HENRY PLACIDE.

a Miographical Sketch of his Career-Interest-ing Reminiscences of the American Stage. We yesterday announced the death of Henry Placide, one of the best of the old stock of American actors, who are now fast disappearing from view. From an appreciative sketch of his career by the late Frederick S. Cozzens, published some months ago in the New York Times, we make the following extracts, which give all the principal events of his life and a friendly critieism of his merits as an actor. Mr. Placide died at his residence at Babylon, L. I., on

Saturday. Henry Placide, the eminent American comedian, was born in Charleston, S. C., Sept. 8, 1799. His father, Monsieur Alexandre Placide, was an eminent pantomimis-and dancer on the tight-rope (it was said that he was the instructor of the Count d'Artois, the brother of Louis XIV, in the art), a very graceful performer and estimable man. He was also, in the early part of this century, manager of the Charleston company, said to be at that time the best theatrical company in America, and afterward manager of the Richmond (Va.) Theatre until it was burned down in December, 1811. * * The mother of Henry Placide was before her marriage a Miss Wrighten, the daughter of a very celebrated actress. It is often the case that hereditary talent is transmitted to the children from the mother. In this case it seems to have descended from the grandmother as well. The grandmother of Henry Placide was a Mrs. Wrighten, prompter of Drury Lane Theatre, afterwards Mrs. Pownall, a comic actress and vocalist of great ability. . . . The earliest authentic record of his appearance on the stage exists in a playbill hanging in the parlor of the actor) of the Charleston company, dated Friday evening October 14, 1808, in which Master H. Placide appears in two pieces, viz., as "David" in the Blind Bargain, and as "Florio di Rosalvi" in the Hunter of the Alps. He was then nine years old, but he says he appeared in the same company much earlier. * * * In 1813, Placide, then only fourteen years of age, appears in a New York theatre in junior Theatre of Twaits & Holland, where, This was the old Anthony Street in after years, Edmund Kean made his first appearance. He played here for about a year, when Twaits died, and the theatre was closed. His next appearance was in Albany, under Manager Bernard. This company performed during the winter in Albany, and in summer made a tour through the Provinces, giving dramatic performances at Montreal, Quebec, etc. After two years of hard work and little pay, the company found themselves almost penniless in Quebec, the season having been unsuccessful. It was here that Manager Bernard declared to them the impossibility of keeping the company together any longer. 'If broken up in smaller parties each set might do better when detached, and playing with less expenses before smaller audiences. He advised a party of them to go to Halifax, Nova Scotia; there was a large garrison there; surely they could count apon some support in Halifax." This well-spoken advice determined the larger part of them to go to that fancied El Dorado It was a custom in those days to sell vessels condemned by the British Admiralty in the Provinces to West India adventurers, and a schooner of this inviting reputation being randy to sail for the tropics was engaged, though risky but economical, to carry the greater part of the company down the mighty St. Lawrence and drop them at the Nova Scotia capital. * * * The vessel brought the company safely to Halifax. This was in the summer of 1815. Placide was then sixteen years of age. As they were nearly destitute of money, the company at once set about re-

But a full cup will sometimes overflow. The company had no sooner begun to reap a tole-rable harvest, than some of the garrison officers, who had taken part in amateur theatricals before, felt an ambition to appear upon a real stage, and volunteered to take a hand in the performances of the company. This was not to be denied them-indeed, for a time it proved a great card for the managers. After a run of unexpected profit, the volunteers be-gan to tire of the irksome duties of the stage, and only appeared occasionally. Then the real actors began to feel the weight of this auxiliary upon their backs. They could only count upon an audience on the nights when the officers played! The company alone, on the off nights, played to empty houses. To crown all, their military allies, inspired by an exclusive feeling of vanity, began to think about establishing a theatre of their own. It was not long before the project was carried into execution; a neat little garrison theatre made its appearance, and, with this fermidable rival to contend with, the old theatre soon sunk into neglect and decay. The owner of the fish warehouse, in order to secure, if possible, the payment of his rent, drew up a partnership note for all the actors to sign, as a lien upon every member of the company! The note was signed and fell due and was not paid; the luckless actors managed to escape from Halifax, and were separated never to be united again; one of them only, unconscious of impending danger, loitered behind, perhaps from stress of money to get away with, and the law laid its ging actor in a debtor's prison. This unfortunate party was Henry Placide. This pleasant abode was often referred to by his old and intimate friends afterwards as his "country seat at Halifax." " " Released

trieving their broken fortunes by giving a

representation at the earliest moment,

empty fish warehouse and set to work to prepare it for the future theatre. A stage was erected, benches made ready, a Halifax house

painter was secured for the scenery, and in

spite of any delrys and vexations, the com-

pany made its first bow to a Halifax audience

soon after, and for a time achieved a great

* Some of the party had secured an

from the country seat, he made his way to Richmond, Virginia, by way of Boston, where he performed again in a similar company in which he had enlisted as a youth, For three years he travelled with this company, and appeared in turn in Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, Augusta, and other Southern cities.

