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James H. Caldwell: Theatre Manager.

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A Dissertation

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by

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Acknowledgment

This book is respectfully dedicated to Professor Hubert C. Heffner, who inspired it, to Professor Monroe Lippman, who encouraged it, and to Professor Claude L. Shaver, who guided it.
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This study is a critical account of the career of James Henry Caldwell, the actor-manager who dominated theatrical activity in the southwestern United States from 1820 to 1843. Caldwell came to America as an actor in 1816. As the result of a quarrel with the manager of the Charleston Theatre, he left the company in 1817 and during the next three years himself managed theatres in Virginia and Washington, D. C. In 1820 he took his company to New Orleans where, for three years, he conducted highly successful winter campaigns at the French theatre. His favorable reception by the New Orleans public encouraged a more permanent arrangement and led him to erect the American Theatre in Camp Street in 1822. This move profoundly affected the fortunes of both Caldwell and New Orleans. Caldwell's location of his theatre in an uninhabited section of the city served to attract other businesses to the area and the American section of New Orleans was thus established. Caldwell lighted the theatre with gas and by doing so laid the foundation of the large fortune he accumulated from gas lighting.
companies in New Orleans, Mobile and Cincinnati. His investments in real estate in these cities also contributed to his wealth.

From 1824 to 1833 James Caldwell expanded his theatre operations from New Orleans to the cities of Natchez, Huntsville, Nashville, St. Louis, Louisville, and Cincinnati, creating a theatrical circuit which enabled him profitably to employ a stock company for an entire year, with a winter season in New Orleans and summer seasons in the other cities of his circuit. This arrangement also aided him in the engagement of stars. In all of these cities, except Louisville, he either built or helped build new theatres, or renovated existing buildings.

Caldwell retired from the theatre briefly in 1833 to devote his time and energies to the establishment of the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company. During this time, also, he was engaged in the development of the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad. He was elected to the New Orleans City Council in 1834 and was returned to that office many times during the succeeding ten years.

In 1835 Caldwell returned to the theatre world when he built the mammoth St. Charles Theatre. Except for minor competition offered by the lessees of his Camp Street Theatre, he had no difficulty in re-establishing his supremacy in the South. However, the Panic of 1837 prevented his resuming his former theatrical circuit. Eventually, his monopoly in New Orleans was challenged and
destroyed. In 1840 he built a theatre in Mobile and drove the firm of Ludlow and Smith from that city. The routed managers promptly opened the New American Theatre in New Orleans, which proved a stronger attraction than Caldwell's St. Charles. When the St. Charles was destroyed by fire in March, 1842, Caldwell's reign as monarch of the south-western theatre was all but ended. A false hope was raised in him when Ludlow and Smith's theatre also burned and, after a complicated series of manouvers, Caldwell was able to re-enter management briefly at the re-built New American. However, his heavy financial losses drove him from the field even before his rivals had opened the re-built St. Charles in 1843.

Although he eventually failed as a theatre manager, the career of James H. Caldwell is unique in the annals of the American theatre for the high social status and wealth he acquired while following the profession of the theatre at a time which held that profession in low esteem.
INTRODUCTION

"I don't know that my friends ever claimed for me the credit of being the first founder of the drama in the South and West, but certainly they may say thus far, I have been the best; and this, falsehood itself dare not deny, that I am the first founder of the American drama, at the emporium of the South and West, New Orleans."¹

Never known for his modesty, the writer of this statement, James Henry Caldwell, nevertheless could make his claim of being "the best" without any great fear of contradiction. In fact, at the time he wrote this in 1837, James Caldwell was virtually unchallenged as the monarch of the western theatre. He was the owner of one of the largest theatres in the Union, and during the preceding fifteen years, had made his presence strongly felt in six widely separated western communities. During an American career of twenty years up to this point, he had had a hand in the construction of six theatres and, before his retirement in 1843, he would build two more. Qualitatively, too, he had made an impact on the theatre of the South and West. As he himself phrased it, "I have wielded the tinsel sceptre,

and commanded . . . every distinguished member of the profession, who has sought these shores. . . . Mammon and fame led them on; and season after season, I introduced them to crowded and delighted audiences."²

But fame, power, and a degree of fortune were not the elements which made the career of James H. Caldwell almost unique in the annals of the American theatre. Unlike a vast majority of his contemporaries in the profession who were itinerant and profligate and who were prevented by the nature of their livelihood, as well as by the mores of their times, from establishing permanent civic and social bonds, Caldwell's life is as notable for his contributions to the economic and political advancement of his chosen community, New Orleans, as for his contributions to its cultural advancement. In addition to becoming an outstanding theatre manager during his life, he became also a utilities magnate, a railroad tycoon, a banker, and a member of government at both the local and state levels. At the time of his death in 1863 he was a venerated and wealthy member of his community.

The history of the English-speaking theatre in New Orleans during the years in which Caldwell dominated the scene has been surveyed by a number of studies and thoroughly covered by two. Dr. Nelle Smither's doctoral dissertation, "A History of the English Theatre at New Orleans, 1806-1842, (Pennsylvania, 1942) covers the

²Ibid.
greater part of this period, and Dr. Joseph P. Roppolo's master's thesis, "A History of the American Stage in New Orleans, 1842-1845," surveys the final year of Caldwell's activity. There have been, similarly, chronicles of the theatres of Nashville, Natchez, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Charleston, Philadelphia, and Richmond--places at which Caldwell figured in varying degrees of prominence. The present study, without consciously attempting to avoid the materials so ably presented in these previous studies, attempts to bring together all these theatrical activities of Caldwell, along with some new and additional material, in terms of the man himself. Consequently, much of the chronicle material--the dates and names of plays and players--is considered only in the light of its relation to the actor-manager-businessman-politician Caldwell. At the same time, it has been necessary to omit much of the detail of Caldwell's non-theatrical interests, retaining only as much, in the judgment of the author, as has a direct bearing on his career as a New Orleans theatre manager.

Up to the time of the present study James H. Caldwell was a rather shadowy figure in American theatre history. To some degree he remains so. The amount of personal memorabilia is negligible: a mere handful of letters, most of which are in the Harvard Library. Moreover, a number of theatre fires of which Caldwell was the victim no doubt destroyed such account books and records
as might have formed a better picture of his theatrical management. The result is that the student of his career is compelled to depend on contemporary newspaper accounts, occasional references in memoirs and biographies of the day, and various legal and public records and from these infer most of Caldwell's motivations.

This study attempts to present the known facts of the life and career of James H. Caldwell from the time of his arrival in America in 1817 to his retirement from the theatre in 1843, with a brief final chapter on the highlights of his life from his retirement until his death. The evidence available points to a record of achievement and respectability and delineates James H. Caldwell as one of the giants of his time.
In June of 1816, Joseph G. Holman sailed from Charleston, South Carolina, for Great Britain to recruit new actors for his stock company at the Charleston Theatre. Holman had only acquired this theatre the previous fall; prior to this the Charleston Theatre had been under the management of the famous Placide family. Alexandre Placide was manager from just before the turn of the century until his death in the summer of 1812. His widow continued the operation briefly in the winter of 1812-1813, but war and a poor box office closed the theatre until the advent of Holman. Now, apparently wishing to cap the advantages of his first successful season, Holman set forth to scour the British provincial theatres for talent. 1 It was in Dublin that he encountered and engaged a young actor named James H. Caldwell. The exact nature of this contract will probably never be known, but it was an engagement which Holman was sorely to regret.

At the present writing, little has been determined

1 Unless otherwise noted, the facts concerning the Charleston theatre are drawn from W. Stanley Hoole, The Ante-Bellum Charleston Theatre, (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1946), pp. 3-14.
of the early life of James Henry Caldwell. He was born in either Sheffield or Manchester in 1793, possibly on May 10. His theatrical debut was made at Manchester as the Page in Court Scenes. Apparently, this was at an early age, since in a letter to James Rees in 1841, Caldwell described himself as "regularly bred in the profession from my boyhood. . . " If true this would seem to have precluded much formal education, although Caldwell was always regarded as being a person of culture and refinement. One of his contemporaries recalled him as "an accomplished gentleman, and a fine, classic scholar." A somewhat enigmatic reference to these early years in England is contained in the words of a disgruntled voter who, in defending the losing candidate whom he had supported for the New Orleans City Council in 1834, referred disparagingly to Caldwell, the winner, not only as an actor, but one "who

2 T. Allston Brown, A History of the American Stage from 1733 to 1870, (New York: Dick & Fitzgerald, 1870), p. 61. Brown says he was born at Manchester, but the death notice of his eldest son in the Daily Picayune of May 26, 1874 declared Caldwell to be a native of Sheffield. The two great manufacturing cities are, of course, very near one another in the north of England.

3 This specific date, without documentation, appears in Clayton Rand, Stars In Their Eyes, (Gulfport, Mississippi: The Dixie Press, 1953), p. 84.

4 Brown, op. cit.


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is known to have exercised the profession of Umbrella-making in England." This may be a literal reference or merely a slang appellation.

Caldwell's debut in America was a happy occasion. He arrived in Charleston, along with Holman and the other new members of the company on October 30, 1816, and performed there for the first time in Richard Cumberland's sentimental play *The West Indian*, followed by Thomas Dibdin's *Of Age Tomorrow*, on November 6. The elegant Belcour in *The West Indian* was fundamental to Caldwell's repertoire and was a role he was to repeat many times over the next twenty years. His success in this and similar roles had led to his distinction as "leading light comedian at Bath, Bristol and Manchester."^9

Caldwell's reception by the Charleston public was extremely favorable and he quickly acquired an extensive following. His obvious talents in genteel comedy and melodrama were coupled with extreme good looks. A highly romantic portrait done by John Wesley Jarvis^10 depicts

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^7*New Orleans Bee*, November 14, 1834.

^8Brown, *loc. cit.*, says this first bill included Prince Hoare's *Three and the Deuce*, but Professor Hoole's records, drawn from contemporary newspapers, would seem to be more accurate.

^9*Spirit of the Times*, November 16, 1836.

^10Probably done at New Orleans in the early 1820's when Jarvis is known to have been in that city. See Oliver V. Larkin, *Art and Life in America*, (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1949), p. 125.
Caldwell in a Byronesque pose with open collar. Predominant features are the thick, wavy, dark hair, penetrating dark eyes surmounted by heavy, almost beetling brows, and a wide mouth in a somewhat oversized jaw. (The effect is one of virile appeal.) This, added to Caldwell's boundless energy and courtly manners, must have ensured him many personal friends.

The Charleston season proceeded smoothly and successfully until Friday, March 7, 1817. On that night Shakespeare's *King Henry VIII*, in which Caldwell had played Buckingham in its previous presentation on Wednesday, was announced again with Caldwell in the same role. But Caldwell did not appear. On Tuesday the 11th in the *City Gazette* appeared the first of a series of "Addresses to the Public" authored by both Caldwell and Manager Holman. In the first communication Caldwell set forth the circumstances surrounding his non-appearance the previous Friday. He claimed that the engagement he had made with Holman in Dublin was, in part, based on a verbal

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11 Exhibition to Illustrate the Boston Stage, 1825-1850, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, #71. . . Shaw, MWED (Boston).

12 The succeeding account of Caldwell's association with Holman and the Charleston Theatre is drawn from *A Succinct Account of the Disturbance Which Occurred at the Charleston Theatre On the Evening of the 12th of March, 1817, With Addresses to the Public by Mr. Holman, The Manager, and Mr. Caldwell*, (Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1817), Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, KF 1817. . . Reserve Room, 303.
contract, two points of which were now at issue. Holman, said Caldwell, while steadfastly refusing to grant Caldwell a benefit after twelve performances as he asked, nevertheless had stated that if any individual in the company was to receive such a benefit Caldwell would be entitled to one. Now, complained Caldwell, despite his assurances given in Dublin, Holman had given his daughter Mrs. Charles Gilfert, wife of the orchestra leader, a benefit after only some seventeen or eighteen nights; and Miss Latimer, Holman's future wife, had had a benefit "before the expiration of twelve nights." "I have played, upon the average, three times a week for eighteen weeks," said Caldwell, "and yet this advantage . . . I have been denied."

Caldwell's second point of disagreement with Holman hinged also on a part of the "verbal compact." Caldwell claimed that Holman had agreed that he should only have to act in tragedy in a secondary character, and that when so required to act he would be "displayed to advantage" in one of his farce parts. On the Wednesday night of the first representation of Henry VIII, after playing Buckingham, Caldwell had appeared in the farce Matrimony. On Friday night, for the second representation, however, Holman advertised a farce in which Caldwell did not play. This prompted Caldwell to remind McCulloch, Holman's acting manager, of the alleged compact made in Dublin; he refused to play Buckingham again unless he also played in a farce. Informed of Caldwell's rebellion,
Holman, on Saturday, wrote Caldwell that he was no longer attached to the theatre. Caldwell resorted to an open letter to the public relating the above interpretation of the situation which he concluded with several flattering references to the "generous hospitality and warm reception" which Charleston had given him, and which he had hoped might be "more strongly elicited towards me, by their patronage at my benefit." He suggested that Holman owed him the benefit as a matter of theatrical common law, and subtly appealed to the public to make his quarrel their own, recalling his role as a stranger whose acceptance into the society of Charleston had been so thorough that he had been led to believe himself "still enjoying the pleasure and society of my paternal home."

The next day following Caldwell's address to the public,--Wednesday, March 12--Holman wrote the first of his addresses. The letter was destined to appear in the Gazette, but arrived too late to appear in the morning paper and was published instead in the Southern Patriot that afternoon. It was a brief and austere statement making note of Caldwell's complaint and promising refutation of his charges at a later date.

