic. The complications of plot are solved by the artificial device of having the ore discovered, not on the farm belonging to the villain, but on that belonging to the hero.

Mr. Gillette is the author of a melodrama of the Civil War, Held by the Enemy, which began its career at the Criterion Theater, Brooklyn, February 22, 1886, and played at the Madison Square Theater in August.⁸

The action takes place "in a Southern city which has been captured and occupied by Northern forces during the Rebellion."⁹ Eunice McCreery is engaged, by a family arrangement, to her cousin, Gordon Hayne, a lieutenant in the Confederate army. Colonel Harvey Brant and Brigade Surgeon Fielding, both of the Union army, also love her, and the play centers around Fielding's attempts to win her, by force if necessary. Brant's capture of Hayne, who is entering the city as a spy, to make plans of the fortifications, gives Fielding his chance. He is judge-advocate at Hayne's court martial, and cleverly turns the evidence to prove that Brant was prompted by his rivalry with Hayne to capture him as a spy. Eunice unwittingly aids Fielding by bursting out, forgetting all else in her desire to save her cousin, that only Brant had seen the incriminating paper which was taken from the Southerner. Brant then refuses, for love of Eunice, to testify against Hayne, but the latter, to save him from the charge of dishonor, acknowledges that he is a spy and is proud of it. In the next act,

⁸ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 217.

⁹ William Gillette, Held by the Enemy (New York: Samuel French, n.d.), title page.

Hayne is shot as he is escaping from his prison, the walls of which were destroyed by a timely shell. The McCreerys secure from the commanding general a permit to take Hayne's body from the military hospital, where he is placed to recover from his wound, through the lines. In some way which is never explained, they have been able to deceive the examining surgeon, for Hayne is not really dead. Fielding suspects the fraud, and Brant, unaware of the deception, insists that the body be examined.

(Eunice, who has been edging down on R., now goes quickly near Brant on his right so that she is behind him as he is turned toward the General.)

Eunice. (Sharp whisper to Brant--on his right--keeping a little away from him and without looking at him.) No, no! Save yourself! He isn't dead--he's alive! (She quickly turns further away and stands motionless.)

(Dramatic music. Brant stands motionless as he was, facing the General--unable to speak.)

The General orders the examination.

(Fielding strides to the stretcher near C, and throws the covering from Hayne's head and breast--which is toward left, and at once stoops over making hurried examination. Eunice, almost as Fielding throws back the blanket, glides quickly to the stretcher from up R. C. where she had been moving during last speeches, and stands on Fielding's right, very near him, but bending over Hayne as if to see.)

Eunice. (Sharp breathless whisper to Fielding as she is apparently looking at Hayne and as Fielding bends down with his hand to Hayne's heart.) Oh save us! Save us and I'll marry you! I will, I will! (Fielding stops dead in motions he was making in examination of Hayne--and listens.) I promise!--On my sacred word--that I'll never break! I will! (She rises up erect and stands back a few steps motionless--faced away to R. of front a little--her eyes lowered--waiting.)

(Fielding, who has listened motionless while Eunice was whispering does not stir for a minute after she ceases.--Then he goes on with the examination for a moment, but his hand shakes as he puts it on Hayne's throat. He bends down and puts his ear to Hayne's body over the heart. Then he rises erect, and turns toward Gen. Stamburg.)

(Stop music.)

Fielding. (Speaking with an effort.) General--I owe Colonel Brant--and this young lady--an apology. My suspicions were groundless. The man is dead. (Brant--whose eyes were lowered, slowly raises them and looks off front--realizing what has happened. Others motionless.)
Curtain.¹⁰

In the last act, although he knows that the consequences will be serious for him, too, Brant threatens that unless Fielding releases Eunice from her promise, he will reveal to the General the Surgeon's part in Hayne's escape.

Fielding. You sharp devils always miss a trick somewhere and you've missed a good one! They had a pass to take that body through our lines! He's gone! No one examined him but me--and I say he was dead! Your word against mine! I'm a Surgeon an' you never looked at 'im! I say he was dead--and by God he was dead! And there's not a man who can prove--
(Portiers up L. C. open and Hayne stands white and grim up L. C. Fielding frozen motionless, looking at Hayne. After an instant's pause, Brant turns slowly to see what stopped Fielding. On seeing Hayne he steps back a little in surprise--and stands.)

Hayne. (Very quietly.) Reckon Ah might have something to say about that. (Brief pause.) You're behavin' so decent about this, Colonel, that Ah can do no less!--Here's the proof you want! (Touching himself.)¹¹

Fielding releases Eunice, then Hayne, knowing that she and Brant are in love, releases her also, giving the play an entirely happy ending.

The stock-character types of hero, heroine, and villain are present in this play. The villain is routed, but not killed. Few of the situations are over-sentimental. The conversation is usually quite natural. But the actions are undeniably melodramatic. The use of tableaux seems to

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 98-100.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 124.

be outgrown, but the devices of asides, soliloquies, and music still persist.

The popularity of this play shows the growing enthusiasm for war subjects. It is non-partisan in that the hero is a Northerner, while the heroine, her cousin, and her sister, all important characters, are Southern. There is no propaganda--the story merely presents some of the complications to love which the War brought about.

Derman Thompson's The Old Homestead was first acted on April 3, 1876, at the National Theater in New York, as Joshua Whitcomb. By 1886 the title was changed and the play was somewhat revised, appearing April 5, 1886, at the Boston Museum.¹² The story centers about Joshua's search through New York for his son, from whom he has heard nothing for some time. Joshua related to a friend the cause of Reuben's disappearance:

About a year ago now he was cashier in the Cheshire Bank in Keene, a few miles from here. Well, it seems one day, a party of sharps from Boston went to Keene and went into the bank and when some of them were talking to Reub one of the mean sneaks got into the vault and stole a lot of money. ...It all came out in the trial. Well, they pitched onto my boy and had him arrested right before a lot of visitors from Boston, on suspicion of robbing the bank; but they let him go again pretty quick, I can tell you. ... I don't believe the boy has had a good night's rest since. He always imagined people p'inted at him and was down-hearted and low spirited, so one day he packed his trunk and started for New York.¹³

A particularly melodramatic speech is delivered in the first act by the tramp who stops at the Whitcomb homestead, as he discusses the danger

¹² Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 128.

¹³ Derman Thompson, The Old Homestead (Boston: Walter H. Baker Company, n. d.), pp. 12-13.

of "riding the rods";

(Music cue for sympathetic music pp. in orchestra.)

Jack. (With pathos.) Not a day passes that some poor fellow is not either killed or maimed. Now last winter on our way south my partner lost his life. I was riding on the rear truck and he was on the front. In rounding a curve the brace of the truck bent and caught him between the truck and the brace and mashed him to death. I had to ride nearly thirty-two miles listening to his pitiful cries for help but I couldn't reach him, so he said: "Jack, old pard, you'll have to get another pal. I'm called in," and all was over with poor Tom. A high power had put on the brakes. The engine of life was stopped.

(Buries face in old dirty handkerchief.)¹⁴

Joshua asks him why he doesn't go home to his mother in New York.

Jack. I'll tell you why I don't go home. Because I'm ashamed to! I'm no good--a wreck at thirty.

Josh. Do you ever think ... (With pathos.) of your mother. How she watched you all through the cares and dangers of childhood; worked for you; prayed for you. I tell you, boy, you owe that mother more than you can ever repay.

Jack. (Sits, penitently, with lowered head.) Say, old gentleman, you've set me thinking.

Josh. I'm glad if I have. Now look here, will you go home if I give you money enough to pay your fare?

Jack. Yes.

Josh. And stop drinking?

Jack. (With determination.) I will! And if I don't win, I'll give old John Barleycorn the toughest scuffle he ever had for the underhold. Good-bye, old friend, good-bye!

(Shakes hand and exits up L., walking as if footsore.)¹⁵

In New York, Joshua tells his boyhood friend, Henry Hopkins, of

Reuben:

Josh. (With pathos.) No use talking, children little know the anxiety parents have for them. I've got a son alone in this great city and I'm dreadfully worried about him.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

Henry H. Don't you know where he is stopping?

Josh. No, I don't.

Henry H. And hasn't he written you?

Josh. Not for four or five months.

Henry H. L. What was he doing when you last heard from him?

Josh. He warn't doin' nothing. Said he expected to get something to do before long and writ a little mite as though he was discouraged. And when I answered I guessed he'd better come back again;--but you know how it is when they go away from home to make their living, they hate to come back and have folks say they wasn't smart enough to do it; and Reub is kind o' proud-spirited, I don't know as I blame him much,--like as not he's out o' money,--maybe he's sick and perhaps he's--
(Puts handkerchief to eyes and breaks down completely.)¹⁶

For days Joshua walks the street, looking for his boy, then one night he meets up with Jack, the tramp, now reformed.