His second appearance in New York was as "Zekiel Homespun," in The Heir-at-Law, and as "Dr. Dabloncœur," in the afterpiece of The Budget, of Blunders, at the old Park Theatre. in 1823. From this time until 1843, a period of twenty years, he was the constant favorite of the New York public; in a career of unvarying excellence, always a star among stars; with the elder Mathews he divided the ap-plause of the audience; his "Frederick the Great" was as life-like a performance as Power's "Major O'Dogherty" in the same piece; his "Mr. Aspen," in The Nercous Man, was equal at least to the "McShane" of the same glorious rival; and "Count Morenos," "Major Hans Mansfeldt," and "De Wilkeskein," all intended for second-rate parts, he corked face looked horribly like the Moor.

O'Plenipo," "Gerald Pepper," and "Rory O'More." Charles Mathews, the elder, in taking leave of America, sent him his own stage copy of "Coddle," in the play of Marvied Life," with a note in verse advising him to visit England, assuring him that he would fill the Adelphi, and hailing him as the

"Chastest of actors

In spite of detractors That follow all actors, and bequeathing to him the part of "Coddle," in order, as he says, that he may "gain a fresh wreath" in acting this, a favorite part of Mathews.

In fact. Placide's excellence rose to a pa with the highest class of foreign actors that performed upon our scenic boards; he was equally esteemed with any or all of them, and his versatility was superior to any of them, except, perhaps, C. Mathews, the elder.

In genteel comedy, where birth and breeding were to be portrayed in the character of a gentleman, an innate refinement of manner surrounded Placide, and he looked, dressed and walked like one of "nature's noblemen. No one who has seen him can forget his port and bearing in "Lord Ogleby," in "Sir Peter Teazle," in "Sir Harcourt Courtley," in "Charles XII," or "Frederic the Great." No one who has seen him in his personification of the latter character will ever forget his courtly bearing to the ladies; his proud bow to his army as it passes under the windows of the Chateau Schonfeldt; the mixture of dignity, contempt, and defiance with which he bran dishes his sword in the face of "Baron Trenck's" squad of Austrians, when he is alone, and betrayed in the old chatean, yet shows himself to be "every inch a King!" *

* In the whimsical characters of comedy he had few rivals; such as his personification of "Sir Anthony Absolute," "Sir Abel Handy," "Major Ollapod," or "Colonel Damas," or "Dr. Caius" in the Merry Wives.

Another range of characters he was equally at home in, such as "Touchstone," in As You Like it, or the "Clown" in Twelfth Night; "Tom Dobbs" in the farce of the Omnibus, "Fathom" in the Hunchback, or in the innumerable roles he performed in farce, vaudeville, or melodrama. The profession was a different thing in those days to what it is now. Now we have seldom more than one piece a night, and a run of hundreds of nights of the same piece. Then they had three pieces a night-a piece to play the audience in with-a piece to play the audience out with—and a five-act tragedy or comedy be-tween the two. "I have studied and played in thirty-six different pieces in the course of three weeks," says the indefatigable actor. Think of it, ye easy-going aspirants for histrionic honors, who appear before modern footlights in only one piece for hundreds of

But there was a class of characters which belonged peculiarly to Placide, and which, since his retirement from the stage, have rarely, some never, been attempted by others, such as his "Dr. Boncour," in the Village Doctor; his "Michael Perrin," in Secret Service; his "Jean Jacques Freiaque," Grandfather Whitehead;" or "Tom Noddy or "Uncle John;" or "Haversack;" or in the last performance with which he took leave of the stage, "Corporal Cartouche."

Memory can only recall the exquisite pathos and humor of these representations. We shall never see their like again. Such real honest tears as were then shed will never be shed again by later audiences.