In the meantime, Caldwell's friends had filled the streets of Charleston with placards which threatened Holman: "The fulfillment of your promise with Mr. Caldwell, or no play." That night at the theatre a large crowd was on hand to see, for the first time in Charleston, the
Pocock opera John of Paris, and to see, no doubt, what excitement might occur. They did not have long to wait. The curtain had barely risen when the upper boxes set up a call for Holman and Caldwell. Holman finally appeared and, somewhat inadvisedly in view of the temper of the crowd, remarked, "That any dispute between an actor and himself, was a private matter, in which the audience had no right to interfere." He insisted that the amusements of the evening should not be interrupted and compelled the actors to proceed. This the actors were unable to do. Holman's rashness had only served to provoke the audience to a greater demonstration than before, and the play was entirely suspended. Again Holman came forward. This time he declared angrily that "upon his honor, Mr. Caldwell should never again appear on the boards of this Theatre." Holman's irritation under the stress of the moment only further whipped up the emotions of the mob.

At the height of the uproar Caldwell's friends brought him into the pit, and he was induced to address the audience. He stated his unwillingness to be there, called upon Holman to refute the charges of insubordination preferred against him, and begged the audience to let the play proceed. Holman now returned to the stage with some heated remarks threatening Caldwell with a lawsuit, and called upon whatever magistrates were present to preserve order. His efforts earned him no more than a severe blow on the head with an apple or orange lofted out of the
house, and he retired. Further attempts to go on with the play were scotched by a now universal uproar, in the midst of which Caldwell and his friends departed the theatre. The City Guard entered, observed benches, lamps and chandeliers being demolished, and retired to the comparative safety of the backstage area where they regrouped in greater numbers and then reappeared before the mob with muskets and bayonets. As might have been expected, this only served to increase the disorder, but, fortunately, by now the theatre was in total darkness and the mob soon dispersed of its own volition.

Surprisingly enough, there seem to have been no injuries, with the exception of Holman's humiliating clout with the fruit, and the battle of the benches devolved into a mere war of words. The next day Holman composed another address to the public which appeared in the City Gazette of the following afternoon, Friday, March 13. Casting aside the general remarks he had intended to make relative to "the necessary regulations of a Theatre," which were now clearly manifest as a result of the riot, Holman launched into a direct attack on Caldwell as "the source of all this mischief." He categorically denied the existence of any compact other than a written agreement which he forthwith reproduced:

**Copy of the Agreement**

Mr. JAMES HENRY CALDWELL engages with Mr. JOSEPH GEORGE HOLMAN, to perform at his Theatre of Charleston, in South-Carolina, or any other Theatre, which the said Mr. H. may open, during
the ensuing winter season, for the weekly sum of Thirty Dollars, with a proportionate reduction in Passion week, performances in that week being allowed only on one night.

If during the said winter season, the said Mr. H. shall require Mr. C's services in more than one theatre, the said Mr. H. shall pay Mr. C's travelling expenses during that period, unless some adequate compensation shall be settled between the said parties.

Mr. H. engages to give Mr. C. a benefit at the regular charges. Mr. C. will bear in mind, that Mr. H. expects his aid wherever Mr. H. shall take his company during the summer season, at the highest rate of salary Mr. H. gives his first class of performers during that period.

JAMES HENRY CALDWELL
JOSEPH GEORGE HOLMAN.

Holman argued that if Caldwell's claims were as important as he pretended, he would have made sure they were included in the written agreement, that he had already made an engagement with Mrs. Gilfert which included two benefits and could not have forgotten this fact in Dublin, and that, therefore, the promise of an extra benefit as claimed by Caldwell was "among the instances of Mr. Caldwell's fertile imagination."

Holman next took up the matter of Caldwell's alleged right to be cast in one of his farce roles when required to play a second role in tragedy. Holman denied any such agreement and stated, further, that Caldwell had variously claimed this right on the basis, first, of a promise by McCulloch, the acting manager, and, then, by virtue of the supposed Dublin verbal agreement. He pointed to Caldwell's refusal to appear in the second representation both as a violation of his contract and violation of
an express regulation of the theatre. Thus, said Holman, he had a double right to dismiss him. Holman concluded his letter with an apology for any disrespect to the public he might have evidenced on the night of the riot.

Caldwell was not long in replying to Holman's letter. In an effort to prove the existence of the verbal agreement, he quoted Holman's words as contained in his last communication:

... so far from my allowing him to consider it as such, his engagement was suspended till he unequivocally and unconditionally consented to perform second rate characters in Tragedy--such as Lysimachus in Alexander, and Laertes in Hamlet.

Caldwell's rather questionable logic was that a verbal contract must have existed because Holman found it necessary to insist on his performing second rate characters in tragedy, and, quoting Holman again, "when a man enters into a written contract, he is not likely to omit the points most conducive to his advantage." "I, therefore, had as much right to refuse, as he had to demand the performance of parts inferior to my general line of acting," said Caldwell. Caldwell concluded by pointing out that in Holman's reproduction of the written contract the word "benefit" was manifest.

On Monday, March 17, Holman again appeared in print. He was obviously encouraged and strengthened by Caldwell's failure to prove anything conclusive with respect to verbal contracts. Holman noted the established theatrical precedent that permitted a manager to require an
actor to perform any character without specification in a written contract. "Mr. Caldwell," said Holman, "has found no avenue by which to escape from my accusation against him, of absolute falsehood, in respect to verbal compacts."

Holman also disputed Caldwell's contention that Buckingham in Henry VIII was a second rate character. He said Caldwell had no claim to a part of his written contract, namely the benefit, since he had violated the whole of it. He then volunteered the information that had Caldwell offered an apology for his refusal to play, instead of "exciting... a ferment so destructive in its consequences," he would have been reinstated in the company without further incident. Holman then loftily admonished the young Caldwell by means of an anecdote drawn from his own experiences in England. In an analogous dispute between actors and managers, Holman piously observed, the actors proceeded to a redress of their grievances by legal means and not by an emotional appeal to the public.

Perhaps feeling that his position had been thoroughly vindicated, Holman, on Tuesday, March 18, magnanimously consented to Caldwell's benefit, apparently through the agency of Holman's son-in-law, Gilfert. However, Caldwell, with professed reluctance, felt constrained to reply to Holman's last communication with a letter which appeared on Wednesday. Again he quibbled with rather minor issues. He called the rules and regulations of Holman's theatre "an arbitrary power" which might
permit the manager to call on the "principal Performer
to play the most menial parts," which if he refused would
subject him to dismissal. Caldwell maintained that he had
been "engaged specially as a comedian," and that there
were preliminary negotiations to the written compact.
Only his own dereliction had precluded these important
points being included in that written compact. The role
of Buckingham was not, as Holman had claimed, a second-
rate character; it was a third-rate character after
Cardinal Woolsey and Henry VIII. He called upon Holman to
point out in the written contract any clause that gave
Holman the right to dismiss him for refusing a part.
Rather, he said, Holman had had to resort to the expedient
of his own rules and regulations to effect this unwarranted
dismissal. Caldwell stoutly maintained that inasmuch as
he was the sole injured party, the apology which would
have satisfied Holman was in no way due him. Finally,
Caldwell denied any close analogy between the present
instance and Holman's anecdote, other than its proving
that "Mr. Holman, when a leading Actor, had his troubles
also with the Manager. I prefer laying my case before a
liberal and just people," Caldwell concluded.

This closing sentiment prompted Holman to take
up his pen for the last time to challenge Caldwell to lay
his case before "citizens, indeed . . . arranged as jurymen,
to hear and judge impartially, under the sacred solemnity
of an oath." If in error, said Holman, he had the right
to have that error adjudged and the penalty of the offence determined legally.

Caldwell was not disposed to accepting this challenge. He did accept the benefit which Holman had offered, and on Friday, March 21 played Hamlet and the Three Singles in *Three and the Deuce*. It is possible he left Charleston the next day, but later reports indicate that he and Holman resolved their difficulties by means of the code duello on nearby Sullivan's Island. Holman was wounded but recovered only to die rather ingloriously of apoplexy the following August.

Caldwell's success in obtaining his benefit, and his vindication on the field of honor, seem hardly just in light of the facts. Legally, it would appear that he had little justification for his act of secession. Having signed himself to Holman, he could not have been so naive as to suppose that in a company as small as Holman's, playing in repertory, he would not be expected to play a considerable number of relatively minor roles outside his general "line" of comedy, despite the fact that his salary of thirty dollars a week, and his place in "the first class of performers" might entitle him to some extra consideration. Of more moment and interest than the legal

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14Cf., *Spirit of the Times*, November 19, 1836 and Clipping, unsourced, undated, Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, MWEZ n.c. 703 p. 138.
aspects of the dispute, however, are revelations of Caldwell's personality. This is the first instance of his ability to use his personal charm with the public to his own advantage—a quality that was to stand him in great good stead in later years in politics and business, as well as in the theatre.

Caldwell's benefit had netted him a comfortable sum to tide him over a period of unemployment; the receipts of the night were said to have been $2,100, not including private donations. Even if this were not a clear benefit, allowing him all the receipts minus the usual charges for the theatre, his situation was far from critical. While Caldwell's movements are unknown after his leaving Charleston in late March until the end of May, he was actively engaged as an actor by May 31. From that date until June 7 he played a short engagement for the managers William Warren and William B. Wood during their spring season at Baltimore. Caldwell seems to have filled this engagement as a star, since Wood's diary carries his name in a marginal annotation to the record of performance. Caldwell performed three of his favorite roles—Belcour in The West Indian, Romeo, and Young Wilding in The Liar. He may also have assisted at the benefit of Steward and McFarland on June 4, playing another of his favorite roles, Charles Surface in The School For Scandal. His own

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benefit occurred on June 7 at which he played Florian the Foundling in The Foundling of the Forest. Wood recalls that Caldwell was received "with great approbation," but Warren's diary entry of June 1 notes, "Mr. C. was well received; but, in my opinion, he is a very queer actor." However, this was an adjective which Warren seemed fond of applying somewhat indiscriminately.

It was during this season at Baltimore that Warren and Wood first introduced gas lighting into the theatre of that city—one of the first of such experiments on the North American continent. It is not unreasonable to suppose that, while Caldwell had undoubtedly seen theatrical gas lighting in England where it had been established for several years, this observation of its use in Baltimore, and later at Warren and Wood's Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, may have greatly impressed Caldwell with the possibilities of similar employment in other cities of this new country.

The whereabouts of James H. Caldwell during the remainder of the summer and fall are unknown. It is possible, as T. Allston Brown asserts, that he began his managerial career with a small company at Columbus, Kentucky. However, Columbus is in extreme western

17 James, op. cit., p. 221.
18 Brown, op. cit.
Kentucky on the Mississippi River, considerably removed from the scene of Caldwell's activities during the next two and a half years. The possibility exists that Brown is referring to Columbia, Kentucky, a small community a hundred or so miles southwest of Lexington. But, considering the difficulties of overland travel of the time, this seems a less likely possibility than Columbus, which could be easily reached by water. Caldwell himself makes no mention of such a venture and, in fact, claims to have begun management in Alexandria, "in the District of Columbia," sic in December of 1817. 19 What the exact nature of the organization of this Alexandria company was, and how Caldwell became associated with it cannot be determined. It may have been a pick-up company organized on a sharing scheme, but it is probably the same group which appeared at the Washington, D. C. Theatre on January 24, 1818, and again in Philadelphia in April under the joint management of Pepin the equestrian, Entwisle (or Entwistle) the comedian, and Caldwell. This group occupied the Washington Theatre from January 24th through March 14th under lease from Warren and Wood for ten per cent of the receipts. 20 Caldwell and Mrs. Entwistle were the leading players in a company which included Mr. and Mrs. Hutton, Mr. Garner, Mr. Wynne, Mr. 

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19 Letter from James H. Caldwell to C. B. Smith, October 1833, Theatre Collection, Harvard University.
20 James, op. cit., pp. 247-51.
Duran, possibly the wives of some of the above, and a Miss Trajetta. The last named actress was later to become Mrs. Jackson Gray, wife of Caldwell's popular delineator of old men in the New Orleans troupe.

Caldwell seems to have been the guiding spirit of the organization, as is evidenced by his having the favored benefit spot of the last night of the season.

During their three months in Washington the company presented the standard fare of the day, covering the full range of comedy and farce through melodrama and equestrian spectacles and tragedy. At the end of his stay in Washington, Caldwell took his benefit, which, however, was postponed several times due to his indisposition. With the entire talents of the company, including Pepin's horses, massed to support him, Caldwell played in the spectacles Tekeli and Timour the Tartar, and in the course of the evening declaimed both of his favorite recitations, Bucks Have At Ye All and Collins' Ode on the Passions. The principal performer must have been as exhausted as his audience.

On April 16 Caldwell, Entwistle and Pepin moved into Philadelphia to begin a brief season at the Olympic Theatre. The Olympic had been build ten years earlier for Pepin and Breschard to house their circus and equestrian performances. With the addition of legitimate dramatic

\[\text{Washington Daily National Intelligencer, March 14, 1818.}\]
activity, the theatre had provided some competition to Warren and Wood ever since. This combination of entertainment was presented now by the three partners until June 6, 1818 when Caldwell and Entwistle withdrew the dramatic department. No doubt recognizing that Warren and Wood were thoroughly entrenched in Philadelphia and Baltimore, Caldwell decided to explore the possibilities of management farther to the south.