Jack. Did you find your boy yet, Mr. Whitcomb?

Josh. (With feeling.) No sir; I didn't, and I have been trampin' up and down these streets for more'n a week searching for him everywhere; and I have seen more wickedness and misery in that time than I ever thought could exist in a civilised community. I am dreadfully afraid he has been led off, and took to drink. ...I've seen so much of it since I have been here. Henry Hopkins says drink is the ruination of more than half the young men in New York.

Jack. Well, Henry Hopkins isn't far from being right.

(Organ stops. Commotion outside ... Voices ... shouting "Good-night, old feller," etc. Enter Reuben staggering. ... Josh recognises him. He falls into Josh's arms and then falls on his knees. Josh bends over him.)

Josh. My boy Reubi! Reubi! Reubi! (When Reuben falls, Policeman runs on L. 1 E. and Jack, who is L. C., stops him and then crosses back of Josh to R. C.) Why it's my boy Reubi!

(Organ in church plays "Wedding March," piano, till curtain, and then forte until final curtain.)¹⁷

Reuben receives a joyous welcome on his return to the old homestead the following New Year's Eve.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 40-41.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 61-62.

Matilda. ...Why didn't you bring him home with you when you was in New York?

Josh. Well, I'll tell you, Til. He did start to come but when he got as far as the depot, I noticed something troubled him. He hung back a leetle mite, and I said to him--"Reuben, don't you want to go home with me?" And he says, "Yes, Father, I do; but I hate to go back and have Swansey people say that Reuben Whitcomb went away to make his own living and his father had to go and bring him back again!" (With Pathos.) And, Til, when he hung down his head and his eyes filled up with tears, and his voice was kind o' choked, he says, "Father, let me stick it out a little while longer"--I says, "Go it!" "Thank you," he says, "I'll be home by New Year's"; and he'll be here to-night, you see if he ain't,¹⁸

--and he was.

This play differs from the ordinary melodrama in that it does not have the conventional characters. Its story, conversation, and actions are thoroughly melodramatic, however, and asides, soliloquies, and sympathetic music are used in abundance.

Edward Harrigan's melodrama of Southern life, Pete, ran for five months at the Park Theater during the year 1887. The story is concerned with the abandonment of a child, May Coolidge, before the War, and her salvation afterward. Pete is the old negro servant, who is devoted to the daughter of his old master.¹⁹

Another outstanding melodrama of the Civil War is Bronson Howard's Shenandoah, first played in Boston, at the Boston Museum, on November 19, 1888.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

¹⁹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 94.

²⁰ John A. Pierce and Brander Matthews, the Masterpieces of Modern Drama (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1915), p. 59.

Kerchival West, an officer in the Union army, who is in love with Gertrude Ellingham, a Southern girl, at the outbreak of the Civil War, provokes the hatred of Captain Thornton, a renegade Northerner in the Confederate Secret Service. When Thornton attempts to seduce Mrs. Haverill, wife of the Southern general, West comes to her rescue, but leaves evidence which leads the General to believe his wife is having an affair with West. Alone on the stage, Mrs. Haverill says,

We leave for the North before noon, but every hour seems a month. If my husband should learn what happened in my room to-night, he would kill that man. What encouragement could I have given him? Innocence is never on its guard--but, (Drawing up.) the last I remember before I fell unconscious, he was crouching before me like a whipped cur! (Starts as she looks out of the window.) There is Mr. Thornton now--Ah! (Angrily.) No,--I must control my own indignation. I must keep him and Colonel Haverill from meeting before we leave Charleston. Edward Thornton would shoot my husband down without remorse.²¹

A few minutes later, West, and then Haverill, enters.

(Enter Haverill, a white silk handkerchief in his hand.)

Haver. Constance, my dear, I've been looking all over the place for you. I thought you were in your room. But--by the way, Kerchival, this is your handkerchief; your initials are on it.

(Kerchival turns and stares at him a second. Mrs. Haverill starts slightly and turns front. Haverill glances quickly from one to the other, then extends his hand toward Kerchival, with the handkerchief. Kerchival moves to him and takes it. Mrs. Haverill drops into the chair.)

Ker. Thank you. (He exits with a quick glance back. Haverill looks at Mrs. Haverill, who sits nervously looking away. He then glances after Kerchival. A cloud comes over his face, and he stands a second in thought. Then, with a movement as if brushing away a passing suspicion, he smiles pleasantly and approaches Mrs. H., leaning over her.)

Haver. My fair Desdemona! (Smiling.) I have found Cassio's handkerchief in your room. Have you a kiss for me? (She looks up, he raises her chin with a finger and kisses her.) That's the

²¹ Bronson Howard, *Shenandoah*, in *Representative Plays by American Dramatists*, Vol. III, edited by Montrose J. Moses (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1921), pp. 389-90.

way I shall smother you.

Mrs. H. (Rising and dropping her head upon his breast.)
 Husband! ²²

Haverill had quarreled with his son some years before the play opens. Mrs. Haverill, the boy's step-mother, persuades her husband to send him some token of friendship. The boy dies a heroic death in the army, but he has concealed his identity so well that his father does not recognise him. Later, the General finds the letter from Mrs. Haverill and her portrait, which have come into West's possession through the capture of the spy, Thornton, who had in turn taken the portrait from young Haverill.

Haverill. ...Where is the portrait of yourself, which I gave you, in Charleston, for my son?

Mrs. H. Your son is dead, sir; and my portrait lies upon his breast, in the grave. (Haverill takes the miniature from his pocket and holds it towards her in his extended hand. She starts back.) He gave it to you? And you ask me where it is?

Haver. It might have lain in the grave of Kerchival West!

Mrs. H. Ah!

Haver. Not in my son's. I found it upon his breast. (she turns front, dazed.) Well! I am listening! It was not I that sought this interview, Madam; and if you prefer to remain silent, I will go. You know, now, why I have been silent so long.

Mrs. H. My only witnesses to the truth are both dead. I shall remain silent. (Turns toward him.) We stand before each other, living, but not so happy as they. We are parted, forever. Even if you should accept my unsupported word--if I could so far forget my pride as to give it to you--suspicion would still hang between us. I remain silent. ²³

In this play appears the melodramatic situation which so often is used in Civil War plays, that of bringing both hero and heroine face to

²² Ibid., p. 391.

²³ Ibid., pp. 441-42.

face with the choice between love and patriotism. West makes his decision in favor of love of country. Gertrude Ellingham chooses her lover.

West disappears during an encounter at Cedar Creek. Gertrude, not finding his body on the field, "seized the bridle of a stray horse, sprang upon its back and rode away to the South.... She did not return, and we have heard nothing from her since."²⁴ It is never explained how she found him, but she returns with West while Barket, an Irish Unionist, is describing the battle.

(...Gertrude enters in hall, looks in, beckons out left. Kerchival follows. They move up stage, back of the rest and unseen, listening....)

Barket. The attack on the left flank was checked. But when we stopped to take breath, Colonel Wist was n't wid us. (Gertrude turns lovingly to Kerchival. He places his arm about her.) Heaven knows where he is now. Afther the battle was over, poor Miss Gertrude wint off by hersilf into the wilderness to find him.

Kerchival. My wife! You saved my life, at last! (Embracing her.)

Barket. They'll niver come together in this world. I saw Miss Gertrude, mysilf, ride away into the wood and disappear behind a school-house on the battle-field, over there.

Gertrude. No, Barket--(All start and look.)--it was the little church; we were married there this morning.

Curtain.²⁵

Mrs. Haverill's honor is saved by a letter which Madeline West, Kerchival's sister, produces--young Haverill's dying thanks for the picture. Captain Thornton's villainy is rewarded by his being captured by the Union army.

Tableaux are almost entirely lacking in Shenandoah, and there are few asides and soliloquies. There is also less use of sympathetic music.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 435.

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 444-45.

The plot complications are often highly improbable, and are solved by frequent intervention of coincidence. Many of the actions and much of the conversation are sentimentally exaggerated. The old familiar types of hero, heroine, and villain are present, the villain's punishment being capture by the enemy.

Like Held by the Enemy, this play owed its popularity to its absence of partisanship, the hero being a Northerner, and the heroine and the villain Southerners.