Of his wonderful industry some idea may

be formed by the following:—We have not yet spoken of his musical acquirements. He had a remarkable baritone voice, which, with proper cultivation, might have ranked him high in the class of buffo vocalists. Witness his "Baron Pompolino," in Cinderella, But this was not his ambition. One day Mr. Simpson, the manager, came to him, and asked him to undertake the "Olifour," in the opera of La Bayadere. Mr. Richings, who had often performed the part, was suddenly taken sick. Mile. Augusta (the "Bayadere") was set down to appear on the following Monday. The day on which the manager made his proposition was the Wednesday preceding. Placide said it was impossible; could not somebody else be had? They sent up again for Richings. "No," his physician said, "he will not be able to leave room for some weeks!" Simpson again appealed to Placide-"he would give him \$50 extra if he would undertake the part." To which Placide replied that he would add \$50 more out of his own pocket if Simpson would get a substitute. Thursday came. Mad'lle Augusta could not play anything else but "La Bayadere." But where was an "Olifour" to be had? The manager presented to the view of the actor the consequences that would ensue if the opera was not performed on the night in question; the disappointment of the public, the rage that would follow, the broken benches, the smashed chandeliers, the secnery in flames! "I shall be ruined," said poor Simpson. The heart of Placide was touched, and he agreed to undertake the part, and began to study on Thursday night the whole vocal *role* of "Olifour"—solos, duets, trios, choruses, and all—so as to be ready to appear in La Bayadere on the Monday following. "And while my brain was strained to its utmost to commit the music of the opera, judge of my surprise," said the actor, when I took up the morning paper on Monday, to find myself put down to play the principal character in a long farce that was introduced before the opera to play the audience in with. Simpson had no mercy upon his actors. He broke me down at last, with all this hard work, he never neglected his art. No one ever saw one of his parts slurred over or carelessly played. Everything he did was well done. His "Old Silky"—a subordinate character in the Road to Ruin was as well played as such chief parts as his "Sir Peter" or his "Sir Harcourt Courtley."

Many persons will remember Placide's first and only appearance in high tragedy in a principal character: namely, his playing "lago" to Reeve's "Othello," in the third act of that tragedy, June, 1835. Reeve was an immense man, probably weighed over four hundred pounds; he could scarcely be called an actor, but rather a Merry Andrew or buf-foon, in which character he has never been excelled: his memory was very poor, but he supplied the deficiency by all kinds of interpolations, which, with his wonderful drollery, passed off very well. It was a hard job for Reeve to master the text of a play. He was very illiterate man, and had so knowledge of reading that shis parts had to be read to him. Placide undertook to teach him his part in Othello, and Reeve was often on the point of giving it up in despair. However, he fagged away at it, and finally committed enough to go tolerably through with it. Another difficulty was to find a suitable dress large enough for him. At last an Oriental costume that had been used in a spectacle turned up, the principal part of which was a large green velvet tunic, with white satin sleeves; in this he was equipped, and with a scimetar and well-

raised to a level with Power's "Sir Patrick | The play went on very well for a time, both actors playing it seriously until "Othello" makes a demand of "Ingo:"— "Othello"-"Give me a living reason she's

> Whereupon "lago" repeats the passage relating to "Cassio."

"Othello" then should have followed with: "O monstrous! monstrous!" "instead of which, as if not satisfied with "lago's" reply, he very coolly said: - "Give me another reason." This brought down the house. "lago" was not prepared with "another rea-son," it was not in the play, and from that time the performance went on in burlesque, Reeve forgetting his part continually, until what with perplexity, what with the heat of the weather, his face began to perspire plentifully. This annoyed him, and in attempting to wipe it off he drew his long white satin sleeve across his cheek, which was like the flap of a saddle in bigness, and wiped off sweat, charcoal and all. This was enough for a climax; the audience roared, Placide gave a signal to the prompter, and down came the

In 1840 Mr. Stephen Price, Simpson's partner in the management of the "Park," died, leaving some engagements unfinished that he had made with popular performers on the other side of the water. Placide, at Simpson's request, crossed the Atlantic in the ship Gladiator, to re-engage the performers, and the consequence was the appearance at the Park of Braham, the famous tenor singer, Tyrone Power, Fanny Ellsler, Mr. and Mrs. Woods, Buckstone, and other foreign actors of the highest merit, During this visit to the Old World he did not play in England or elsewhere. He returned in August of the same

This period may be called the brightest days of the "Old Park." The far-famed stock company was in its perfection then, and being assisted by such actors as we have spoken of above, with Dowton, Hackett, Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Burton, the Seguin Operatio Company, the Martyn Operatic Company, Forrest, Charlotte Cushman, Browne, Barnes, W H. Williams, and others of great celebrity besides, it might surely have contested the palm with any theatre whatever.

Placide played a star engagement in London in 1843, where he was subject to some few not unfriendly criticisms, as Forrest had predicted, and even the comparisons made to his disadvantage were with giants of the stage. His "Sir Petef" was compared with that of Farren, and his "Touchstone" with that of Fawcett.