Caldwell may have been in Petersburg, Virginia, in the fall and winter of 1817, around the time he claimed to have begun management at Alexandria. James Rees states that Jackson Gray was "in 1817, a member of Caldwell's company in Petersburg, Va." On this visit in the fall of 1818, however, Caldwell took steps to establish himself more permanently in the community. On October 17 he opened the new theatre which he had built. In discussing this event in later years, Caldwell said:

This fact [Caldwell's building of the Petersburg Theatre] has been disputed. I certainly obtained subscriptions, and it was a kind of stock, but I furnished the plans; my artist Mr. Grain, superintended the building, my mechanist acted under him. I paid his salary, and also the major part of the expenses, amounting to about twelve thousand dollars; the whole cost was about twenty thousand dollars. I opened the Petersburg Theatre on the twelfth day of October, 1818 with the "Honey Moon," and "Fortune's

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22 James, op. cit., p. 30. T. Allston Brown, op. cit., mistakenly credits Caldwell with an appearance at the Walnut Theatre on April 16, 1818.

23 Rees, op. cit., p. 63.

24 But see the letter from Caldwell to C. B. Smith, op. cit., in which Caldwell gives this date as October 9, 1818.
Frolic." I cleared ten thousand dollars in four months. Some debts finally remained for the ground, &c., for which the building was seized, in my absence. I traversed the proceedings, and put it into chancery, where it remained a few years, and, as I did not attend to it, it was finally sold, by which I lost twenty thousand dollars. The difference between twelve and twenty thousand dollars arising from the scenery and decorations I had made in three years.\textsuperscript{25}

The above account would seem to indicate that Caldwell spent four uninterrupted months in Petersburg. Such was not actually the case. The month of January, 1819, found Caldwell and his company performing at The Circus in Richmond, Virginia.\textsuperscript{26} This was a daring venture, since Caldwell's was the first theatrical company to play Richmond since the disastrous fire of December 26, 1811. On that tragic day seventy-one persons were killed, and public sentiment in Richmond against the theatre, even after seven years, was still high.

The Richmond Circus was a makeshift building located at the northeast corner of Seventh and Grace streets. Since February, 1818, it had been used for amusements of a non-theatrical nature. Now Caldwell starred in this substitute theatre for ten nights, playing Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, his genteel comedy roles of Charles Surface in The School For Scandal, Reuben Glenroy in Town and Country, Ferment in The School of

\textsuperscript{25} Rees, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 54-55.

\textsuperscript{26} Richmond Compiler, January 4, 1819.

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Reform, the triple role in the musical farce Of Age Tomorrow, and concluding the brief season with Charles Kemble's The Point of Honor on January 28, 1819.27

By this time Caldwell had succeeded in creating an established circuit for his company. A notice in the Richmond Compiler of May 13, 1819, announced that "The manager of the Petersburg, Washington City, Alexandria and Fredricksburg Theatres" had again contracted with Mr. West, the proprietor of the Richmond Circus, for a limited number of nights, and promised that he would "not in any way conflict with the Theatre recently erected in this city." This last was in reference to the theatre which Gilfert, now manager of the Charleston Theatre since Holman's death, had built in Richmond. However, the opening performance was shifted to the Long Room of the Eagle Tavern because of some municipal "inhibition of the representation of plays at the Circus."28 This performance starred Mr. and Mrs. Bartley from Drury Lane, and two nights later, May 28, Mrs. Bartley played Belvidera to Caldwell's Jaffier in Venice Preserved at the Circus, the ring having been converted into a pit.29 This seems to have concluded this second Richmond invasion by Caldwell.

The company probably returned to either Petersburg.

27Ibid., January 18-28, 1819.
28Ibid., May 26, 1819.
29Ibid., May 28, 1819.
or Fredricksburg for the remainder of the summer, but Caldwell was engaged as a star for five nights at Gilfert's new Richmond Theatre from July 16 to July 23, playing Belcour, Rolla in *Pizarro*, the Three Singles, Young Wilding, Colonel Freelove in *The Day After The Wedding*, Charles Surface, Captain Aubry in *The Forest of Bondy* and Romeo to Mrs. Gilfert's Juliet.  

Sometime during this period, the adventurous spirit of Caldwell conceived the plan of bringing the English drama to the capital of the new state of Louisiana—New Orleans. His decision to leave the comforts of settled Eastern Virginia for the uncertainties of bilingual New Orleans was a courageous one. New Orleans was a city whose population was annually decimated by yellow fever, and, with a resident Creole portion of the community openly hostile to *les Americains*, Caldwell's decision had to be born out of his driving enterprise and his indomitable energy. His theatrical circuit of Washington, Alexandria, Petersburg and Fredricksburg seems to have been flourishing. According to James Rees he had "kept up quite a sensation in Virginia," giving "the

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31 However, the *Spirit of the Times*, November 19, 1836 said Caldwell "failed" in the Virginia theatres. This may refer to his loss of the Petersburg Theatre, *supra*, p. 19.
stage a tone and character it had not possessed in that
section of the country." But Rees goes on to explain:

The limits of acting being, as he thought, too
narrow, and offering no extraordinary inducements
to remain, he conceived the great design of estab-
lishing the drama in the "far West" . . . Caldwell
. . . a close observer of men and manners, knew
that money-making people are not always selfish,
and are sometimes the patrons of the arts and
sciences. . . . He determined to establish a
temple dedicated to [the drama] . . . in the city
of New Orleans, on the banks of the Mississippi.32

Caldwell may have learned of the opportunities which New
Orleans offered—certainly financial opportunities and
possibly those as altruistic as Rees describes—from a
"little group of Americans who were interested in seeing
the English drama brought to that city."33 Or it may be
that Caldwell and his company were merely part of an
increasing stream of actors who quite naturally were
following the flow of western migration. Whatever the
motive, for Caldwell it was a fortunate decision, one that
was to lead to wealth and social position far beyond even
the visions of his ever-active mind.

But before boarding the schooner Betsy at City
Point, Caldwell took another step which was vastly to in-
fluence his later years. He was married.

32Rees, op. cit., p. 52.

33John Smith Kendall, The Golden Age of the New
Orleans Theater, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University
Press, 1952), pp. 16-17. Professor Kendall's work is a
readable and detailed work, which often, as in the present
instance, omits documentation of ostensible facts.
The circumstances surrounding the wooing and winning of the handsome young widow Maria Carter Wormeley are perhaps forever lost. Considering the constant activity of James Caldwell, and the fact that he had been in Fredricksburg only a relatively short time, it may have been a cyclonic courtship. Without placing too much credence in them, later accounts of the affair deserve to be recounted if only because they add another dimension to the record of a man whose life is remembered largely in terms of his successes in the worlds of business and the theatre. The first of these accounts appeared originally in the pages of the *New Orleans Republican* in 1875:

He [Caldwell] was a remarkably handsome man, which, no doubt enhanced the emotional value of his acting, so that while performing in the ancient town of Fredricksburg, a widow of the most exalted aristocracy who had recently buried a rich and gouty husband, so far from controlling her admiration for the attractive young actor according to the dictates of the refined society of which she was a member, suddenly in one of the most pathetic points of the play, precipitated herself upon the stage, seized young Caldwell in her arms and made proclamation to all whom it might concern—and others—that she loved him above all men on the earth, and took this dramatic method to signalize at once her devotion to the man to whom she meant to entrust her hand and fortune, and her contempt for those who denied her right to do what she chose with herself and with her possessions.

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*Ibid.*, pp. 217-20. Kendall does not date this story more specifically than this and I have been unable to locate the original.
The New Orleans Republican then gives a long and largely inaccurate account of Caldwell's professional activities in New Orleans which is heavily larded with a goatish recital of some supposed incidents from Caldwell's later domestic life. The account is not to be trusted, not only because of the demonstrable distortions in it, but also because of the newspaper itself, an inflammatory journal born of the Reconstruction period. And yet there are some similarities to a later account of Caldwell's "courtship" which appears in the staid Daily Picayune of June 17, 1890. The Picayune, in noting the approaching nuptials of one of Caldwell's granddaughters, related the following incidents of Caldwell's own marriage:

After a few years amid the gayeties of the season there shone upon the town a bright theatrical star, when the handsome young Englishman, James H. H. Caldwell [sic] stepped upon the stage before the footlights of Fredericksburg's F. F. V's. Heralded by fame, fortified with introductory letters to certain gentlemen of the town from friends of similar social standing in New York, curiosity and expectation were at fever heat at the theatre, where the ladies were radiant in silks and diamonds.

The play was "Romeo and Juliet." The young actor excelled in the portrayal of its passion. There was a sensation in the audience when, during the death scene, the widow sighed and suddenly fainted. Friends rushed to her aid with fans, smelling salts, cologne and cold water until the pale beauty could be helped to her carriage and was quickly driven home.

The widow and the actor met and loved, but all the aristocratic allied clans of the Halls warmly arrayed themselves in lines against the marriage. One friend and relative with whom she had ever been a favorite was true to her cause. He was the nephew of Washington, Major Robert Lewis. Their residences adjoined and one morning through the garden fence a trembling
voice called, "Cousin Robert," to a gentleman walking and smoking among the flowers. He turned to answer and saw Maria on tiptoe looking over the paling. She pleaded passionately that he would attend her marriage, but he refused to be present at first. Not many tears were shed before Cousin Robert consented against his convictions to attend the ceremony and bestow the hand of the beautiful widow upon the handsome actor. The clergyman of St. George's church officiated, and besides Colonel Lewis and the doorkeeper, no one else was present.

There is no question that Caldwell had made a splendid match. Maria Career Hall Wormeley belonged to one of the pioneer families of Virginia, her maternal great-grandfather being the famous Robert "King" Carter. Her previous marriage to her cousin Warner L. Wormeley was in line with a long tradition of intermarriage between these families. Her planter husband died, leaving her with two small sons, Carter and John.

The actual date of the wedding is unknown, but it would seem to have been in the last week of November. The Richmond Compiler for December 1, 1819 carries a notice of the marriage of James H. Caldwell, "Manager of the Petersburg, Fredricksburg and New Orleans Theatres" to Mrs. Maria Carter Wormeley, but without reference to date or place. It was a brief honeymoon for the couple, for in late November or early December Caldwell, with his troupe, sailed from City Point on the James River for New Orleans.  


36 Caldwell is hazy about this date. In his letter to Rees, op. cit., he says November; in his letter to C. B. Smith, op. cit., December. The company arrived at New Orleans just prior to January 7, 1820.
Behind he left his newly acquired family, his bride already enceinte with the first child of their union, who was born the following year. Perhaps it was a romantic gesture to the author of Romeo and Juliet, the play which supposedly brought them together, that the Caldwell named their son William Shakespeare.
CHAPTER II
1820-1824

New Orleans in 1820 was a city whose culture was still essentially French. But since American acquisition of the Louisiana Territory in 1803, the achievement of statehood in 1812, and the defeat of the British in 1815, a steady stream of migrants began to fill the city, swelling the population from about 18,000 in 1812 to over 170,000 by the outbreak of the Civil War.

The city was no stranger to theatrical activity prior to the arrival of Caldwell and his company. Amateur theatrical production took place as early as 1753 during the French colonial period. During the time when Spain was in possession of the city, a French theatre was built in St. Peter Street and opened in October of 1792 by Jean-Marie and Louis-Alexandre Henry. After an insecure first few years Le Spectacle de la Rue St. Pierre, as this theatre was called, was placed on a sound artistic footing with the arrival of Louis-Blaise Tabary and his company of actors, refugees from the colony of Saint-Domingue.¹

The first recorded theatrical performance in the

¹For an account of this period of New Orleans theatre history see Rene J. LeGardeur, Jr., The First New Orleans Theatre: 1792-1803, (New Orleans: Leeward Books, 1963.)
English language occurred on April 29, 1806, when a Mr. Rennie presented what appears to have been a solo theatrical entertainment consisting of the comedy, The Doctor's Courtship, and two acts from the pantomime of Don Juan.  

Rennie was followed in 1811 by William Duff and a small American company who performed during the spring and summer months in the St. Philip Theatre, a French theatre which had been erected in 1808 after the failure of the St. Pierre. Duff's company performed only once or twice a week when the resident French company was idle. Amateur theatricals in English were given at the St. Philip Street theatre spasmodically from 1813 to 1817. In the latter year another itinerant professional actor, Mr. A. Cargill, appeared in New Orleans and acted with the little band of amateurs, The Thespian Benevolent Society.

The American Theatrical Commonwealth Company of Noah Miller Ludlow arrived in January of 1818 to give New Orleans its first experience with something close to a regular season of English drama performed by an organized professional company. Ludlow's preceding of Caldwell to New Orleans by two years was to provide Ludlow in later years with frequent opportunity to discredit Caldwell's

For the details of Rennie's New Orleans sojourn, as well as the activities of other English performers up to the advent of Caldwell, see Nelle Smither, "A History of the English Theatre at New Orleans, 1806-1842," Louisiana Historical Quarterly, XXVII, 1, 2 (January, April 1945) pp. 83-103, 361-66.
claim to being "the founder of the drama in the West and Southwest." Ludlow had come to New Orleans with his partners John Vaughan and Thomas Morgan from the Ohio Valley. There he had played a couple of seasons under the pioneer manager Samuel Drake, Senior. En route to New Orleans the company had stopped briefly at Nashville and Natchez, allowing Ludlow to claim two more "first performances of any regular dramatic company." In Nashville Aaron Phillips, another partner in the venture, fearing the New Orleans enterprise was not to succeed, had quite the company.