The most important melodramas of the 'eighties were Esmeralda, Held by the Enemy, and Shenandoah, the last two being concerned with the Civil War. Obviously the War furnished ideal melodramatic material, and it was now far enough in the past that audiences could enjoy the dramas without shuddering at the havoc it wrought. None of the melodramas of this period were didactic or satiric. Music for the purpose of heightening the sentiment of certain scenes, asides, and soliloquies are still found occasionally, but the tableau seems to have been discarded. In 1867 Daly introduced to the stage a female villain in the person of Judas, Byke's accomplice, in Under the Gaslight. Mrs. Burnett and William Gillette went one step farther and made Mrs. Rogers the only villain in Esmeralda. The heroines of this period are not usually subjected to so many physical disasters as were those of earlier periods, but their problems were still most often solved by highly artificial means. The villain of this period were very rarely punished by death. Conversation was rapidly becoming more natural, action and characterization being the most outstanding melodramatic traits found in the plays.

CHAPTER V

1890-1899

One of the most successful melodramas of the 'nineties was James A. Herne's Shore Acres. It grew out of his play The Hawthornes (1889), which was revised and performed at McVicker's Theater, Chicago, May 17, 1892, as Shore Acres Subdivision. After a run of two weeks, the title, at McVicker's suggestion, was changed to Uncle Nat. It opened as Shore Acres at the Boston Museum on February 20, 1893, and ran for one hundred thirteen performances. On October 30, 1893, it was presented at the Fifth Avenue Theater in New York and ran for the entire season.¹

Nathaniel Berry, "Uncle Nat" to all who know him, is the central figure in the play. He has always given up everything to his younger brother Martin, even the woman he loved, and the property which they owned jointly. One of the most melodramatic scenes in the play occurs when Uncle Nat, hoping to prevent Martin from selling the knoll on which their mother is buried, recalls the woman's all-night vigil there when their father was lost at sea, and her request that "When I die--I want yeh should bury me right here on this spot--so's ef Father ever doose come back--

¹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 146-47.

² James A. Herne, Shore Acres, in Shore Acres and Other Plays, op. cit., p. 41.

he'll find me waitin' fer him."²

Determined that she, too, shall not be deprived of happiness in love, Uncle Nat aids the love affair of Helen, Martin's daughter, and Dr. Sam Warren, against whose advanced ideas Martin is violently prejudiced. Nat's helping the young people to elope by ship results in another thoroughly melodramatic scene, in which Martin tries to prevent Nat from lighting the beacon that will guide the lovers on their way through the storm.

(Uncle Nat seizes Martin, and the two men have a quick struggle. Then Uncle Nat, with almost superhuman strength, throws Martin the whole length of the room. Martin is dazed; he reels and staggers like a drunken man towards the door by which he entered, and blindly gropes his way out into the storm.)

Uncle Nat seizes the lantern and starts to crawl up the stairs. It is hard work to climb them, the excitement has been too much for him. He gets a few steps up, then slips down again, he crawls up again on hands and knees, and once more slips down. He makes still another effort, falters, staggers, and, with a heartbreaking cry, falls and rolls down the stairs.)

Uncle Nat. God help me! I hain't got the strength!

(The thunder crashes, the sea roars, the lightning flashes. The stage darkens as the light above goes out completely.)³

The next scene, in which no words at all are spoken, is reminiscent of some of the scenes of Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Scene: An expanse of wild, stern-tossed waves, with the lighthouse, a dark, shadowy bulk, rising from the rocky coast on the left. The rain is pouring in torrents, the thunder roars, the lightning flashes. The boom of a ship's gun is heard above the din of the storm, and in the darkness, the "Liddy Ann," sleep-rigged and under reefed jib, makes her way slowly through the heavy seas, from right to left. She is off her course and perilously near the rocks. At intervals her gun booms and she

³ Ibid., pp. 86-87.

sends up distress signals. The figures of Captain Ben, Dave, Burgess, Gabe Kilpatrick, and Bill Hodgekins, as well as Sam and Helen, can be dimly discerned on board. The shouts of Captain Ben giving orders, and the replies of the crew are drowned by the noise of the storm.

For a few minutes the "Liddy Ann" tosses helplessly in the darkness. Then a tiny light appears in the lowest window of the lighthouse. For a second it wavers, then slowly it rises from window to window, as Uncle Nat climbs the stairs to the tower. In another moment the light in the tower blazes forth, showing the "Liddy Ann" her course. A shout of relief goes up from those on the boat, and as the "Liddy Ann" makes her way safely past the rocks

The Curtain Descends.⁴

Martin receives punishment for his misdeeds first by having his daughter elope, and then by losing all his money. But Uncle Nat's "back pension" money arrives in time to avert the disaster of losing the estate. Helen, Sam, and baby return, after two years, and are entirely forgiven.

(The woodhouse door opens and Martin enters slowly leading Helen by the hand. She looks dazed, but very happy to be back in her home. They are followed by Sam, now a bearded, handsome man who appears to be perfectly happy and gratified that Helen's wish to bring her baby home has been fulfilled. There is a long pause; everybody's eyes are on Martin and Helen. He leads her proudly and slowly down the stage before he speaks.)

Martin. Neww--my girl--I'm glad to see yeh back, that's all I got to say.

(It is with difficulty that Martin can get these words out. Tears are in his eyes and voice. He kisses her. ...Helen creeps into her father's embrace, puts her arms around his neck and looks pleadingly first at him and then at Sam, as though to say, "Father, haven't you got a word for Sam?" Martin's gaze follows hers and he sees Sam. Helen draws away a little and Martin moves toward Sam.)

Martin. (Making a big effort to conquer his pride.) Sam, I don't b'lieve I acted jes's a father ought to hev acted towards Nell, an' I didn't treat you quite right I know--I-- (Hesitatingly stretches out his hand which Sam takes in a hearty grasp, and the two men shake hands.)⁵

⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 106-7.

This play, like Hearts of Oak, is dominated by a central character, this time Uncle Nat, who makes everything right in the end, including Helen's love affair, and the financial disaster which threatens the estate. Martin is a mild sort of villain, who reforms in the end. There are few asides and soliloquies, although there is one scene, cited above, which is entirely pantomime. Music plays little part in any of the scenes. Again it is the action which is the most important melodramatic element in the play.

A melodrama which held the stage by reason of the sincerity of its characterization as well as by the vividness of its situations is Charles T. Daxey's In Old Kentucky, produced at the Grand Opera House in St. Paul, Minnesota, in June, 1898. It was performed for twenty-seven consecutive seasons in New York or on the road,⁶ and a few years ago was filmed, starring Will Rogers. It presents a contrast between mountaineer and "blue grass" people, and is a series of fights and accusations of murder, terminating in a horse race. Her love affair with patrician Frank Layson leads the heroine, Madge, a mountain girl, to ride his horse to win the race for him, although by appearing in riding breeches, which, according to his standards, no lady would wear, she runs the risk of losing his love. In Old Kentucky pictures the intense loves and hates of the primitive mountaineers. The improbabilities of the play lie rather in the grouping of incidents rather than in the incidents themselves.

⁶ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 101.

One of the best melodramas of the period is In Missouri, by Augustus Thomas, first produced in Chicago on August 7, 1893. In September it opened in New York, was successful, and became a stock piece.⁷ The hero, Jim Radburn, is the sheriff of Pike County, Missouri. Unknown to Kate Vernon, the heroine, he has, for love of her, financed the education which now makes her feel superior to him. Jim has poulticed with clay the leg of a crippled dog, and a bit of this clay falls into the forge in Joe Vernon's black-smith shop. This is the means of providing the hero with a fortune, for it is discovered that the clay, when heated, becomes hard as flint.

Jim's character is revealed in his many unselfish acts--his befriending of the cur with the broken leg; his gift of the melodeon to Kate; his withdrawing, at Kate's wish, from the race against Joe Vernon for nomination as a candidate for the legislature; his providing the means for Kate's education, unknown to any but her father; and, in the early part of the play, his brave acceptance of her refusal to marry him:

Joe. (Indignantly.) Why, Kate Vernon--everything you know, Jim Radburn--

Jim. (Imperatively.) Hold on--(pause.) You've heard her say no, and--that lets you out. As far as I'm concerned--why, Kate's nearly right. I don't know any more'n the law allows--but--that's for Kate to say--

(Jim extends his hand in appeal to Kate. Kate turns her back to audience--leans on anvil, firmly shakes her head "No." Jim motions silence to Joe; makes a struggle, and pulls himself together--turns and kneels by dog, caressing it.)⁸

⁷ Ibid., p. 246.

⁸ Augustus Thomas, In Missouri, in Representative Plays by American Dramatists, Vol. III, edited by Moses, op. cit., p. 496.