On his return to New York Placide reappeared at the Park in September, and con-tinued to play these until 1843. He there terminsted a long career of unequalled popularity at this time-honored edifice, and retired to his quiet country residence at Babylon, Long Island. Since then he played in the various cities in the Union, his last engagement being at the Winter Garden in 1865, where he played "Corporal Cartouche" with undiminished spirit in his sixty-sixth

In person Henry Placide is of medium height, a fine robust figure, a handsome face, with dark expressive eyes, and a meaning in every look or gesture. As is the case with all first-class actors, he acts with his whole body, every movement, however slight, has a sig-nificance, and attracts the attention of his audience from first to last. His voice is rich and unusually full and powerful, but modulated to every note of pathos or humor. There are tones in it that invariably touch our sympathies, and bring the tears when least expected, or move us to laughter at a word. His dress on the stage was always faultless. his manners graceful, his bearing that of a man of genius. In private life his character has been most exemplary. Scrupulous in the payment of his debts, particular in his intercourse with others, and careful in his habits. The control he exercises over himself is wonderful. He once said: - "During my acting upon the stage I never used to drink a drop of anything after dinner-not even water-as I was sure it affected the voice. So in the nights, even when I had to play in three pieces-and the theatre was rarely closed until after midnight-I never drank until I reached home. Then I would undress and make all ready to get to bed, even turning down the clothes, so as to make it all clear for me to jump in, and then I would take my first drink—a little brandy and water. Ah! one glass was never enough! I had to take two to quench my thirst before I put out

Matthews' compliment to Placide, whom he styles "chastest of actors," was by no means unmerited. Not only did he hold the "mirror up to nature," but in another sense his acting was chaste, and free from those ordinary blemishes of rudeness and vulgarity which too often disgrace performers of the comic drama. The indelicate jokes, the indecent gestures, the licentious doubles entendres of Jack Reeve and those who followed the style of that grotesque mimic, never were imitated nor even tolerated by Placide. His mind was singularly simple and pure of evil. In fact, he was always, on or off the stage, a refined gentleman. Not long since the writer was speaking of the opera bouffe, and the retired actor expressed some curiosity to know something of the play that just then was fas-cinating the town. This was during the early performances of the Grande Duchesse de Geolstein. As the licentiousness of the plot slowly revealed itself to him his lips became compressed, his eyebrows contracted, until at last he threw up his hands, and, in a burst of indignation exclaimed, "So, this is the kind of thing that pleases a New York audience, is it? This is what respectable people take their wives and daughters to see? Have we got down to this, when such things can please? Thank God I am no longer on the stage!

Mr. Placide, having acquired an easy com petence by his profession, is independent of the world, lives in his own pleasant little cottage, surrounded with its trim flower garden, and passes the autumn of his days in an Indian summer of tranquillity and peace. He is married, has one adopted daughter, and is a constant attendant on Sunday afternoons of the old Episcopal Church in Babylon, in which he takes great interest. He will leave behind him a reputation like that of Garrick. None can fill his place.

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POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT Scaled Proposals will be received until 5 P. M. on the 1st day of MARCH, 1870, for furnishing all the "Stamped Envelopes" and "Newspaper Wrappers" which this Department may require during a period of four years, commencing 1st of July, 1870, viz. STAMPED ENVELOPES.

No. 1. Note size, 2% by 4% inches, of paper.

No. 2. Ordinary letter size, 3 1-16 by 5% inches, of white, buff, canary, or cream-colored paper, or in such proportion of either as may be required.

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tion of each.

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to the proportion of each.

NEWSPAPER WRAPPERS,

by 9% inches, of bull or manilla paper.

All the above envelopes and wrappers to be embossed with postage stamps of such denominations, styles, and colors, and to bear such printing on the face, and to be made in the most thorough manner, of paper of approved quality, manufactured specially for the purpose, with such water marks or other devices to prevent imitation as the Postmaster-General may direct.

for the purpose, with such water marks or other devices to prevent imitation as the Postmaster-General may direct.

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the inspection and direction of an agent of the Department.

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the contractor.

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used, and any changes of dies or colors shall be made without extra charge.

Specimens of the stamped envelopes and wrappers now in use may be seen at any of the principal post offices, but these specimens are not to be regarded as the style and quality fixed by the department as a standard for the new contract; bidders are therefore invited to submit samples of other and different qualities and styles, including the paper proposed as well as the manufactured envelopes, wrappers, and boxes, and make their bids accordingly.