Ludlow's group opened at the St. Philip Street Theatre on January 13, 1818, playing Tuesdays and Fridays for the next sixteen weeks until May 1. Considering his apparent financial success, it is strange that Ludlow did not return the next season, but the company disbanded and Ludlow himself did not visit New Orleans again until he became a member of Caldwell's company during the years 1821 to 1824.

New Orleans was not to experience so great an offering of theatrical fare as Ludlow had provided until the arrival of Caldwell. However, William Turner brought a

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3 Ludlow's autobiography, Dramatic Life As I Found It, (St. Louis: G. I. Jones and Company, 1880), is one of the most valuable sources for materials concerning the history of the American Theatre on the frontier, despite its egocentric style and frequent misstatements of fact. An example of the latter occurs in the present instance. Ludlow, on page 138, recalls specifically that he opened the St. Philip Theatre on December 24, 1817, whereas Smither, op. cit., p. 97, shows that the company did not arrive in New Orleans until January 7, 1818.

Ibid., p. 152.
fairly strong company to the St. Philip in March to May of 1819, and Ludlow's erstwhile partner, Aaron Phillips, perhaps acquiring a different perspective on the merits of New Orleans as a theatre town as a result of Ludlow's success, performed briefly at the Orleans ball room and with Turner's company the same season. Both Turner and Phillips seemed sufficiently satisfied with their successes to make plans to return in the fall. But in December of 1819 only Phillips returned.

In the meantime, Caldwell had made known to Orleanians his plans to bring his Virginia company to their city. Aaron Phillips, perhaps having had some difficulty in recruiting a very reputable company in the East, may have thought to gain an advantage over Caldwell by securing the newer and more commodious French theatre in Orleans street. Confidently he opened there on January 7, 1820, the same night that Caldwell opened at the little St. Philip Street Theatre.

As a manager Caldwell's concern for the rights of the actor had undergone a change from the time had had so heatedly disputed them with Holman in Charleston. With smug pride he relates a deception he practised on his company with regard to taking them to New Orleans. As quoted by James Rees, he wrote: "New Orleans at that time, was considered the birth-place of the yellow fever, and when I first mentioned to the company, that the next town we played in was New Orleans* (*Actors are engaged to play in any town the manager chooses to take them,) an almost universal expression of horror took place, and had nearly proved fatal to my attempt to establish the drama in the South; fortunately, however, I had calculated correctly upon the character of my people; for I had a vessel chartered, the schooner Betsey, Captain Benedict. She was to leave in three days, and no alternative remained but to be out of a situation, or to follow their leader." Rees, op. cit., p. 54.
Never one to be long removed from controversy, Caldwell quickly found himself the center of several disputes concerning the activities of his theatre. His immediate reception by the New Orleans play-going public had been extremely favorable. The opening bill of Honey Moon and Three and the Deuce—virtually standard fare for the beginning of a theatrical season—was greeted by a numerous and respectable audience. As the Duke Aranza in the first play, one writer regarded Caldwell as superior to Thomas Abthorpe Cooper, particularly in the cottage scene. In the afterpiece, Caldwell in his portrayal of Pertinax, Percival and Peregrine Single "again excited wonder and delight by his versatile powers," particularly in the role of the foolish brother. But the next performance, Maturin's Bertram, called forth the wrath of an unknown correspondent to the Daily Chronicle who objected to Caldwell's selection of this "detestable play." "Abydos," in defending Caldwell in the Louisiana Gazette of the 13, asked Caldwell not to be swerved from his course by "would-be critics" and, with reference to Caldwell's acting of the title role in the play, lauded him as "a Tragic Muse" who "walked forth like the full round moon growing more clear as it advances from its rising! . . . To say that Mr. Caldwell cannot play Tragedy, is as absurd, as to say, he never saw a theatre!" In the Gazette of the following day "Dramaticus"

6Louisiana Gazette, January 10, 1820.
concurred that "Mr. Caldwell's chief excellence is in tragedy," but at the same time admitted that the two tragedies lately performed--Bertram and Richard III--had not entirely satisfied the public because two of the actors had not been up to the roles they were called upon to perform. But "Dramaticus" hastened to add that he had heard "one who is well informed" that the company would not again perform tragedy until the "corps are well prepared for their enactment." Within a week Hamlet was produced with Caldwell as the Prince. "Gliocnas," writing to the Gazette after this performance, called its critics men of hypocrisy, prejudice and superstition. He noted that these complaints against Caldwell and his company were that they were much inferior to what might be seen to the north. And yet "Gliocnas" had made the "pretty grand discovery" that at least one of these critics had never even read the play.

Recalling Caldwell's dispute with Holman at Charleston over the requirement that he appear in tragedy--not his line of acting--it is amusing to find him three years later again the center of a community argument relating to his professional abilities. On this occasion, however, Caldwell took no part in the conflict. Any departure he was making from his general line of acting was born of necessity. With a small company and himself as the leading player, confining himself to a single line of acting was a luxury he obviously could not afford.
Despite these grumblings by the public about the quality of production, Caldwell's American company at the St. Philip Street Theatre was too strong for the competition Aaron Phillips could offer at the Orleans, and on January 19 Phillips gave up. Caldwell graciously gave him a benefit at the St. Philip on January 21; absorbed into his own company the Phillips actors, among whom were the Entwistles—his former partner in Washington. Phillips chose Romeo and Juliet for his benefit with himself in the principal role. Caldwell was highly commended for this "example of liberality." The advantage he had gained in driving Phillips from the field might have been capped by Caldwell by his taking over the more spacious and more respectable Orleans Theatre, were it not for his rental agreement with M. Coquet, the proprietor of the St. Philip Street establishment. It may be that Caldwell saw a means to this desirable end when he published the following card:

To the Public.

Being apprised of a general report that the proprietor of the Orleans Theatre has offered me the occupation of that theatre upon 'my own terms,' I beg leave most respectfully to state that no

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7 E.g., in the Gazette of January 17th, "A Friend" who generally approved the company's production of English opera, nevertheless criticized the apparent lack of preparation in getting up The Devil's Bridge.

8 Louisiana Gazette, January 19, 1820.

9 Clipping from an unidentified newspaper dated January 24, 1820, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.
direct proposal to that effect has ever been made to me.

James Caldvell, 10 American Theatre, St. Philip Street
Jan. 24, 1820.

It was not long before this bit of gratuitous information provided a very satisfactory response. The Gazette of February 2 announced that the talents of the Caldvell company had so interested several of the most respectable gentlemen of the city that arrangements had been made for the company to play at the theatre in Orleans Street. Moreover, these public spirited citizens, out of their own pockets, would indemnify M. Coquet, "the father of a numerous family, which his humanity has increased by the adoption of the orphans of the late Mr. Jones," for his losses. The Gazette further underscored the righteousness of this gesture by pointing out that M. Coquet was believed to be the builder of the first theatre in New Orleans, and should not be abandoned. The Gazette made the further suggestion that both theatres might be used by Caldvell, since he would use the Orleans Street Theatre only four nights a week when the French company was not playing, and therefore might play at the St. Philip on the other two nights. This was indeed the plan that was subsequently adopted. Caldvell then announced that, "in obedience to the wishes of many respectable American families, and particularly with a desire on his own part, of gratifying

10Louisiana Gazette, January 20, 1820.
the expectations of the French population," he would open
the Orleans Theatre with Honey Moon and Three and the Deuce
on Monday, February 14. Off-handedly noting that this
arrangement had been concluded "through the medium of his
friends," Caldwell alluded to "the increased expenses which
he will necessarily subject himself to in the present
arrangement." He bravely allowed that he was, nevertheless,
"the public's humble servant," and was happy to have "met
the wishes of those disposed to patronize the Native drama."11
Recalling this move to the Orleans Theatre in later years,
Caldwell claimed "the injury done to the French Theatre, by
my attraction, occasioned overtures to play in that house. .
. . I had the rent of both theatres to pay that season."12

For the first week of the new arrangement the
American company performed only at the Orleans Theatre.
Days of performance were Monday, Wednesday, Friday and
Saturday, with the prices of admission at the usual rate
of one dollar for box and pit and seventy-five cents for
the gallery. The first and second tiers were designated
Dress Boxes. "Respectable Free People of Color" had
reserved for them the baignoires, or ground-floor boxes
behind the pit, and the gallery admitted free people of
color and slaves. After February 22 Caldwell performed
only sporadically at the St. Philip Theatre on Tuesdays

11Ibid., February 14, 1820.
12Rees, op. cit., p. 54.
and Thursdays. According to Caldwell "the public was dissatisfied" with the little theatre. With Caldwell's benefit the first season in New Orleans closed on April 19.

If only because the astute Caldwell elected to make the arduous return voyage to New Orleans the next season, this first New Orleans venture must be regarded as a marked success. From a monetary standpoint his profits, after paying the return passages of his company to Virginia, were not great--$1,740. With tongue in cheek, perhaps, Caldwell hinted at another revenue as a result of his New Orleans visit:

The newspapers of the day... said I had returned with two hundred hogsheads of sugar, profit. One newspaper editor knew that it was sold in Baltimore for twenty thousand dollars--well, that was not so bad!14

Just how Caldwell ordered his finances cannot be determined; no ledgers or account books of his have survived. The Louisiana Gazette carried a letter signed "New Orleans" under date of March 29, 1821 in which the writer charged that Caldwell took one hundred dollars a night from the expenses of the theatre for his personal services. "New Orleans" calculated that on this basis for the twelve week season of 1820, Caldwell's personal profit would be $4,800. This added to his announced profit of $1,940 would make

13Ibid.
14Ibid., p. 55.
$6,540 "carried away from the purses of a liberal generous citizenry." Whatever the truth of the matter, Caldwell obviously deemed it worth his while to return. Before quitting New Orleans for the summer yellow fever months he contracted for the rental of the Orleans Theatre for the next three years "at one hundred dollars per night, lights included."\(^{15}\)

This first season was not an unqualified success. Some general criticisms of the company and some specific criticisms of Caldwell have already been noted. As an actor he was sometimes extravagantly praised as when a writer in the *Gazette* of February 2 proclaimed that "no man in America could have played Petruchio better than Mr. Caldwell." On occasion his public expressed a disaffection for his talents, as in the case of the New Orleans premiere of M. M. Noah's *She Would Be A Soldier*. Although the critic of his performance regarded the play as "the best American Play which we have ever seen," he thought Caldwell, as Captain Pendragon, burlesqued the role and "out-dandy-fied even the Dandies."\(^{16}\) Caldwell's recitation of Collins' *Ode on the Passions* was so favorably received, however, that several gentlemen printed a card in the *Gazette* of April 13 requesting that he repeat it "for the improvement of youth in the reading and understanding of


\(^{16}\) *Louisiana Gazette*, March 16, 1820.
that much admired piece of poetry." One is led to wonder if Caldwell, in the course of the next two decades, did not grow as weary of Collins' "Ode" as DeWolf Hopper is reputed to have come to despise Casey At The Bat.

Caldwell was careful to maintain a favorable image of himself in the public eye. For example, ever mindful of the good to be derived from public esteem for an act of charity, he held a benefit performance on February 23 for the victims of "the late dreadful fire at Savannah," and was applauded for his generosity.

But there were some unpleasant moments with the public which the actor-manager experienced during this first season. The following incident was not alluded to in the press at the time but was recalled the next year. On February 7, when Caldwell was playing Othello at the St. Philip Theatre, he was hissed. Caldwell's reaction to this affront, as recounted by a writer who used the cognomen "Bones," is a quick view of how the young Englishman could, when stung, forget his role as "the public's humble servant":

... some person who disapproved of Mr. Caldwell's conduct, took the liberty of hissing, at which the manager waxed wroth, said he was not accustomed to such sounds, and in a Turkish dress, in the character of Othello, and with a sneering contemptuous tone, demanded "who is he that hisses? Let him show himself." ... Mr. C. might ... have assumed an imperative (not to say impudent) manner in consequence of the adulation he received from some of our great

17Ibid., February 23, 1820.
men, and of the outrageously fulsome praises which were bestowed upon him by the newspaper writers.\textsuperscript{18}

As he had in Virginia, Caldwell seems to have sought the approval of the upper levels of society, and, as was often to be the case in the future, there were those who resented his Bourbonism.

In another incident Caldwell had promised to produce a new play called \textit{The Bride of Lammermoor}, written by a young gentleman of New Orleans. The play had been announced for Caldwell's benefit on April 19, but was called off under "disagreeable circumstances." From a communication to the newspaper during the next season which recalled this unpleasantness it may be inferred that Caldwell had some altercation with the author or his friends concerning the worth of the play as a stage piece.\textsuperscript{19}

These wounds were only superficial and, according to Caldwell, he and his company left New Orleans in late April for Petersburg, Virginia.\textsuperscript{20} How much of his Eastern circuit he resumed during the summer months of 1820 is problematical. There is no record of his returning to Washington City that summer, so he must have spent the months of May through August at his theatre in Petersburg chiefly, with occasional excursions to Alexandria and Fredricksburg.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, March 8, 1821.
\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Ibid.}, March 1, 1821.
\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Rees, op. cit.}, p. 54.
In September Caldwell arranged with Gilfert to exchange his Petersburg Theatre for Gilfert's new Richmond Theatre for a short season, and Caldwell's company opened in Richmond on September 12 with the traditional *Honey Moon* and *Three and the Deuce*. Caldwell, of course, starred in both the comedy and the farce. The company played their repertoire until October 3 and then no doubt returned to Petersburg. For the weeks of November 22 to December 26 Caldwell made another arrangement with Charles Gilfert, this time renting the Charleston Theatre. About the first of January the company sailed from Charleston for New Orleans again, arriving sometime in late January.