The villain, Robert Travers, is a train robber who is taking refuge in the little Missouri town. He is attractive and polished--a "man-of-the-world." His one virtue is that he loves Kate, and she thinks she loves him, because he has traveled and has more knowledge of the world than do the people of her home town. He has begged her to go away with him, but fearing lest it be for the places he would take her and not for himself alone that she cares for him, she has delayed giving her answer until he has been apprehended, and in trying to escape has killed a man.

Kate. There has been some mistake--these people have never liked Mr. Travers. ... (In wild-eyed panic.) Oh, how dreadful! This is what I have felt coming all the day. It is my fault, too. If I had said "yes" last night, or only gone with him this morning--it couldn't have happened. How horrible! --Killed a man! They didn't tell me whom. I--I wonder if my name was mentioned? They said--Lisbeth said a train-robber--(She leans on table for support.) That letter! Jim thought the writing looked like his, Jim--Jim has told the others his suspicion--Yes--Jim Radburn has done it! I see! see! Jim hated him--they have persecuted him for me--Oh! Oh! Why did I not go last night?

(Enter Travers, pale and breathless--revolver in hand. He closes the door behind him.)

Travers. Kate!

Kate. Oh! ... Tell me what you did--that pistol!

Travers. In self-defense--they would have killed me if they could. (as she hides her face.) Where can I go?

Kate. They will find you here. (He turns, facing door with pistol, left hand holding door shut, menacingly.) No,--not that--you wouldn't shoot again! My father may come here!

Travers. Kate! Do you believe me?

Kate. Yes.

Travers. (Pleading.) In self-defense--they were ten--ten to one. Give me a drink--I'm parching. (She gets water in a dipper from bucket on bench. Travers drinks with the tin rattling on his teeth. Noise of a galloping horse passes. He drops the dipper.) I don't think they saw me come in here.

Kate. Why did you come?

Travers. Where else? I ran--turned every corner till I lost them. If I can hide or get a horse!

Kate. (Doubting him) Why did they try to arrest you?

Travers. I--I don't know, Kate--some mistake.

Kate. They said the express robbery.

Travers. It isn't so--Kate (Pause.), Kate (Pause.), you must believe me! Why should I be here (Pause.) in this little town--Listen!

(There is again the sound of approaching hoofs.)

Kate. Someone is coming--(He turns at bay.) No--I couldn't stand it--go in here--(Opens closet.) Quick!

Travers. Yes! (He enters the closet--she closes the door of the closet and throws open the street door; goes to table.)

(Jim rides into view and crops from his horse.)

Jim. (After looking slowly about.) Where is he?

Kate. I--I--where is who?

Jim. (In a matter of course way.) Travers.

Kate. Why, how should I know?

Jim. (Shaking his head.) Too late now..... If it'd been all right, you wouldn't a--tried to dodge me....(Pause.) I'm awful sorry for you, Kate.

Kate. Oh, you needn't be.

Jim. (On the "qui vive.") But I want to see Mr. Travers.

Kate. (In distress.) You--you annoy me very much. (Sits left of table.)

Jim. (In real tenderness.) Why, Kate--Katie--see here--I'm your friend--they ain't anybody in the world that feels as bad for you as I do--but be reasonable--it's only a question of time. I s'pose every man in Bowlin' Green that owns a gun or a bowie knife's collectin' up there at the Court House--your own pa and Dave--they'll be back here after awhile--and what then? don't you see?

Kate. It's horrible--don't tell me it is duty makes them hunt a fellow-man like that. (Rises.)

Jim. I don't pretend to know anything about that--(Pause. Picks up dipper; looks at Kate.) Poor chap--thirsty--oh, well, that's your business, Kate. (Puts dipper on the bench.) See here, Kate--I want a word or two with Mr. Travers. I think the honestest thing he ever did was liking you--I--

Kate. (Fiercely.) And that is why you hate him! You think he like me! You think if it hadn't been for him I might have liked you! Well, I do like him--(Pause.) That's why you hunt him! It isn't your duty prompts you--it's your jealousy!

Jim. (A pause in which he decided the question.) He's in that closet.

Kate. (Turning.) He is not.

Jim. (Straddling a chair and facing closet. Speaks in ordinary tone.) Travers, come out. If you don't come out, I'll shoot through the door.

Travers. (Bursting from closet and levelling pistol.) Throw up your hands!

Jim. (Pause. In fateful monotone.) You're a damn fool! The sound of a gun now would fill both them streets with pitch-forks.

Kate. Don't--don't--shoot.

Jim. He won't.

Travers. Do you think you can arrest me--alive?

Jim. It don't make no difference to me.

Kate. (Anxiously pleading.) If you are innocent, Mr. Travers,-- if you have acted in self-defense--

Jim. Wait, Kate--we ain't got time to try him now. He ain't got time; the boys are waiting up at the Court House. Mr. Travers, this young lady likes you--very much. (He slowly rises.)

Travers. (Still covering him.) I know the cause of your hatred, Mr. Radburn--I know you are here because I love her.

Jim. No, I'm here because she likes you--if she didn't like you 'twouldn't make any difference to me how quick we came to terms; but she likes you--your Pinkerton friend--(Pause. Indicating neck.) dead--the boys are up at the Court House. Clark is pretty hot about them Jumbo bottles, and they wouldn't be reasonable--my hoss is standing at the door--with anything like a fair start he can hold his own--Louisiana town is eleven miles away, and jist across from that is Illinois--and then you'll have to look out for yourself--now go!

Kate. (With emotional appreciation.) Jim.

Travers. You tell me to go?

Jim. (Pause.) Yes.

Travers. Why, there's ten thousand dollars' reward--

Jim. For the man that--went--in--that--car--but you ain't that man.

Travers. On your horse?

Jim. Yes.

Travers. Kate--(Starts toward her.)

Kate. (Shrinking.) Oh-h!

Travers. (Holds out hand.) Jim Radburn!

Jim. No--I give you my horse, but I'm darned if I shake hands with you--!!

(Exit Travers. Kate sinks in chair sobbing. Jim in doorway regards her tenderly.)

Curtain.⁹

Although Travers gets away from Bowling Green, he comes to justice by being shot before escaping from Missouri. He swears, before dying, that he did not steal his horse, but that it was given to him by Radburn.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 503-7.

The people then accuse the sheriff of helping the outlaw to escape.

Kate. Do you blame this man?

Bollinger. Blame him! Why, he's an accessory after the fact, and maybe before--I don't see how he can git out of it! Here's his telegram, really better than a plea of guilty--we ought to arrest him!

Kate. (To Bollinger.) He is not guilty. (To Jim.) Oh, Jim, Jim! Can you forgive me? (She extends her hand.)

Jim. (Taking her hand.) Why, Kate, 'tain't none o' their business.

Kate. No, it is all mine. (Murmur from crowd.--To the men.) Listen, all of you must know that Mr. Travers was attentive to me--I believed he was a gentleman--we thought he was a friend--(Half crying.) but he never was half the friend--never could be half the friend that Jim Radburn's been--

Jim. (Expostulating.) Kate!

Kate. (To him.) Yes, I know all about it now--my father has told me all--everything about my college days--I am humiliated to the dust.

Jim. Now, Kate--

Kate. You should have told me in the shop, when I presumed to speak of your disadvantages.

Jim. (To men.) See here--this is a little matter between me and Kate Vernon--none of your business--so why don't you saunter off? (Men start to go.)

Kate. (To the men.) No, I want them to stay. I have nothing to say of Mr. Travers' doings--we were mistaken--but Jim Radburn thought I cared for the man, and he was big enough to let him escape for me--I am the one at fault--he has almost given up his life for me. You, Col. Bollinger, and every one knows that he could win his nomination if he wanted to--(Turning to Jim.)--But he gave that up, too, because Joe Vernon, my father, wants it. Oh, Jim! Jim! (Sinks on steps, sobbing.)¹⁰

The situation in this play differs somewhat from those in previous plays in that the heroine thinks she is in love with the man who turns out to be the villain. All the action is concerned with proving to her the goodness of the hero and the badness of the villain. Asides, soliloquies, tableaux, and music are conspicuously absent. The villain's reward is death,

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 516-17.

as it was in plays of a much earlier period. The conversation is usually quite natural, but the situations are very melodramatic.