The contract will be awarded to the bidder whose proposal, although it be not the lowest, is con-

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Before closing a contract the successful bidder may be required to prepare new dies, and submit impressions thereof. The USE OF THE PRESENT DIES

impressions thereof. The USE OF THE PRESENT DIES MAY OR MAY NOT BE CONTINUED.

Bonds, with approved and sufficient sureties, in the sum of \$200,000, will be required for the faithful performance of the contract, as required by the seventeenth section of the act of Congress, approved the 26th of August, 1842, and payments under said contract will be made quarterly, after proper administrant of accounts. The Postmaster-General reserves to himself the right to annul the contract whenever the same, or

right to annul the contract whenever the same, or any part thereof, is offered for sale for the purpose of speculation; and under no circumstances will a transfer of the contract be allowed or sanctioned to any party who shall be, in the opinion of the Postmaster-General, less able to fulfill the conditions thereof than the original contractor. The right is also reserved to annul the contract for a failure to perform faithfully any of its stipulations.

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Bids should be securely enveloped and sealed. marked "Proposals for Stamped Envelopes and Wrappers," and addressed to the Third Assistant Postmaster-General, Post Office Department, Wash-

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BURRAU OF ORDNANCE, Sealed Proposals for the purchase of 30-pounder and 20-pounder Parrott Rifles, with Carriages, Implements, and Projectiles, now on hand in the Navy Yards at Portsmouth, N. H.; Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and Norfolk, will be reeived at this Bureau until 12 o'clock noon, January

In the aggregate there are about 390 Guns, 354 Car-

In the aggregate there are about 390 Guns, 354 Carriages, and 96,157 Projectiles. Schedules in detail of the articles at each yard will be furnished on application to this Bureau.

Bidders will state the number of guns, carriages, implements, and projectiles they desire to purchase at each yard separately, specifying the calibre of gun, kind of carriage, whether broadside or pivot, and the kind of projectiles.

The guns, etc., will be delivered at the respective navy yards, and must be removed by the purchaser or purchasers within ten days after the acceptance of his or their bid. But no deliveries will be made of any article until the parties purchasing shall have deposited with the paymaster of the navy yard the full amount of the purchase money in each case.

Many of the guns are new, and all are service thie. Bidders will therefore offer accordingly. No offer for these articles as old iron or wood will be considered.

The Bureau reserves the right to reject any or all bids which it may not consider to the interest of the Government to accept.

Proposals should be endorsed on the envelope "Proposals for Purchase of Rifled Caunon, etc."

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PROPOSALS.

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONERS FOR THE ERECTION OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS. PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 17, 1870. SEALED PROPOSALS will be received for the following work and materials required in the execution of the WALNUT Street portion of the PUBLIC

BUILDINGS, to wit;-For all the excavations, including the trenches for the foundations. The price to be stated per cubic yard, which is to cover all digging, hauling away the surplus earth, and cutting down and removing whatever trees may come in the way of the excavations, without extra measurement or allow-

For taking down the terrace wall, cleaning the bricks, and pilling them up adjacent to the buildings. taking down the iron railings, the gate piers, the coping of the wall and the steps, and depositing them on the grounds, and removing all the rubbish occasioned by the same. The price for this portion of the work to be stated in gross.

For concreting the entire foundation of the build-

ings with small broken stone, and cement, mortar, and grout, in conformity with the specifications. The depth of the concrete to be three feet, and the lateral dimensions to conform to the plans. The price to be stated per cubic foot, and to include all materials and labor.

For furnishing and delivering large-size building stone, the price to be stated per perch of 22 cubic feet, measured in the walls. Also, for select building stone, averaging 3 by 5 feet, and from 12 to 18 inches thick; the price for the same to be stated per cubic foot, delivered on the ground.

For building all the cellar walls, and the outside walls of the basement story, as high as the level line of the pavement, according to the plans and specifications. The price to be stated per perch of 22 cubic feet, laid in the walls, without extra measurement, and to include all labor and all materials except stone.

The contract or contracts will be awarded to the best and the lowest bidder or bidders, who will be required to give approved security for the faithful performance of the same.

The plans and specifications may be seen at the office of the Architect, Mr. JOHN MCARTHUR, JR., No. 205 S. SIXTH Street.

The proposals to be scaled and endorsed "Proposals for Public Buildings," and addressed to JAMES V. WATSON, Chairman of the Committee on Contracts, and to be left at the office of the Commissioners of Public Buildings, in the new Court House, SIXTH Street, below Chesnut, on the 14th day of February next ensuing, between the hours of 11 and 12 o'clock A. M., at which time the bids will be opened, in the presence of such bidders as may wish to attend.

By order of the Committee on Contracts. H. C. PUGH, Secretary. 1 19 wfm 11t

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