Had he foreseen the storms of public controversy which were to beset his second New Orleans season, James Caldwell might have thought twice before committing himself to a three-year lease on the Orleans Theatre. On the other hand, the enormous financial returns resulting from his presentation of Thomas Abthorpe Cooper as New Orleans' first visiting star, no doubt mitigated the personal abuse he received from an outraged public this season. Besides, Caldwell seems to have thrived on controversy. With a true showman's instinct, he managed to keep his name before the public whether in a good cause or a bad one.

The New Orleans season was opened on the last day of January, 1821, with Caldwell starring as Frank Heartall in *The Soldier's Daughter* and as Young Wilding in *The Liar*.

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The season progressed without undue incident for the first three weeks. Again, the company played on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights in alternation with the French company. Relations with the public were good until February 20. The preceding Saturday Caldwell had played Octavian in *The Mountaineers* and his performance was praised by at least one of the newspapers. To this praise "An Observer" took great exception. He imagined the "smile of approbation which no doubt played on Jemmy Caldwell's face, when reading his own applause," but pointed out in considerable detail how undeserved it was, considering the omissions and substitution made in the text by the cast. "Observer" particularly singled out Caldwell as a chief offender in butchering the text, a copy of which the critic happened to have in his pocket the night of the performance:

I now come to the part on whose enactment certainly depends most of the interest of the play. In spite of all the praises bestowed on Mr. Caldwell, I think him misplaced in parts which call forth the deep and tender feelings of the heart. This actor, in his anxiety to give more effect to what he says, so strains and distorts his voice in tragedy, that it always carries with it something extremely grating to the nerves. In his emphasis, I must repeat the charge of impropriety urged before. He too takes unpardonable liberties with the text, omitting and adding where his memory, no doubt fails. I particularly noticed one shocking misapplication of that stage trick and grimace by which some modern actors try to excite a clap.—When old Roque demands if he does not recollect his countenance, Octavian replies, without reflection, in the negative; but afterwards, on the mention of Floranthe's name, being induced to draw nigh and examine the other's face, recognizes with astonishment the old servant of his mistress. What did Mr. C? Upon the first demand of "Signor do you not remember
my countenance," he approached with the gestures and grimaces of a maniac, and after some minutes prying into the other's face, bawled out "no," and told him to be gone. This trick was certainly ridiculous, and became stale when it would perhaps have been better timed on Roque's reminding him how he lifted the latch to admit him to Dona Floranthe. In many places in the subsequent interview with his mistress, our Octavian was equally infelicitous. The examples were too frequent to particularize here, but they could not have been unobserved by good judges in the house at the time and to them I appeal with confidence.

"An Observer" concluded by warning Caldwell that while he was among those who maintain the English Theatre in the city, he must not make the mistake "of thinking he would derive large sums of money from the constant repetition of pieces we have already seen."

Sometime during the week following the above criticism, Caldwell must have been reminded of his promise of the previous season to perform, upon his return to New Orleans, The Bride of Lammermoor. He countered by advertising that if the author of the Bride of Lammermoor would furnish him with a copy of the play he would put it into rehearsal. "Public" informed Caldwell, via the Gazette of March 1 that this advertisement would not be accepted as an apology for his not performing it this season. He suggested that "if the play is bad, let the principal characters be performed by Fielding, Benton, and Brennan, and let them be damn'd together." In an obvious reference to Caldwell's popularity with the respectable portion of the population, "Public" sarcastically invited Caldwell to

22 Louisiana Gazette, February 20, 1821.
recite Collins' Ode on the Passions in lieu of an after-piece, as a sure means of satisfying the public.

King Lear was presented for the first time on any New Orleans stage on March 2, 1821. Caldwell had chosen to play Shakespeare's hero for his mid-season benefit. One wonders if, when the furor resulting from this effort had subsided, he did not ruefully recall his lofty assessment of himself as an actor of genteel comedy and not tragedy which he had made in 1818 in Charleston. One reaction to Lear was particularly caustic. "Nipperkin," writing in the Gazette of March 12, could not "conceive of anything more absurd, more monstrous, or more ridiculous, or of a more complete abortion... than this feigned representation of one of the best of Shakespeare's plays." He found not a single character well-sustained, and of Caldwell as Lear he said, "Why he must forget himself. He cannot possibly suppose that he has a conception of the character of the least talent for its support." "Nipperkin" suggested that the applause on that night had come from "the admirers of the absurd; out of time, out of place and out of taste." Leaving the theatre he could hear nothing but the words "horrid," "shocking," "vile!"

Sorrowfully, he said:

It is really to be regretted that the Theatrical corps mistake their own talents so much; in most comedies they get on very well, and in some perhaps do as much justice to the pieces as could be expected from any company in the northern cities—but when they approach tragedy, it really appears to be all a farce of absolute caricature. There seems to me to be a
strange infatuation in this ambition to accomplish what is entirely unattainable, and to the neglect of that which could be done with much credit and advantage.

But the slaughtering of Lear was not the only objection to the evening's entertainments. The tragedy had been followed by a performance on the slack-wire. "Crito" in the Advertiser of March 6 called on future audiences to "mark distinctly their disapprobation" of such performances. "Crito's" objections were supported by the irony of "Bones" in the columns of the Gazette of March 8. He chided Crito for his intolerance, pointing out that such an exhibition was well-calculated to increase the manager's benefit by attracting a full house. Surely "Crito" must be "a stranger to Mr. Caldwell," mocked "Bones," "or he would know that Mr. C. does not like it," and he recalled the hissing incident at Othello the previous year. But "Bones" was also sure that the slack-wire entertainment had "highly edified the old Maids and Quatros, who delight to see the 'human form divine' in all positions," and, for his own part, he hoped to see more of Caldwell's company "on the Rope" where "some of them would do it more honor, than they do the Drama."

These excoriations were but as the stings of gnats compared to the verbal barrage which followed Caldwell's announcement that for the engagement of Thomas

\[23^{\text{Supra, p. 32.}}\]
Abthorpe Cooper the prices of admission to the theatre would be raised to one dollar and fifty cents. A flood of letters appeared in the *Louisiana Gazette* on March 23 following this announcement. The letters ranged in tone all the way from coldly rational to hysterical and from conciliatory to threatening. All of them had in common a distrust of Caldwell's motives in boosting the prices, rejecting his plea of "increased expenses," and arguing that it was to his ultimate benefit to retain the old price structure, both from the standpoint of immediate profit and future patronage. Caldwell was threatened with thinly veiled hints of a disturbance on the opening night of Cooper's engagement. He was reminded of the fate of the managers of Covent Garden when they had attempted a similar maneuver. He was scorned for taking as his model John Davis, the manager of the French Theatre, who had also raised his prices to a dollar fifty.

A side issue to the dispute was Caldwell's decision not to play secondary roles during Cooper's visit. One citizen sarcastically suggested that the raise in prices was not in consequence of Cooper's playing, but of Caldwell's not playing, recalling the recent painful experience with Lear.

Caldwell seems to have judged the public temper

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\(^{24}\)The O. P. (Old Prices) riots occurred at Covent Garden beginning the night of September 18, 1809 and lasting for sixty-one nights. They were the result of John Philip Kemble's raising ticket prices to meet increased costs.
with fair accuracy, however. He remained adamant and opening night came and went without further incident than some scattered calls of "O.P. The Manager. Mr. Caldwell."\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{Gazette} of March 26 carried a communication which asserted that Caldwell had raised the prices for the Cooper engagement to "prevent the greasy Kentuckians and the rabble from leaning over the backs of the boxes to the great annoyance of the Ladies." Whether this bit of snobbery emanated from Caldwell is not known, but two days later the \textit{Advertiser} printed his candid announcement that the price raise was made "to fill the coffers from the high pitch of curiosity raised by the engagement of Mr. Cooper." The jingle of coins in Caldwell's purse successfully drowned out the last wails of indignation.\textsuperscript{26} Tomorrow could take care of itself.

Caldwell looked back on this period with something more than quiet pride. His presentation of Cooper, he said, had made "an impression which it will require a generation . . . to obliterate."\textsuperscript{27} He seems to have regarded this as a turning point in his career when he wrote:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Louisiana Gazette}, March 26, 1821.

\textsuperscript{26}\textit{Caldwell said that he paid Cooper $3,333.33 for sixteen nights, and that Cooper played for twenty-four nights, averaging $700 a night. Rees, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 55. The records for this season are incomplete, but even assuming Caldwell was in error and Cooper played only the sixteen recorded performances, Caldwell's gross for sixteen nights at $700 a night would have been over $11,000.}

\textsuperscript{27}\textit{Ibid.}
\end{quote}
From that day I have yielded the tinsel scepter, and commanded... every distinguished member of the profession, who has sought these shores... to visit this... yellow fever city. Mammon and fame led them on; and season after season, I introduced them to crowded and delighted audiences. 28

It was this success, Caldwell said, which planted in him the notion of building a theatre in New Orleans.

The New Orleans season ended about May 14 and the company again departed for the Virginia theatres for the summer. A new member of the company accompanied them. At the end of April Noah Ludlow had stopped briefly in New Orleans en route to Pensacola, where he had hoped to open a theatre. Finding that Caldwell needed an actor for juvenile tragedy and genteel comedy he had elected to join the New Orleans company and abandon his Pensacola plans. 29

According to Ludlow, Caldwell took the overland route to Virginia after arranging for a small schooner to transport the rest of the company by sea to City Point. Ludlow's report of the trip is not calculated to make the reader believe that Caldwell was anything but penurious in caring for his actors. The trip took forty-two days and provisions and water ran low after fifteen days. 30

Said Ludlow:

In short, there never was a more gross and diabolical swindle put off upon a body of people; and when the owner was told this by

28Ibid., p. 53.
29Ludlow, op. cit., p. 215.
one of the company, the only excuse he gave was that Mr. Caldwell had screwed him down so close on the rates he was willing to allow for the passage of his company that he was not able to afford more or better than he had done.

The Petersburg season was opened about mid-July, according to Ludlow, but without the presence of Caldwell. Richard Russell, an English actor who with his wife had joined Caldwell's company just prior to the first trip to New Orleans, was entrusted with the management of the Petersburg Theatre. Caldwell and Russell were close friends, and the trust which Caldwell now evidenced was to be expressed again and again through their long association. It was a friendship which ended, however, in a bitter feud which was never resolved before Russell's death. In 1836, in the midst of this feud, Russell recalled that first year of their association when, he said, "James E. Caldwell and myself LANDED TOGETHER--we WALKED to reach New Orleans together--and for the first two nights the same bed contained us." 31

The Petersburg season was undistinguished, according to Ludlow. 32 But, although he may not have realized it at the time, two people entered Caldwell's life during this eastern visit who were to have a profound effect on his fortunes. The first of these was Junius Brutus Booth. Booth had landed unheralded at Norfolk and

31 Handbill, "To the Masters, Pilots, Engineers and Boatmen of the West," signed by Dick Russell and Dated New Orleans, December 10, 1836, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.

had been engaged by Charles Gilfert. Dick Russell, Caldwell's acting manager, heard of Booth's appearance at Richmond, went to see him, and engaged him for an appearance at Petersburg. Booth was to act under the auspices of Caldwell many times in the next twenty years, and always with considerable gain for the manager.

In addition to Booth, another person came within the compass of James H. Caldwell that summer—one who was to have an effect on his personal life as well as his professional life—Jane Placide. Ludlow recalls that Jane's sister Caroline, now Mrs. Waring, had brought her to visit the company during "the vacation of our season," for the purpose of securing an engagement for her. Ludlow claims that she was engaged in Norfolk and was a member of the company during the winter in New Orleans. However, Jane did not become a member of the New Orleans company until 1823, so it is possible that Ludlow has her confused with her other sister Eliza Placide who was, in fact, engaged for New Orleans this year. Caldwell probably met Jane in Richmond where he was engaged as a star by Gilfert from October 10 to October 16. Jane Placide was a member of Gilfert's company assigned to maids, soubrettes, and walking ladies for the most part.

Caldwell closed his Petersburg theatre on November

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33 Ibid.
34 Shockley, op. cit., pp. 397-410.
and moved his company to Norfolk for the remainder of the month, where he presented Booth, Cooper and Mr. and Mrs. Hughes--two stars who had been with him in New Orleans the past winter. About the last week of November the company sailed for New Orleans again, this time aboard the brig Holland.

The recollection of the previous season's unpleasantness concerning the raising of ticket prices no doubt was still fresh in Caldwell's mind when he wrote to the New Orleans papers announcing his forthcoming return to the city. Caldwell professed his disinterest in the pecuniary, maintaining he sought to establish permanently the theatre in New Orleans and to elevate it to "a standard of the language and a school of moral ethics." But, argued Caldwell:

... the public will readily perceive that the primary agents in the above work, must be sufficiently qualified masters. ... These, as he [the manager] has not hesitated to seek, so having found them, he has not refused a sufficient, not to say liberal compensation for their talents. That the manager, therefore, may be enabled to gratify the public taste with first rate talents, he deems it a duty to state to them the necessity of making a permanent regulation in the prices of admission to the theatre.

Behind the fustian, of course, was the notice that boxes and parquette would be a dollar and a half this season.

Caldwell's old antagonist, "Crito," while admiring

35Ludlow, op. cit., p. 228.
36Louisiana Gazette, November 11, 1821.
Caldwell's text as being profoundly just in the abstract, nevertheless saw "sinister motions lurking under its brilliant garb." Warned "Crito":

But, unfortunately for the worthy manager and the admiring public, it cannot be concealed from the enlightened part of the community, that neither himself, nor any of the "masters of the Drama" he has announced, are capable of illustrating that text.