Secret Service, William Gillette's most significant play, was first produced as The Secret Service at the Broad Street Theater in Philadelphia, May 13, 1895. It appeared in revised form in October, 1896, at the Garrick Theater, New York, where it ran until March, 1897.¹¹ Later it was acted both in England and in Paris, and was revived in the United States during the season of 1915-16. According to Quinn, the exact number of performances up to the present day is 1791.¹²

The action occurs from eight until eleven o'clock at night in Richmond, while the Union forces are attacking the city. The heroine, Edith Varney, is a Southern girl. The hero is Lewis Dumont, the Northern spy who has secured entrance to the city as "Captain Thorne" of the Confederate army. Through her influence as the daughter of a Confederate general, Edith has secured a commission for him as Major in the telegraph service of the Confederate army, but he refuses it. Benton Arrelsford, of the war office, serves as the villain in that he, too, loves and is trying to win the heroine, and in that he is trying to prove Captain Thorne a spy. Edith is forced to submit her lover to the test of his fidelity to the Confederacy. Arrelsford and Edith conceal themselves outside the window of the war office. Thorne enters with a forged order, clears the room of all other workers, and prepares to send the message which will weaken the Confederate defense.

¹¹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 228.

¹² Quinn, Introduction to Secret Service, in Representative American Plays (New York: The Century Co., 1917), p. 576.

Arrelsford stops him by a shot from the balcony, and summons the guard. Edith comes to his rescue with the commission which he has once refused, making her choice for love of Captain Thorne, against love of country. Because to the man duty to country comes first, Thorne goes to the telegraph instrument to send the dispatch. But when Edith appeals to his honor, telling him that she brought the commission to save his life, not dreaming that he would use it for anything else, he revokes the message and tears up the commission.

Although the action is given the place of far greatest importance, the play would yet probably escape the classification of "melodrama" if it ended here, but in the last act the dramatist intervenes like a "god from the machine," and spares the life of the hero, even intimating that the hero and heroine will live happily ever after. The hero's goodness is questionable, he being a Union spy with a divided duty.¹³

The fellow was at best nothing but a devoted and patriotic spy, who, after professionally playing the Confederates false, comes dangerously near betraying the Federals. He sublimely weakens at a supreme moment, but there is really no reason, except that everybody loves him from President Davis down, why he should not have been shot, except again those reasons, plentiful as blackberries, which romance always has at hand and which we are so willing to find convincing.¹⁴

David Belasco produced his The Heart of Maryland in October, 1895, at the Grand Opera House, Washington, D. C. It is, like Shenandoah, Secret Service, and Belle Lamar, a melodrama of the Civil War. The hero

¹³ William Gillette, Secret Service, in Representative American Plays, edited by Quinn, op. cit., pp. 638-649.

¹⁴ W. D. Howells, "Recent Plays," Harper's, 182+634-37, March, 1916, p. 637.

is a Northern officer, Alan Kendrick. The sympathy of the audience is transferred from the Southern cause to the Northern, in the play, because upon Alan's success depends the salvation of Maryland Calvert, who has risked her life and forsaken her own cause to save him. The height of the melodramatic is reached in the scene in which Maryland swings out from a tower holding to the clapper of a bell which was to have been the signal for her lover's doom.¹⁵

'Way Down East, "A Pastoral Drama" by Lottie Blair Parker was a popular success, beginning at the Manhattan Theater on February 7, 1898, and running for three hundred sixty-one performances in New York.¹⁶ The heroine, Anna Moore, had been tricked by Lennox Sanderson, the villain, into believing they are married. He soon grew tired of her, and she discovers the fraud in the ceremony. Soon after her baby died, her mother died also, leaving her alone in the world. As the play opens, she comes to the New England farm home of the Bartletts seeking work. Lennox Sanderson, a wealthy and respected citizen of this community, to which he has recently moved, is courting Kate Brewster, niece of the Bartletts, and is very anxious to get Anna as far away from there as possible.

Anna. I don't know what more there is to be said between you and me. I had hoped and prayed that I might never see you again.

Sanderson. That's exactly what I want. It's deuced unpleasant for me to have you around here. If you'll go away I'll give you five hundred dollars.

Anna. I don't want it.

Sanderson. Oh, that isn't enough, eh? See here, then, I'll make it a thousand, and you can have it any minute.

¹⁵ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., pp. 176-77.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 162.

Anna. I refuse to take it.

Sanderson. (Strolls leisurely down to table as he speaks.) You do--then I suppose you are going to try and work some plan to get the best of me--you know I'm rich now, maybe you think you'll get a big sum out of me--who knows? Maybe you think you'll compel me to marry you.

Anna. (Jumping up; dropping her knitting basket on floor.) Oh, stop--oh--how could I ever have been foolish enough--ignorant enough to care for you. I feel nothing for you now but contempt.

Sanderson. (Turning to her suddenly.) Then you're not going to interfere with any of my plans.

Anna. Oh, if I had ever thought of doing that--of forcing you to right the injustice you have done me--that thought was buried in the grave with our little child.

Sanderson. The child is dead, then?

Anna. (Simply nods her head and crosses to table. Sits.) At first I thought I would go mad in my loneliness and despair; I see now that it was best--she will never suffer for her mother's wrong, nor blush for her father's infamy. (Weeps.)

Sanderson. (Coming toward her and down L. of her.) Oh, hand it all, Anna, you needn't be so hard on a fellow. I offered to make it up to you. If a thousand isn't enough, how much will you take to go away and call things square?

Anna. (Rises and looks straight at him.) You can't square the ruin of a woman's life with money--and I don't want any of yours. (Crosses to R. C.)

Sanderson. And you won't go away?

Anna. No.¹⁷

David Bartlett, whose parents have been planning for years his marriage with his cousin Kate, falls in love with Anna at first sight. Realizing her unworthiness, she refuses his love and his proposal of marriage, although she loves him dearly.

Anna. Oh--no--no--I can never be your wife--I can never be any man's wife.

David. (Steps toward her.) Anna!

(Anna looks at David; tries to speak; fails; bursts into sobs. Crossing slowly to steps, sobbing audibly. David appears stupified, sinks into rocker. When Anna has gone half way up the steps she drops her head on her arms of the bannisters, still sobbing.)

Curtain.¹⁸

¹⁷ Lottie Blair Parker, 'Way Down East (Copyrighted, 1899, by Lottie Blair Parker, Author and Owner; printed, not Published), pp. 46-7.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

Squire Bartlett investigates the rumors he had heard concerning Anna's past, finds they are true, and faces her with them.

(Anna totters toward Squire imploringly; sinks at his feet, back to audience.David has backed up stage to chair, ... where he sits dazed; Anna, after a pause, holds out her hands appealingly toward David; he turns away, goes up to window, back to audience. Anna staggers to her feet; slowly goes to G. door; opens it wide, gets half out, stops, looks back at Squire, who has been watching her but now turns away, leaving the door open. Anna comes back into room a few steps.

Anna. You found out so much! You found out that I had been a mother! You found out that I had borne a child and endured the agony of losing it! Did you find out also that I had believed myself to be an honorable wife? That the father of my child was a wretch who betrayed an ignorant girl through a mock marriage--...You have been hunting down the defenseless girl who only asked to earn her bread in your house. There is a man, an honored guest at your table--why don't you find out what his life has been? For he (Pointing to Sanderson.) is the father of my child--he is the man who betrayed me!

(Exit quickly, leaving door open. Heavy snow whirls in and the wind roars and whistles. All hold their attitudes till curtain.)¹⁹

The neighbors hunt all night for Anna. Early in the morning, David finds her, unconscious, half-frozen in the snow where she had fallen on her way to the lake to end her troubles. She is forgiven her sin and accepted by the family, while Lennox is ordered to leave the country.

There appears in this play, for the first time in the history of the melodrama in the United States, a heroine who is not a "pure woman." The villain is as evil as ever a villain had been, and his punishment was in banishment rather than in death. The plot complications were based upon her attempts to prove her innocence in the sin. The story itself is melodramatic, and so are the actions. The conversation is much less natural

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 69-70.

than that found in the usual play of this period; in fact, it is reminiscent of the language used in Under the Gaslight. There is little use of soliloquy, aside, or music.

The Moth and the Flame, by Clyde Fitch, first played at the Chestnut Street Theater, Philadelphia, February 14, 1898,²⁰ is very similar to Thomas's In Missouri. In both, the villain is a suave young man, little known in the community, with whom the heroine thinks she is in love; the hero is an old family friend, long in love with the heroine, who struggles to save her from the villain and to win her love for himself; the heroine is more or less of a spoiled brat, who realizes, in the end, the badness of the villain and the goodness of the hero. In both, the hero refuses to take advantage of the heroine's feelings of gratitude for his having exposed the villain, and does not even tell her he loves her at the end of the play. But the audience is led to believe that they will soon "live happily ever after."