"Crito" noted that the theatre was not supported by the wealthy part of the community but by "that grade of society who have to depend upon their labour for obtaining their bread;" that the dollar of 1821 was less valuable than three years previous; and that Caldwell was trying to "slyly grasp the pockets of the public," and "forcing on them new names, instead of real talents."\(^{37}\)

Before Caldwell's arrival in New Orleans and perhaps hoping to take advantage of what they judged to be a general antipathy to him, three would-be entrepreneurs from Pensacola, Florida--Henry Vaughan, a Mr. Bigelow, and Andrew Jackson Allen--announced that they would shortly offer themselves and company to the public at the St. Philip Street Theatre.\(^{38}\) These managers left no room for doubt as to their position with regard to the didactic nature of the theatre. "The stage," they said, "cannot be made a school of ethics, though it has a sensitive influence on minor morals." And, to allay any notion of a tory

\(^{37}\)Ibid.

\(^{38}\)Ibid.; November 20, 1821.
rejection of the Kentucky rabble, the managers announced that arrangements would be made for "the accommodation of all classes of society, with a just regard to the convenience of each." As a final inducement, future patrons were assured that "the original price of admission will be adhered to." Unfortunately for the cause of competition, however, the managers apparently had not consulted Mr. Coquet, the proprietor of the St. Philip, concerning their plans, and his card in the Gazette of November 21 instructed the public that the St. Philip was, in fact, being converted into a circus. The field for Caldwell was clear once again.

The Orleans Street Theatre was opened on the 10th of December—with the increased price scale—and Caldwell might have accomplished his objective were it not for the persistent buzzing of his old adversary "Crito," who renewed his disparagement of Caldwell's plans to "form a school for the standard of our language." Caldwell, insisted "Crito," was "not a qualified master of his profession." On the day following the opening of the theatre "Crito" appealed to the democratic sentiments of the Gazette's readers, reminding them that the price raise had the effect of either taking money from those "who gain your dollar with difficulty" or excluding the "greasy Kentuckians, Yankee dealers, Shoemakers, Tailors, Carpenters,

39 Ibid., December 5, 1821.
Bricklayers" and so forth from the theatre. "Crito" was delighted to be able to point to the effects of this "silly proscription by the Manager" as evidenced by the "mendicant appearance of his too highly prized boxes" on Wednesday night, December 12.39 Said Crito, Caldwell depended too much on the advice of individuals "whose bloated purses have prompted them to support opinions. . . at variance with common sense and the great body of the community."

He called upon the community "to persevere in the support of their rights, and to teach a refractory public servant, that without the voice of the people he can never become legitimate in a country where every man is a sovereign."

Here the matter seems to have rested, perhaps overshadowed by such other events as J. B. Booth's New Orleans debut. But, before the beginning of the next New Orleans season Caldwell quietly restored the prices of one dollar, seventy-five and fifty cents.

Caldwell seems to have felt sure enough of his position in New Orleans to consider expanding his operations to other Southern communities. In the third week of December, 1821, a Natchez, Mississippi newspaper published a letter from Caldwell in which he stated, curiously, that his New Orleans theatre had been destroyed and that he wished to establish a theatre in Natchez.41 It is not

clear what Caldwell is referring to here. His lease with Davis at the Orleans Theatre still had two years to run and was therefore not "destroyed." Perhaps his box office receipts were not up to his expectations and he was considering a permanent move, although his proposal to the people of Natchez indicated that he intended to play in New Orleans four or five months each year and then "make a regular season of two months" in Natchez. Seemingly nothing resulted from this trial balloon which Caldwell sent up, and it was not until the spring of 1823 that he was to begin theatrical operations in Natchez.

The first star of the New Orleans season appeared in the person of Junius Brutus Booth on January 11, 1822. Booth appeared first as Richard III, one of his most popular roles. The French side of the Louisiana Gazette found little to applaud in the performance, complaining of Booth's omissions, the poor seconding of Caldwell's troupe, and Caldwell's refusal to play a secondary role to his star. Of the supporting company, the Gazette said that they "more resembled the soldiers of Falstaff than the warriors of Richard." Booth was followed in February by the return to New Orleans of Thomas A. Cooper, who also opened with Richard III.

42 Louisiana Gazette, January 15, 1822.
43 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 232 claims this was Cooper's first New Orleans appearance, apparently unaware of the previous season.
On March 21 Caldwell gave a benefit for his old friend and Washington co-partner Victor Pepin the equestrian. Pepin's horses were used to present the melodramas of *Timour the Tartar* and *Lodoiska*. The *Gazette* of the previous day had carried a story in which it was announced that Pepin intended to build an amphitheatre in the upper faubourg of the city, that undeveloped portion of New Orleans up-river from the old French section of the city across Canal Street. "This would be in every respect adapted to the convenience of the American population" which was settling in this area, the *Gazette* claimed. There is no evidence that Pepin built his Olympic Amphitheatre until after Caldwell had long since established the American Theatre in the Faubourg St. Mary, but coincidentally, perhaps, two days after the announcement of Pepin's plan, Caldwell quietly purchased two lots in the suburb of St. Mary. These two lots were to be the site of the American Theatre. Caldwell paid $18,000 for a piece of ground in Camp Street, between Gravier and Poydras Streets, and a small half-lot which fronted on St. Charles Street. The purchase price was payable in twenty years at an annual ground rent of $1,440, which included interest at eight percent and was payable quarterly.

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^[Supra, pp. 14-15.]

^[L'Ami de Lois, March 20, 1822.]

^[Notarial Acts of Hughes LaVergne, March 21, 1822, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans.]
The cornerstone of the New American Theatre was laid May 29, 1822. Caldwell had asked the Masonic Lodge to perform the rites on the occasion, but the Honorable J. F. Canonge, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana, responded that he required time for reflection and to prepare the Grand Lodge for the ceremony. Impatient at postponement, Caldwell procured the necessary implements and accessories and performed the task himself in "due and ancient form." In later years Caldwell wrote of the Masons, darkly, "They afterwards regretted it." On the cornerstone, an irregular, flat slab about eighteen inches by two feet in dimension, was placed an elliptical silver plate, three by four inches, with an inscription in French running-hand letters which read:

May, 1822
This Cornerstone
of the First
American Theatre
laid by
James H. Caldwell
Manager of Do.

With the silver plate was placed the clasp of an old-fashioned pocketbook inscribed "J. Caldwell" and a number of coins: three American copper cents dated 1816, 1817, and 1820; an 1821 dime; an 1815 quarter-dollar; an 1821 half-dollar; an 1812 Spanish medio; an 1820 Spanish peso; an Italian piastre dated 1810; and an 1816 British shilling.

Letter to C. B. Smith, op. cit.

These items were recovered sixty years later when the theatre's foundations were being removed to make way for a new hardware store. Cf. Daily Picayune, December 30, 1881.
The last recorded performance of this season at the Orleans Theatre is April 6 and it is not certain whether this marks the end of the season or not, but probably not. Ludlow says the benefits commenced in early May. In any case, before leaving the city for his Virginia theatres, Caldwell, with his characteristic zeal, directed the laying of ten feet of wall, and commenced the task of raising a balance of $14,400 of the $70,000 cost of the building. He accomplished this financing, in part, with a subscription plan. The following example of the note which Caldwell gave each stockholder demonstrates how the plan worked:

New Orleans, 10 June 1824. This is to certify that Samuel Elkins has paid his subscription of three hundred dollars towards building the American Theatre, and is therefore entitled to a free personal admission ticket into the theatre according to the rules thereof, until the said amount shall be returned, which is to be done on or before the first day of January, 1834. Signed Jas. H. Caldwell.

This much accomplished, Caldwell stopped the work and departed for Virginia. Construction on the building was begun again in January when Caldwell returned to New

49 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 237.
50 Rees, op. cit., p. 55.
51 Notarial Acts of William Boswell, February 19, 1834, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans. Elkins had lost his certificate, but had been repaid the amount of the note. This instrument was an agreement by him not to have any claims against Caldwell.
52 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 238. Ludlow quit the company and did not go to Virginia with Caldwell this summer.
There are no extant records of Caldwell's activities on the eastern seaboard during the summer of 1822. The company returned to New Orleans January 2, 1823, as noticed by the Gazette of the next day. Two days later the Orleans Theatre was opened for American audiences. New members of the company this year included Jane Placide, who in this first performance attracted the notice of the Gazette's critic as "the best personation in the whole play" which was The Road to Ruin. Other actors of interest in the company were William Forrest, elder brother of the then unknown Edwin, and Edwin Caldwell, brother of the manager. Ned Caldwell is a somewhat shadowy figure. He was a regular member of his brother's company for this and the next season. From 1824 to 1826 he was a member of Noah Ludlow's company which played the Alabama towns of Mobile, Huntsville, and Tuscaloosa. He was with Ludlow also, when Ludlow visited Montgomery in 1827-1828. After that Ned Caldwell drops from sight. He seems to have been an indifferent actor who was confined to walking gentlemen and other characters of little distinction. Ludlow seems to have been genuinely fond of the easy-going, joke-loving

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53 Rees, op. cit., p. 55. quotes Caldwell as follows: 1.,. stopped till December; then recommenced on the 14th May following, 1823--opened it with the "Dramatist" and the "Romp." This is an obvious error in punctuation which would lead the reader to believe the work was not recommenced until May 14th, the date on which the theatre was opened.

54 Louisiana Gazette, January 6, 1823.
Ned in sharp contrast to the strong antipathy he developed for brother James. 55

Two notices of the season's performances give us additional insight into the acting ability of James H. Caldwell. Of his performance in Goldsmith's She Stoops To Conquer the Gazette of January 8 said:

In the play Mr. Caldwell's YOUNG MARLOW was, on the whole, a faithful delineation; the great fault, however, of this Actor, in the piece in question, as well as in almost every other part we have seen him attempt, is a too strong inclination to overact. We confess we would rather see him fall somewhat short of the energy due to the part he undertakes, than to overshoot and "strain the garb quite from its nature." Nevertheless, we think him the best YOUNG MARLOW we have ever seen.

And on February 10 the Gazette gave the following opinion of the musical drama Rob Roy McGregor:

The part of Rob Roy was sustained by Mr. J. Caldwell to the general satisfaction of the audience—as usual, he was more appropriately, and, of course, better dressed than most of his followers. He, very judiciously, made no attempt at the peculiarities of the Scotch dialect or brogue. . . The "Diana" of Miss Placide surpassed expectation . . .

Despite the fact that Caldwell this season was attempting to satisfy his public with "a numerical increase, and with an expansion of talent and tact," his efforts during January were greeted with a "beggarly account of empty boxes." 56 Several expedients were tried to bring out the

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55 Two of the more entertaining anecdotes in Ludlov's autobiography are about Ned Caldwell. Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 259-60, 298-303.

56 Louisiana Gazette, January 27, 1823.
crowds—an exhibition of nitrous oxide gas on January 11, and, in the melodrama of The Exiles of Siberia on the 13th, "A Snow Storm, in which snow actually appears to descend and rest upon the stage." The public seemed to resent the low standard of performance, however, as when the Gazette of January 14 complained that "the voice of the prompter was too often heard." And despite the fact that Caldwell himself was playing nearly every night opposite either Jane Placide, Rosina Seymour—the future wife of his treasurer James Rowe—or Mrs. Baker, according to the Gazette of the 27th the company was playing to a dead loss every night even though, "the pieces are judiciously selected, and as well cast in the dramatis personae as the strength and adaptation of the company will admit."

An answer to this perplexing problem was volunteered in the columns of the Gazette on January 30 by "Smell Fungus," who suggested that Caldwell reduce the price of entrance to the Pit. "How often," asked the writer, "does one see some yahou throw his unclean feet over the box railings and expose a part still more indelicate to the public gaze... the hat is kept on, and sometimes even the sigar smoked." Reduce the price of the Pit to fifty cents, he told the Manager, and the ladies would return to the boxes now occupied by these "dirty clowns." This unique suggestion was countered in the same paper of the following day with this reply:

Mr. Editor—I am much surprised that
you . . . should have inserted that piece of
Smell fungus's. . . . This delicate creature
wishes to save weak nerves and good money--the
manager can the sooner do without the former
than the latter, and so I advise Smell fungus
to keep away, least, perchance, he run foul of
A SNAG.

Conditions improved somewhat during February.
The addition of the newly-married Mr. and Mrs. Alexander
Drake, son and daughter-in-law of the pioneer manager
Samuel Drake of the western theatres, served to strengthen
Caldwell's company. But eventually he was forced to again
put forth novelties in an attempt to attract patronage.
The first of these appeared in early March in the persons
of Master C. F. Smith and his sister. While child prodigies
in the theatre were a popular attraction of the day, the
Gazette in its columns of March 3 sensibly advised these
children to "study hard, exercise much, and play seldom."
Caldwell seems not to have relaxed his rule not to play
with visiting stars, and his name does not appear on the
bills with the Smith children.

With the third visit of Thomas A. Cooper on
March 21, however, Caldwell did appear as Macduff to
Cooper's Macbeth, and in subsequent nights played the
roles of Cicillus in Virginius, Jaffier in Venice Pre­
served, Brutus in Julius Caesar, Falconbridge in King
John, Iago in Othello and Horatio in The Fair Penitent,
sharing the stage with his visiting star. This last play
was performed on April 11 as a benefit for Caldwell, and
Cooper then departed for Natchez where Caldwell had rented
a ballroom as a temporary theatre. Some of Caldwell's New Orleans company went along to support Cooper in Natchez and to keep the theatre going until the rest of the company joined them in mid-May.

Caldwell was becoming anxious to quit the confining atmosphere of the Orleans Street Theatre. His doorkeeper had been murdered in February by a customer who had been denied entrance for lack of a ticket. Caldwell's relationship with John Davis, owner of the Orleans, was apparently becoming somewhat strained, also. Caldwell's advertisement of March 27 in the Gazette carried the following paragraph:

It was the intention of the manager to perform on Thursday evening; that privilege, however, having been PEREMPTORILY denied him by the administrator of the French Company, he is under the necessity of postponing his next performance . . .

These irritations were no doubt compounded by his failure to obtain a loan from the City Council to enable him to complete the theatre on Camp Street. He had asked to borrow $6,000, but the Council had refused him on the grounds that on a similar loan of $12,000 to John Davis the interest had not been paid, and the city had lost $5,000 on another loan to the Presbyterian Church.

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58 Louisiana Gazette, February 13, 21, 1823. See, also, Kendall, op. cit., pp. 31-32 for a detailed account of this incident.

59 Louisiana Gazette, March 24, 1823.
This present failure on Caldwell's part was not to deter him from seeking assistance from governmental authorities in the future; much of his subsequent business success was due to ability to secure money from such bodies when he needed it.

A benefit for Jackson Gray on May 9, 1823, was the last performance of Caldwell's troup at the Orleans Theatre. It was not, however, the last night of the New Orleans season, as the following advertisement in the Gazette of May 12 shows:

**AMERICAN THEATRE**

The manager feels it his duty to explain to the public, that he is under the necessity of opening this Theatre in an unfinished state, for a few nights, in order to avoid those defects, which have been found to exist in many Theatres, where the precaution has not been taken of ascertaining how far the construction of the building was sufficient for assuring a complete opportunity of seeing and hearing, in every part of the house devoted to the audience. This proof is necessary not only for the saving of time and trouble, but will avoid the immense expense and inconvenience which would arise in the event of any such defect being discovered in the finished state of the house.

The opening night was announced for "the benefit of the Theatre," and the bill included The Dramatist and the farce of The Romp, Caldwell playing Vapid, one of his most popular roles, in the former piece. Just what defects in construction were ascertained during the two weeks the

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60 This was the same role which Caldwell was to select twenty years later for his final performance when he retired from the theatre.
company played at the new house, if any, and how the architecture of the building could have been altered to correct them, is difficult to say. One is led to suspect from the phrase "prices unlimited" which appears in the opening night bill that Caldwell saw a way to capitalize on the novelty of the new building and turn a quick profit to himself before leaving the city. The chief novelty, of course, was the first introduction of gas lighting into the city of New Orleans.

There seems to be no evidence that this first use of illuminating gas was anything other than an exhibition for novelty's sake. Theatre advertisements of May 17 and 19 in the Gazette carry the note that "after the play will be exhibited an experiment of the manner of lighting the Theatre with gas." This would seem to indicate that at this stage no attempt was made to use gas for theatrical lighting as part of the performance of the play, nor even to illuminate the auditorium. The gas generator and gas holding tank--or gasometer as it was popularly called--were located next to the American Theatre building and were operated by a Mr. Symonds, who Caldwell had imported with the apparatus from England. This first gasometer later proved to be leaky and was replaced near the beginning

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61 It is possible that Caldwell returned to England the previous summer to secure this apparatus. In later years, Caldwell stated that he had twice been to England to purchase this kind of equipment. The other time was definitely during 1834.
of the next season.  

With a benefit for little Master Smith the christening of the Camp Street Theatre was concluded on May 27, according to the Gazette, and the company mounted the Mississippi to Natchez to join the rest of the troupe who were already there. Caldwell remained in New Orleans for the first part of the summer, superintending the finishing of the theatre and preparing for the formal opening to be held at the beginning of the next theatre season. To encourage interest in that opening, he offered a prize of one hundred dollars, "or a piece of plate of that value," for the best poetical address submitted to him before December 1, said address to be delivered on the night of the opening of the theatre.

Sometime in late June or early July Caldwell arrived in Natchez to join his company. The Natchez "theatre" had been fitted up in the ballroom of the city's largest hotel, Traveler's Hall, located on First South (now State) Street near Second (now Wall) Street. The long hall seated about three hundred people, whom Caldwell charged two dollars for admission on the excuse of the expenses of fitting up the theatre and of engaging Cooper. Unlike their more mercurial neighbors to the south, the

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62 Louisiana Gazette, January 31, 1824.
63 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 245.
64 Louisiana Gazette, June 12, 1823.
Natcheans seem not to have balked at this extortion. The little group under the lieutenancy of W. H. Benton included Mrs. Alexander Drake to play opposite first, Cooper, and then Ludlow. The theatre had been opened on April 19, 1823 and the company was strengthened by the arrival of the Russells, William Forrest, Jane Placide and the others about the first of June. On July 5, shortly after Caldwell joined them, the season in Natchez was closed and the troupe moved up the Mississippi and Cumberland Rivers to Nashville. Caldwell placed the company under the direction of Richard Russell for this venture and himself returned to New Orleans to continue the superintending of the building of the American Theatre.

The Natchez expedition had not been too profitable. The company of twenty-five only played four nights a week, and then to mediocre houses, so the return on Caldwell's investment could not have been great. Caldwell nevertheless felt encouraged enough to promise Natchez that the

65 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 245 says the price was reduced to one dollar after Cooper's engagement.

66 Free, op. cit., pp. 150-66. Ludlow recalls that Caldwell did not go to Nashville with them, and further says that he "had gone to Virginia to visit his family, and to bring them with him on his return to New Orleans for the ensuing winter." Ludlow, op. cit., p. 248. While there is no direct evidence that Caldwell was in New Orleans for the rest of the summer, it seems unlikely that he would make the hard trip to Virginia in July, return to New Orleans, and then return to Virginia in mid-August to play at the Richmond theatre. I have found no other allusion to Mrs. Caldwell's ever having visited New Orleans.
company would return in October on its way back to New Orleans. This promise was not fulfilled, however, because of the severe yellow fever epidemic which was still raging as late as November. 67

By contrast to the unprofitable Natchez season, Ludlow recalls that the Nashville season "was simply a paying one, and nothing transpired during the time worth recording here." 68 The company played in a theatre which had been built in 1820 by Collins and Jones. Caldwell later disparaged this theatre as a "barn." 69 The season was ended about the third week of November, 70 at which time Caldwell re-joined them. He had, in the meantime, appeared at the Richmond theatre for four nights. 71 As noted above, the return trip south was delayed because of the epidemic of yellow fever which raged in Natchez and New Orleans. About the second week in December, Caldwell came to Natchez where he again divided the company with part of them remaining in Natchez for ten days or so, 72 and the remainder proceeding to Baton Rouge for a brief season there. 73 Upon his arrival in New Orleans about

68Ludlow, op. cit., p. 248.
70Ludlow, op. cit.
71Shockley, op. cit., pp. 458-60.
72Free, op. cit., p. 167.
73Louisiana Gazette, December 10, 1823.
Christmas time, Caldwell set about immediately to open formally the New American Theatre in Camp Street.

Although he was to return to the Virginia theatres for one more summer, the season of 1823-1824 was a definite turning point in the career of Caldwell as a manager. He had made up his mind to settle permanently in New Orleans, and had constructed a theatre for himself with that object in view. Moreover, he had laid the groundwork for the establishment of what was to become a considerable theatrical empire along the waters of the great Mississippi River system. His roots were firmly planted in Natchez, and in Nashville his success had led him to plan to build a theatre there. On the night of January 1, 1824, as he gazed into the gas-lit auditorium at the huge crowd jammed into the freshly painted confines of his New American Theatre, James H. Caldwell might have had reason to greet the New Year with feelings of optimism and pride.

Rees, op. cit., p. 59, says "Having laid the foundation-stone of a new theatre in Nashville, and made arrangements to extend the drama over the whole of the 'far west,' Mr. Caldwell opened his New American Theatre in New Orleans on Thursday, January 1, 1824." Caldwell did not build the Nashville theatre until 1826, so Rees' use of the term "foundation-stone" is no doubt merely figurative.
CHAPTER III
1824-1829

Today a visitor to the city of New Orleans who found his way to the busy commercial district on Camp Street between Poydras and Canal Streets would find it difficult to visualize the desolate scene which surrounded this area as preparations were made to open the little American Theatre on January 1, 1824. James H. Caldwell has vividly recalled this scene:

Such was the situation of that time . . . that the streets in which are some of the greatest monuments were scarcely even defined.

New Levee Street was then a continuous line of ponds for more than a mile, and Tchoupitoulas and Magazine streets could then boast of no better buildings than such as are denominated "shanties," with here and there the mouldering remains of former plantation residences. Camp-street had only, at that time, a few tobacco and cotton warehouses, and St. Charles street was best known to the boys, who sought to sport for snipe amongst the latannier in the marshes, which had never been disturbed otherwise in its original growth.

The gradual rising of the walls of the first "American Theatre," . . . excited a great deal of curiosity, and naturally so, for people, on the idea of its being intended for fortification. For several years the public had to travel on gunwale side-walks; and . . . carriages could not be used after a heavy rain, in places so far out of

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1These three streets lie between Camp Street and the Mississippi River, parallel to Camp Street, and are at right angles to Canal Street. New Levee Street is now called South Peters Street above Canal Street.
the way as Camp-street.  

The appearance of the theatre itself is preserved to us today only in brief descriptions and a few pictures. These last are, in their time of publication, unfortunately somewhat separated from the time of the first opening of the theatre, and may not present a wholly accurate view of the theatre as it actually was in 1824. On the historic occasion itself the Gazette said only, "The audience part of the house, particularly, was neatly fitted up, and when entirely augmented, will, we think be inferior to none in the United States." The newspaper said nothing concerning the looks of the exterior of the theatre or of the surrounding landscape.

There are at least two pictures of the exterior of the theatre, however. One is a lithograph of about 1830 which depicts the front and side of the building with the viewer looking towards Canal Street. The other is a head-on sketch of the American Theatre as it looked in 1838. The latter picture clearly shows eight years of change in the structures adjacent to the theatre, but the American Theatre is identical in both views. It is a building not distinguished for architectural beauty, but

2Spirit of the Times, December 24, 1842.

3This picture is in the Fridenberg Collection in New York.

obviously commodious and well-adapted to its function. The facade, though of comparatively simple design, is still somewhat too ornate for the severely plain lines of the rest of the building. There is, in fact, a strong suggestion of the false-front store of the western mining camp of later years. It is easy to see why there arose a jocular speculation "on the idea of its being intended for fortification." For the facade, the intent seems to have been to suggest a Doric order of a Grecian building.

Extending the width of the building and mounting steeply from the street are nine marble steps leading through five arches supported by marble columns. At the street level in front of and intersecting the steps at regular intervals are four marble piers, each of which supports a cast iron tripod in which hang the gas lamps which illuminate the front of the building and the street.

Alterations were made to the interior of the American Theatre from time to time during its history, the first major one being in 1828. However, the description of the theatre as it looked to the Louisiana Advertiser on December 18, 1828 is probably a fair approximation of what the basic structure of the interior was in 1823:

On entering the doors, the visitor passes into a well lighted vestibule, where he presents a ticket. He then ascends a flight of stairs to the box lobbies. Through the centre box is a passage to what is generally called the Pit, but which is here converted into forty-two Boxes, divided longitudinally into four rows. 5 These, with the

5 This was no doubt a change in the original structure which probably had the traditional pit with benches.

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Boxes of the first tier (thirty in number) afford accommodations for nearly 800 persons. The Pit (or Parquet) Boxes, are superbly fitted up, carpeted throughout, and contain, each, five mahogany chairs with stuffed seats and crimson coverings. The seats of the boxes in the circle are stuffed and covered to correspond. Each stage box is ornamented with a looking glass 7 feet by 3, that affords a panoramic view, as it were of the audience. The mirrors are tastefully decorated with blue damask, and surmounted each by a large eagle en or, displaying the national flag, in satin. The lobbies of this tier are carpeted, which with its other comforts deadens the noise of the many and often heavy footsteps of the visitors.

On entering the Boxes, the first thing the eye rests upon is the majestic Procenium [sic] of the Theatre. It is an elliptic [sic] arch of 38 feet span, supported by two Doric pilasters in imitation of Scacolina marble, reeded in gold, the bases and capitals also in gold, resting upon attic pedestals of ver de mer marble. The arch is ornamented with a double row of pannelled [sic] rosaces, cased with gold mountings—the centre pannel [sic] with an emblematic gold lyre—in arabesque, and has the appearance of a fan when open. The colour is in imitation of blue silk surrounded by another resembling that of the morning's dawn. The centre is a canopy painted in light clouds, studded with silver stars. Here is suspended a beautiful cut glass chandelier, 9 feet in diameter.

The decorations on the front of the boxes vary in every tier. The lower circle is set off with wreaths of roses and flowers, supported by golden zephyrs, upon a prismatic ground, with gold mouldings. The fronts of the 2d and 3d tiers are in arabesque, and gilt. Around the boxes are Candelabres dores, with three branches and large ground glass shades to soften the light. Every part of the house is brilliantly illuminated with oil gas.