The Moth and the Flame is an attempt to show the emptiness and superficiality of society. Marion Wolton, a New York society belle, is courted by Douglas Rhodes, an old friend and highly estimable young man, and by Edward Fletcher, a fascinating new acquaintance whose reputation is decidedly bad. She accepts the latter on the same evening that her father commits suicide to escape the consequences of having misappropriated trust funds.

The scene of the discovery of this suicide is highly melodramatic:

²⁰ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 346.

(Marion enters tragically. White, frightened, she staggers quickly into the room, and, stopping for a second, gasps in a horrified whisper.)

Marion. Mother! (Crosses to arch.) Mother!! (...Marion turns, frightened, goes down. Her mother comes to her. They meet.)

Mrs. Wolton. (Frightened, puzzled.) What is it? What is the matter?

Marion. (For a moment, can't speak. She opens her lips but the words refuse to come. Then she manages to gasp out.) Father!

Mrs. Wolton. Your father--what? (Starts and looks at her questioningly, frightened.....)

Marion. He is dead!

Mrs. Wolton. Dead!! (She makes a movement toward door. Marion stops her.)

Marion. It's too horrible!--he has killed himself--(Adds the latter in lower tone, almost fainting. ...Re-enter Douglas from ball-room.)

Douglas. May I go up? (He sees the condition of Mrs. Wolton and the expression of Marion.) Is your mother ill?

Marion. Help me take her to--my room--I will tell you. (... Mrs. Wolton and Marion shudder as they go out.)²¹

The wedding ceremony is interrupted by Jeanette Cross, a woman who claims to be the mother of a child by Fletcher.

(Jeanette reenters, bringing by the hand a small child, Edward, with her. She leads him straight to the foot of the chancel steps, and, pointing to Fletcher, speaks. All through the rest of this scene, the child keeps hold of the skirts of the mother--standing close to her side.)

Jeanette. This is that man's child--and mine.You shall not go on! He's done his best to make me what he says I am--and God knows he might have succeeded--(Emotion,) but for my boy's sake I fought the fight for honor--(Completely controlling her emotion.) The day he tricked me--(With a look of scorn at Fletcher.) I stood before him as pure a woman as you stand now, and since he left me, there has never been an hour when I couldn't (Sic.) look straight into my child's eyes, not one minute I couldn't (Sic.) feel his two arms about my neck without a shudder.²²

The villain in this play is like Sanderson, in 'Way Down East', in that he had tricked an ignorant girl by a fake marriage. Much of the con-

²¹ Clyde Fitch, The Moth and the Flame, in Representative Plays by American Dramatists, Vol. III, edited by Moses, op.cit., pp. 561-62.

²² Ibid., pp. 573-75.

versation, and a great deal of the actions in this play are melodramatic. Again, there is an absence of the use of music, asides, and soliloquies.

Another melodrama of the Civil War is Herne's The Reverend Griffith Davenport, first given at the Lafayette Square Theater in Washington, January 16, 1899, and later at the Herald Square Theater, New York, from January 31 to February 10. The direct source of this play is the novel An Unofficial Patriot, by Helen H. Gardener.²³

Clyde Fitch's The Cowboy and the Lady appeared in Philadelphia, at the Broad Street Theater, beginning March 13, 1899, and was later taken on tour. It was received with little enthusiasm in London, where it played in June of that year.²⁴

The hero is Teddy North, a Harvard graduate, now proprietor of a dude ranch in Colorado. Although his dress and features make him appear a dude, those who are best acquainted with him know that his physical strength has no equal in that locality. The heroine is a married woman, mistreated by her husband, who is a perpetual flirt. She says to him,

Ever since I married you, you've heaped sorrow and disgrace upon me. Your name which you gave me to bear has been the by-word for scandal in every city we have lived in. I came to you an innocent girl, and you soon made me into a hard and bitter woman, knowing more than any woman should ever know! All this is in the past, and though your shadow must fall over my future, I've made up my mind it shall be only your shadow that darkens it, and not yourself.²⁵

In spite of her unhappiness with her husband, Mrs. Weston remains so sweet and fresh that everyone loves her--including Teddy North, although

²³ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 150.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 273.

²⁵ Clyde Fitch, The Cowboy and the Lady (New York: Samuel French, 1908), p. 76.

no love-making ever takes place between them.

Weston is a "good-looking man between thirty and forty--a selfish man, thinking only of his own pleasures, honest with men from habit; dishonest with women for the same reason."²⁶ His habit of having an affair with every girl he meets comes to an abrupt end when he tries to elope with the wrong girl--and is killed by Indian Jim, who loves the girl. Both Mrs. Weston and North are suspected of the murder, Mrs. Weston because Teddy overheard her say to her husband, "I feel to-night I could kill you!"²⁷ and North because Mrs. Weston discovered him beside her dead husband. In the third act, the trial of North for the murder takes place. The evidence Mrs. Weston furnishes all points to the conclusion that he is guilty, yet she insists that she believes him innocent. Teddy is handling his own defense.

Teddy. Mrs. Weston, you just now said you believed in my innocence?

Mrs. Weston. Absolutely!

Teddy. (Affirmatively.) But your evidence was true, all the same? (She nods affirmatively.) Only your belief in my innocence is so great that you thought perjury justifiable if necessary to save my being unjustly condemned?

Mrs. Weston. (Very low voice,) Yes--

Teddy. (Very embarrassed,) I must now ask you an awfully embarrassing question. There is an opinion in the court that it isn't so much absolute belief in my innocence as love for me that has influenced you in my behalf. The only way to properly disabuse their minds is for me to ask you a question outright, and you will speak the truth, won't you?

Mrs. Weston. Yes.

Teddy. (Desperately--very slowly,) Mrs. Weston, do you love me? (Music pp.)

Mrs. Weston. (Surprised, afraid.) The truth? I am to speak the truth?

²⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 77.

Teddy. Yes, on your oath, the truth. (A short pause. Mrs. Weston looks into Teddy's eyes, and the love hitherto concealed wells up into her own. . . Music, very piano, "I love a lovely girl, I do.")

Mrs. Weston. (Slowly.) Yes, I love you better than all the world.²⁸

When the jury pronounce North guilty of murder, Molly, for love of whom the Indian had killed Weston, breaks away from Jim and pushes her way through the crowd.

Molly. Wait! Wait! He didn't do it, so help me God! . . . I was in my room that night all the time. I swore false when I said I went down the road! . . . I know who did it! . . . Lemme kiss the book! I've been afraid of him, but I can't see no innocent man swing for what he done! I'll tell you who did it. (Crosses up to table--takes book.)

Jim. Don't you speak a word!

Molly. Gimme the book! (Molly seizes the book, presses her lips to it. At that moment Jim shoots her. With one half-cry, half-groan, she falls instantly to the floor. Tremenduous commotion. The public falls on Jim, who tries to make his escape. . . .)

Teddy. (Springs to the crowd, climbing upon their backs and breaking through them.) Boys! Boys, stop! For God's sake, don't kill him! Don't you see, the woman's dead, and only he can save me! . . . (The crowd falls back and gradually grows quiet.) . . .

Mrs. Weston, Dave, and Sheriff Ransom and a doctor from the crowd have carried Molly into the room where the witnesses were.)

Judge. (To Teddy.) Bring the man here!

(Teddy brings Jim to Judge--throws him L. Jim is sullen and dogged.)

Judge. (To Jim.) Why did you shoot your sweetheart?

Jim. She talk too much.

Judge. You know you will hang for it?

Jim. Naw! She not dead. Jim only make her tongue quiet.

Jim frighten Molly, but him not kill her!

Judge. Why were you afraid to have her tell who killed Weston? (Jim does not answer.)

Teddy. He's got to speak!

Jim. Jim won't speak.

Teddy. Your Honor, he must!

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 103-4.

(Re-enter Mrs. Weston--she goes to the Judge.)

Mrs. Weston. The woman is dead,

Jim. Molly! (He stands as if in a trance.)

Judge. (To Jim.) You've taken the life--(Interrupted.)

Teddy. (Interrupts.) Your Honor--(With a motion toward Jim, whose lips are quivering and moving as if to speak.)

Jim. (To himself, half singing.) Jim didn't mean to do that. Jim's tried it and he don't want no life without Molly. The sun would set forever behind her grave and the stars go blind and the moon go mad. (He pauses a second and then looks up and speaks aloud.) Don't hurry, Molly! Jim he coming after-- he catch up with you! (To those about him.) It was me killed Weston because he try to take Jim's girl! Now you-uns kill Jim! ...

Sheriff. (Enters from E. B.) Your Honor, the witness is coming to. She will live!²⁹

The curtain descends on the happy lovers as the music swells.

The heroine of this play is a new type, being the mistreated wife of a villain. Her husband receives his reward by being killed. Jim, the Indian, is a second villain in the story, and his reward is the apprehension of his crime. He is the second Indian villain of note, the first being Wannamucka in Daly's Horizon. There is occasional use of sympathetic music, but little of asides and soliloquies, and none of tableaux. The situations and the conversation are sometimes melodramatic, but again the most outstanding melodramatic characteristic is the action.

Augustus Thomas's Arizona, a melodrama of the West, opened at Hamlin Garland's Opera House, Chicago, June 12, 1899; at the Herald Square Theater, September 10, 1900; and at the Adelphi Theater in London, February 8, 1902.³⁰

²⁹ Ibid., p. 109 ff.

³⁰ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 396-97.

Colonel Bonham and his father-in-law, Henry Canby, the owner of Aravaipa Ranch, are representative of the two types which govern the West of Arizona. Life has broadened Canby, but army tradition and discipline have narrowed Bonham. When, at the climax of the play, Estrella, the Colonel's wife, is found in the company of Lieutenant Denton late at night, and Denton's refusal to explain his presence leads to his dismissal from the army, the different ways in which Bonham and Canby react to the charge of theft, which Denton faces to save Estrella's honor, are typical of their natures and of their training. The villain is Captain Hodgman, whose attempted flight with Estrella has placed Denton in his false position. When it is discovered that he has seduced Lina, the daughter of Sergeant Kellar, the Sergeant threatens to shoot him. Teny, the "vaquero," who loves Lina, wastes no time in threats but shoots Hodgman on sight, and at the first opportunity departs on the swiftest horse on the ranch. Denton is finally exonerated and the play ends in true story-book fashion.⁵¹

Sag Harbor, Herne's last play, was produced at the Park Theater in Boston, October 24, 1899, and ran there until January 20, 1900. It opened in New York in September, 1900, with Lionell Barrymore as Frank Turner, and ran a year.⁵² It is a revision of Hearns of Oak, the main theme being the contrasted love of two brothers, Ben and Frank Turner, for the same woman, Martha Reese, who marries Ben, the older, because of the gratitude she feels for him, although she really loves Frank. The central character is

⁵¹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 249.

⁵² Ibid., p. 156.

not the husband, as was the case in Hearts of Oak, but Captain Dan Marble, a guardian angel of everyone. The two lovers here are brothers instead of foster father and son. In both plays, the younger man goes away, upon the marriage of the girl to his rival. In both cases he comes back after two years, and the husband overhears the young people struggling to make their great sacrifice a second time. In Sag Harbor the relations are straightened out by the story Captain Marble tells them on Easter Sunday, of a wife in a similar situation, who finds that after sending her husband off to war she has really loved him best. Frank, with his surly disposition, is a much less lovable character than was Ned Fairweather, so that the audience does not regret the change in ending.³³

The melodrama Sherlock Holmes, by William Gillette, was an unqualified success, running at the Star Theater, Buffalo, beginning October 24, 1899; at the Garrick Theater, November 6, 1899; and at the Lyceum Theater, London, September 2, 1901. Gillette took the famous Scotland Yard figures of Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes and Watson, and created for them his own situations.³⁴

In the 'nineties there were many melodramas written, dealing with a wide variety of subjects. The war still furnished material for plays, such as Secret Service and The Reverend Griffith Davenport, and the Heart of Maryland. Herne's partiality for the sea is shown in his Shore Acres and Sag Harbor. Plays of the West included In Missouri, The Cowboy and the Lady, and Arizona. In Old Kentucky contrasted the two types of

³³ James A. Herne, Sag Harbor, in Shore Acres and Other Plays, op. cit., pp. 127-257.

people of Kentucky. 'Way Down East was a picture of rural New England, and The Moth and the Flame of Eastern society life.

By this time, tableaux were a thing of the past; asides and soliloquies and appropriate music accompanying especially dramatic scenes had disappeared, with a few exceptions. The language had become quite natural, and the plots were more logical. Conventional characterization and over-sentimental acting were the chief remaining melodramatic characteristics of the plays of this period. Several new types of heroines were introduced: Mrs. Weston, in The Cowboy and the Lady, was the unhappy wife of a villain; Marion, in The Moth and the Flame, and Kate, in In Missouri, were girls spoiled by having advantages they failed to appreciate; and Anna, in 'Way Down East, was a girl with a past. The villains in this decade were often supposedly respectable members of society, whose villainy was revealed in the course of the play. The old tradition of having the villain remain bad and receive his punishment still held, but only rarely was that punishment death. There was little change in the nature of the hero, he still remaining a virtuous, generous, brave man whose sole purpose in life was to win and make happy the heroine.

CHAPTER VI

TENDENCIES IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The tendency in the twentieth century has been to subordinate the melodrama, which was the chief dramatic form of the nineteenth century, to give place to a less exaggerated form in which characterization and plot instead of action receive the emphasis. This is the natural result of a gradual process of growth in the writing and producing of native American plays.

At the beginning of the century, however, there came one of the most famous of all American melodramas--David Belasco's The Girl of the Golden West, which ran three years after its first performance at the new Belasco Theater in Pittsburgh, October 3, 1905. Puccini adapted the story into the first grand opera to be written on an American theme, and produced it at the Metropolitan Opera House, December 10, 1910.¹

The heroine, an extraordinarily pure, courageous, loyal, and passionate woman, keeps a saloon and yet is able to cope with any situation which presents itself. Such a combination is to a modern audience an utter impossibility. Having resisted the advances of all comers, "The Girl"

¹ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 192.

falls in love with Dick Johnson, a picturesque but over-nice outlaw, who comes to her place with the intention of robbing it. He is pursued by the sheriff, Jack Rance, to her cabin, where, unchaperoned, she has retained the respect of the neighborhood. It is difficult to understand how she managed to maintain her wonderful reputation when even in the broad-minded days of nineteen hundred thirty-seven she would be considered an immoral woman for entertaining Johnson alone in her cabin at one o'clock at night. However, as Johnson leaves the cabin he is wounded by Rance, and staggers back to be concealed in the loft by the girl. Rance enters and looks everywhere but in the obvious place of concealment. The girl challenges him to a game of poker, wagering that if he wins she is the prize, and if she wins he is to discontinue his search for Johnson. She pretends to faint, and while the sheriff is getting a glass of water to revive her, she pulls from the bosom of her dress the hand which wins the game for her. He is about to leave when a drop of blood falls from the wounded man upon his hand. It hardly seems possible that a drama could go further in the direction of improbability. For love of "The Girl," the sheriff does not arrest the man, but he is forced to do it when the people of the village discover Johnson's presence in the vicinity. Making the girl believe that he is going away to get a job, Johnson comes to bid her farewell.

Girl. I want you to think of me here jes' waitin'. You was the first... There'll never be anyone but you. All that mother was to father, I'm goin' to be to you. You're the man I'd want settin' across the table, if they was a little kid like I was, playin' under it. I don't say more

than that! Only--you--you will--you must get through safe--
and, well, think of me here jes' waitin' jes' waitin' ...
jes' waitin'

(He stands looking at her. After a pause, she puts her face
in his arm and weeps.)

Johnson. Oh, Girl, Girl! That first night I went to your
cabin--I saw you kneeling--praying, Say that in your heart for
me--now. Perhaps I believe it--perhaps I don't, I hope I do.
But say it--say it, Girl--just for the luck of it. Say it. (He
kneels at her feet, his head bowed. The Girl prays silently,
crossing herself before she begins, and at the end of the prayer
they embrace. Sonora opens the door quietly.) God bless you!
Good-bye Good-bye, Girl!²

The men who are waiting outside to hang Johnson see this scene,
and are so touched by the girl's passionate devotion to Johnson and by
his to her that they release him.

The heroine of this play is even more improbable, if possible, than
any which have appeared previously. It is remarkable that she could be
so virtuous and yet do so many questionable things. Another new feature
found in this melodrama is that the villain reforms, is forgiven his sins,
and wins the heroine. Hitherto, an occasional villain had changed, and
had not been very seriously punished--such as Mrs. Rogers in Esmeralda and
Martin in Shore Acres--but the change was never of his own volition. The
conversation, plot, and actions are as melodramatic as any which had ap-
peared even fifty years earlier, and the emphasis remained on the action,
just as it had in the older plays.

During the first ten years of the century there was a deluge of
"cheap" melodrama, more baldly exaggerated, over-sentimental, and insincere
than any which had gone before. These were perpetrated first by Theodore

²David Belasco, The Girl of the Golden West, in Representative
American Dramas, edited by Moses (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1925),
p. 96.

Kremer, and later by Owen Davis, "Bertha, the Sewing Machine Girl," Convict 999, and Nellie, the Beautiful Cloak Model being representative of this group of plays. These men admitted that their plays were written for the sole purpose of making money, because they were popular with the poor people of the city who came to the Bowery Theater to pay their ten, twenty, or thirty cents for an evening's thrilling entertainment. The intelligence of the most of the audiences was decidedly below average, so that they appreciated this type of melodrama because it appealed to the broader, coarser emotions.⁵

About the end of the first decade there came a wave of melodrama which dramatized current events. In 1906 appeared George Broadhurst's The Man of the Hour, a play of political conditions under the "boss" system. Charles Klein's Daughters of Men, coming the same year, portrays the conflict between capital and labor. His The Third Degree (1909) is based on the practice of the police in questioning criminals after arrest. Joseph Medill Patterson and Harriet Ford drew a vivid, but exaggerated picture of a newspaper office and composing room in The Fourth Estate (1909). A Plain Woman (1912), by Eugene Walter, is a dramatization of a current divorce suit.

The melodramas passed from a scrutiny of our political and economic institutions to an analysis of crime and its detection, and a deluge of "crook" plays ensued, reaching the height of their popularity in the early twenties, and even yet are vastly popular as movies. The first of these

⁵ Moses, The American Dramatist, op. cit., p. 186 ff.

worthy of note is Elmer Rice's On Trial (1914), a murder mystery which interrupted the progress of a court trial by enacting certain scenes which the witnesses have just started to describe--a device which the movies have since popularized. In Porter Emerson Browne's The Bad Man (1920) the hero, Fanchito Lopez, is a Mexican bandit.⁴

The Pulitzer Prize play for 1924 was Hatcher Hughes's melodrama of mountaineer life in the South, Hell Bent for Heaven. It has an exciting plot and valid dialogue, and the method of revealing characters is somewhat psychological. The main interest of the story centers around Rufe Fryor, whose religious ecstasies and self-deceptions scatter the seeds of tragedy wherever he goes. Too cowardly to fight, too indolent to work, too effeminate not to be forever hiding behind sympathetic petticoats, he is, as his chief victim says, a "trouble-breeder." He nags at lovers until they are in danger of being separated, and he nags at friends until they are in danger of reviving an old feud. Sid Hunt, just back from the war, is the hero and Jude Lewry, a member of the family which formerly had been engaged in a feud with the Hunts, is the heroine. The villain's reward is a direct result of his attempt on the life of the hero--the waters of the dam sweep over the country, and he is left in the house to drown, while the others escape in a boat.⁵

The old melodrama is now considered absurd, with its outrageously heroic hero, its incredibly villainous villain, and its unspeakably guileless and naive heroine. Its characters were usually but puppets, and when

⁴ Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Civil War to the Present Day, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 100ff.

⁵ Hatcher Hughes, Hell Bent for Heaven (New York: Samuel French, 1924).

the strings became inextricably tangled, the master appeared like a Deus ex Machina, and quickly straightened them out. But soon, through the educational agency of the public libraries, the melodrama audiences began reading books more reserved in action, more logical in plot, more subtle in characterization, and soon they were no longer willing to accept the repeated inconsistencies. The new melodrama demands unconventional complications, soft-pedalling on the arbitrary, and at least a semblance of inevitability. The older melodrama demanded neither probability nor possibility, but the new demands the first. The appeal of "soft music," brought in to lull the critical judgment to sleep and to arouse the emotions so that they would forgive the absurdities, is no longer needed. There must now be a naturalness of dialogue, and a truthfulness of character drawing. The emphasis is no longer on situations and action, but upon characterization and plot.

The breath-taking excitement of the old "thriller" is maintained today in the motion pictures, especially in that variety known as the "Western," which draws such vast crowds in all the cheap theaters on Saturday afternoons. The present day "murder mystery" is another type which retains all the characteristics of the early melodrama.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Melodrama has played an important part in the development of native drama in the United States. Until 1850 practically all the dramas produced in this country were either plays from other countries or adaptations of such plays. The early nineteenth century revolt against the influx of foreign literature did not make itself felt in the field of drama for some time, actors and producers preferring to stage plays whose financial success was assured by their popularity abroad. About the middle of the nineteenth century Dion Boucicault, an Irish immigrant, became interested in the possibilities of producing real American dramas, of American settings, characters, and situations, and under his influence such plays came into popularity.

The most outstanding melodramas of the 'fifties are Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Octoroon, and Ten Nights in a Bar-Room. These plays were all concerned with the social problems of the day, the first two with slavery and the third with the drink evil. All the characteristics of melodrama are to be found in the plays of the period--a thoroughly evil villain, a remarkably virtuous heroine, an outstandingly heroic hero, a highly sentimental story, deeply emotional conversation, frequent asides and soliloquies, many tableaux, much music for heightening the emotional effect of particularly

touching scenes, and unbelievable complications which were finally untangled by some "God from the machine" device. Throughout the plays the emphasis is always on the action, rather than on the plot or the characterization. The leading characters were always recognizable at their first entrance on the stage, and the villain's punishment is death.

Little drama of any kind appeared in the 'sixties, because of the War. What did appear was usually written in haste, and disappeared just as quickly. The only surviving drama of any importance from this period is Under the Gaslight. War-weary minds craved entertainment entirely free from any implication of moralizing. Consequently, the play dealing with the social problem disappeared. In the plays of this period the hero and heroine remained victims of circumstances over which they had no control, and were saved by the use of "God from the machine" devices. The villains were still as evil as ever, but their punishment was sometimes banishment instead of death.

The growing interest in Westward expansion was expressed in the melodramas of the 'seventies, in such plays as Horizon, Davy Crockett, and My Partner. This period also saw the rise to popularity of plays on the subject of the war, Belle Lamar being the first war play of note. The plot complications of many of the plays centered about unhappy marriages. The heroines were often unhappy married women. There was little change in the nature of the hero. A new type of villain appeared--the American Indian. The villain in Hearts of Oak, who was not particularly bad, foreshadowed the coming of the villain who appears to be a respectable member of society.

Dramatic music, asides, soliloquies, and tableaux were still used extensively. Sometimes a villain died at the end of the play, but more often he was exiled. Conversation was tending to be more natural.

The War furnished material for numerous melodramas of the 'eighties, the best of which were Held by the Enemy and Shenandoah. The tableau was no longer used, but sentimental music, asides, and soliloquies were still found occasionally. The first real female villain in American melodrama appeared in Esmeralda. The complications of these plays no longer involved so many physical disasters as formerly, but they were still most often straightened out by mechanical and illogical methods. Characterization was coming to receive more emphasis than previously, but the chief emphasis remained on the action. The villains of this decade were rarely punished by death.

A large number of melodramas, dealing with a wide variety of subjects, were produced in the 'nineties. By this time the tableaux had been discarded entirely, and dramatic music, soliloquies, and asides were rarely used. Conversation was much more true-to-life, and plots were more logical. The chief remaining melodramatic characteristics were conventional characterization and over-sentimental acting. The heroines were less ideal, sometimes going almost too far in the other direction. Often they believed themselves to be in love with the villain, who appeared most frequently as an attractive young man, whose villainy was exposed through the efforts of the hero. The villain was still punished but almost never by death. The hero was not much changed from what he was in the first decennial period.

In the twentieth century there have been frequent revivals of the old melodramas. Those which have been written since the end of the last century place more emphasis on plot and characterization, and less on action. The complications have come to be less conventional, and are solved by more logical means. The plays are often concerned with current events or social problems. But in the twentieth century the melodrama has been subordinated to a more realistic type, which the sophisticated audiences of today consider definitely superior to the old plays. The "murder mystery" and "Western" movies supply the current demands for the old-fashioned "thriller."

The beginnings of native American drama seem to have been in melodrama, which, for fifty years, was the dominant dramatic form in this country. As educational facilities increased, audiences came to revolt against the improbabilities of the old dramas, and a less exaggerated type evolved. The popularity of these plays, as they have been revived occasionally in the twentieth century, might possibly be attributed to the need of the modern audience for relief from the grim realities of such plays as Dead End, Tobacco Road, The Children's Hour, and Winterset.

An interesting study for a future dissertation would be the melodramatic elements in fiction, beginning with the advent of the Gothic romance.

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