The amphitheatre is divided from the lobbies by a brick wall, with doors leading to each box; and the parallel sides are thrown into large arches, more convenient and salubrious in this climate, as a free circulation of air can be always commanded by opening several large windows in the main walls. The partition of the Parquet boxes—the wall that encircles them, and supports the cast iron columns of the different tiers of boxes (which are four spears tied together, and painted white, as far as the caps, and these are gilt) are all, including the arches, of a delicate rose colour, and
thus seem well calculated to set off the fair complexions of the Ladies who may honour this really beautiful Theatre with their presence.

As is usual in contemporary descriptions of nineteenth century theatres, the area behind the proscenium is ignored. The stage opening was not large, however, and wings and shutters were never used at the little Camp. "From want of width on the stage, the scenery is necessarily painted on drops," said a contemporary description. The act drop, at least for some of the years of the Camp Street Theatre’s existence, was painted with a representation of Apollo and the nine Muses. The theatre was lighted with two hundred and fifty gas lights, which no doubt included the chandelier and the lights outside the theatre, and also included footlights. This gas illumination was a genuine novelty. The American Theatre was the first building west of the Alleghenies to be so illuminated and the third theatre in the United States, preceded only by Baltimore and Philadelphia and preceding by two years the introduction of gas lighting at the Bowery Theatre in New York. The Gazette of January 3 observed that "the anticipations

7"To the Muse of 'Straws'”, Daily Picayune, February 19, 1840.
8New Orleans Bee, June 19, 1835.
9Louisiana Gazette, January 3, 1824. The lights outside the theatre were not put into operation until January 22, when two of them were illuminated with an effect "not only brilliant but surprising," according to the Gazette of January 23.
formed of the Gas have been completely fulfilled . . . however, [it has not] yet reached the perfection of which it is capable." The gas machinery was located in the small lot to the rear of the American Theatre and under the stage of the theatre itself.10

Caldwell contented himself with the traditional prices of admission: one dollar to the first, the second, and part of the third tiers of boxes, together with the parquette; seventy-five cents to the pit and the left-hand side of the third tier, which was appropriated exclusively to the Negro population; and fifty cents to the gallery, which was for white persons only.11 Toward the end of the month Caldwell altered the seating provisions with regard to the colored population, and provided for their admission to the third tier at a reduced price of fifty cents, at the same time permitting them to obtain boxes in that tier at the same rate as for boxes in other parts of the house.12 Doors to the theatre were opened at 6:00 P. M. and the performance began at 7:00 P. M. There were separate ticket offices for boxes and parquet and for pit and gallery. As

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10According to an account in the Daily Picayune, June 7, 1891 which recalled the razing of this building in 1882, the discovery of the gas retorts in the above described location caused considerable excitement on the street. The gas retorts resembled "large sized cannons" and a story was started that they were guns from one of the schooners of the pirate Jean Lafitte.

11Louisiana Gazette, December 27, 1823.

12Ibid., January 28, 1824.
was customary in theatres of the day, liquor was sold in the saloon and from bars located in various parts of the lobby areas of the theatre. Caldwell leased these facilities to various persons through the years of his management.

In the operation of the theatre Caldwell was bound by certain municipal ordinances of 1816 and 1823 designed to regulate theatres and other public places. These laws imposed the following restrictions:

1st. That no auditor shall be allowed to wear his hat during the performance.
2d. That no auditor shall be allowed to smoke segars in the boxes or lobbies of the Theatre.
3d. That no auditor shall be allowed to disturb the general silence, either by knocking with sticks or talking loudly, nor shall he attempt to make any kind of disturbance without subjecting himself to a fine of Twenty-five dollars, to the benefit of the Corporation, for each contravention.  

To insure this decorum a staff of police officers was maintained in the theatre.

For the opening bill on January 1, 1824, Caldwell chose Morton's comedy Town and Country and the musical farce Of Age Tomorrow. The Gazette's notice of the performances was restricted to a simple observation that "several members of the theatrical corps were well received," and the opinion that "many of them. . . are. . . much improved since last year." The prize address contest had been won by a Thomas Wells of Boston, and the evening's entertainment was initiated with Caldwell reciting his poem:

When first, o'er Learning, Persecution trod,
And fettered Letters felt his iron rod,

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13 Louisiana Advertiser, February 6, 1829.
Long, long in darkness bound, the Muses slept,
Each haunt left bardless, and each harp unswept;--
"Till, bursting through the gloom, dramatic fire
Apollo darted o'er each slumbering Lyre;
Through clouds of dullness shot his attic light,
And chased the shades of superstitious night;
Loud Paeans then broke forth from every tongue,--
The Temples echoed,—and the Chorus rung—
Warm with new soul, young Music smote the strings,
To Song gave life—to Inspiration wings!—
Awoke, and saw the Drama’s towering dome,
Swell its asylum arch, and call him home;
Allured to higher worlds, he took his flight,
And rose to realms of empyrean height,
Explored the winding paths of Fiction’s bowers,
And gathered for the Stage his deathless flowers.
Her ample page redeeming Learning spread,
And o’er the night of Mind her radiance shed,
Taste polished life—the Arts refined the age—
And Virtue triumphed as she reared the Stage.
Patrons! this night our cause to you we trust,
As Guardians of the Drama’s rights—be just;
Support from you the child of Thespis draws,
Warms in your sun, and thrives on your applause;
At your tribunal he expecting stands,
And craves indulgent judgment at your hands;
Your willing smiles then let his efforts share,
And, to your shelter, take the buskin’s heir!
Oh, let your presence, let your plaudits cheer
Our Protean toil, and give us welcome here!
And yet, no purchased favour we would ask;
Unbiased and unbought fulfil your task.
Before your critic bench we humbly bend,
And to your righteous voice ourselves commend;—
No servile suppliants to your court we sue,
But, praise and censure, claim alike, from you;
Assembled here, to your decree submit,
And hail in you the arbiters of wit.
And now, in scenic beauty drest, thou Dome—
The shield of Morals and of Song the home—
The nurse of Eloquence—the school of Taste,
Hence be thy altars by the Muses graced.
Within thy walls, perhaps, by Genius led
Shall future Shakespeares sing, or Garricks tread;
In Roman grace, and majesty of mien,
Some Kemble reign, the monarch of the scene;
Her fire of soul some Siddons here impart,
Shoot through each quivering nerve, and storm the heart;
On rapid wing still speeds the suspicious time,
When Bards our own the Olympic Mount shall climb;
When round their consecrated shrines shall throng
Our buskinied heroes, and our sons of Song,
In Attic Pride our drama then shall rise,
And nobly daring, claim the Thespian prize;
To classic height exalt the rising age,
And give, to peerless, lasting fame, the Stage. 14

In the event that these florid lines had not wholly
surfeited the poetry lovers in the audience, on the following
Tuesday evening, January 6, Caldwell recited the second-
place address by a Mr. James Porter!

Caldwell's company this season included the familiar
faces of his brother Ned Caldwell, the Ludlows, the Russells,
Jackson Gray, J. M. Scott, and Jane Placide, and, among
the newcomers was a young actor named Edwin Forrest--
younger brother to William Forrest who had been before the
New Orleans audience in previous seasons, and who was again
a member of the stock company.

If Sol Smith is to be believed, it was at his
fatherly insistence that young Edwin Forrest was persuaded
to leave a circus in Lexington, Kentucky to fulfil a prior
contract with Caldwell at New Orleans. 15  In any event,
Forrest joined the New Orleans company a month late; his
name does not appear in the bills until his debut as Jaffier
to Caldwell's Pierre in Venice Preserved on February
4.
Ludlow is quite correct in recalling that Forrest was not,
as James Rees claims, engaged as a star, 16 but as a

15 Smith, op. cit., pp. 27-28. Smith correctly re-
calls the Lexington episode as occurring late in 1823. Ludlow,
op. cit., p. 251, spitefully points out Smith's error on p.
49 where Smith cites Forrest's debut season as 1825-6, but
Ludlow conveniently gives Smith no credit for the present
anecdote.
16 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 251.
"principal" member of the stock company to play such roles as Pizarro, Almanzor in The AEthiop, Harry Dornton in The Road to Ruin, Lysimachus in Alexander the Great, Juba in Cato and Buckingham in Richard III—not the chief roles filled by Caldwell or his visiting star William Pelby, but the important secondary roles usually characterized as "juvenile tragedy." Additionally, Forrest was expected to and did assist where he was needed in the melodramas and farces. Forrest's name seldom appears in the cast of high comedy, although on April 21 he did play the moody Faulkland in Sheridan's The Rivals. Forrest's eventual conflict with Caldwell, when viewed in the light of his subordination to Caldwell during this apprentice period, is a loose parallel to the rebellion by the young Caldwell against his own manager, Holman, in Charleston in 1817. The seeds of this dissension between Forrest and Caldwell seem to have been planted during these first few months of their association. Ludlow recites an episode involving Forrest which, while obviously related to demonstrate the acuity of Ludlow's critical judgment, at the same time reveals something of Caldwell's nature:

Towards the close of the season, and about the time my benefit was to take place, I was asked by Mr. Caldwell what entertainment I proposed for that night. . . . I told him I had been thinking of the tragedy of "Wallace, the Hero of Scotland." . . . Mr. Caldwell, having paused a moment, said: "You intend to perform the character of Wallace yourself, I presume?" I said: "Not if it can be done without my undertaking the character. I should prefer Douglas; it is a part that would be less labor to me and more useful in my general routine of business.
Besides, I have no tragedy aspirations at the present day; therefore Wallace, a very lengthy character, would be to me useless and unavailable stock in trade." He then said: "You certainly cannot expect me, with all my managerial duties to perform, to be able to study the character within the time proposed?" This objection I had in my own mind anticipated; therefore remarked that I had thought "young Forrest might perform the character very well." At this, for a moment, the manager looked surprised, then said: "Why surely, Mr. Ludlow, you would not risk the credit of the theatre upon such a venture as that? If I comprehend the play, the success of it depends upon the character of Wallace being well acted." "True, sir," said I; "and I think it will be well acted, should Edwin Forrest undertake it." The manager bit his lips for a few moments, and then, in his dignified manner, said: "Well, sir, I will cast the young man for the character; but remember it will be your benefit night, and if there should be any disappointment, the odium will fall on you." ... On the benefit night the house was well filled, the play well acted, the applause general and frequent, and the curtain went down upon the last act to such decided expressions of satisfaction that, as it descended, I stepped forward and returned thanks to the ladies and gentlemen present for the honor they had done me, and especially for the approbation they had manifested of the performance of my young friend, Edwin Forrest.17

This first season in the new theatre on Camp Street ended without undue incident or excitement. Attendance appears to have been high and the quality of performance good enough not to encourage any expressions of disapproval in the press. The closest thing to a note of displeasure was a mild reproof in the Gazette of January 23 in which "Viator" suggested that the American Theatre had been "devoted too long a time together to the tragic muse," and

17Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 252-53. Ludlow's benefit was on May 12, according to the Gazette of that date.
asked for a repetition of the opera Rob Roy. Caldwell several times during the season resorted to novelty attractions. One of these was an exhibition of "Exhilarating Gas." On another occasion the theatre was converted into a ballroom. And, for the benefit of Mr. Symons the engineer of the gas department, there was "a spectacle of a FLOWER GARDEN, the Flowers, Blossoms, and Trees made entirely of GAS." As his civic gesture for the year Caldwell presented a benefit in favor of the Greeks fighting for independence. Some question was raised in the press as to whether the "Widow's Mite" had been collected on this last occasion. It was pointed out that "as the manager's expenses are now much reduced," the four or five hundred persons in attendance should have brought something more than a "blank receipt to this noble fund."

The most popular piece of this season seems to have been the Pocock melodrama Zembuca; or, the Netmaker and His Wife, which played for six straight nights in mid-April. It was brought out with "entire new and splendid scenery, machinery and decorations," and the Gazette of April recorded it as "a perfectly successful attempt, on the part of Mr. Caldwell, to ingratiate the favour of his numerous patrons." Unfortunately, however, the Gazette felt constrained

18 *Louisiana Gazette*, February 2 and 10, 1824.
21 *Ibid.*, February 2 and 10; March 6, 1824.
to point out that "when the disbursements of the manager come to be compared with the receipts of the house. . . he will not be found to be a very great gainer." In the absence of account books and diaries, it is always difficult to determine whether such statements are a true indication of financial loss, or merely the product of the helpful pen of a journalist friendly to the manager, who wishes to excite the sympathies of the public in the hopes of increasing attendance at his benefit. For his benefit on May 26 Caldwell performed the title role in the melodrama *The Miller and His Men*, and with an additional benefit for the Orphan Boys Asylum on Wednesday, June 9, the season was brought to a close.

The *Gazette* of May 6, while clearly puffing the American Theatre, probably gives an accurate summary of the general success of this first season:

> The pains and exertion of the manager have gone hand in hand to render his entertainments worthy of patronage. His labor to effect this object has been seen—it is well known to every individual in our community. The same talent and industry in any other walk of life would have left a balance of "hard cash" in his pockets—the reverse is the fact with him now.

> The decorations of the Theatre—the mode of lighting it with Gas, its ventilation—but particularly the company generally (where if none excel pre-eminently, none are notable for inferiority) offer us the full value of an ounce of silver. We are glad to see that Mr. Caldwell now confines himself to light Comedy, & the more so because it may be reasonably doubted whether his performers

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22 Ibid., May 26, 1824.
23 Ibid., June 8, 1824.
are all sufficiently vested with talents as capable of painting passions as of attacking the follies of mankind.

Caldwell was commended by the same paper the following day for his decision to concentrate on comedy, and of his performance as George Howard in The Will, the Gazette said it was "gay, rattling, generous . . . one of his happiest efforts."

Most of the members of his company elected to go with Caldwell to the Virginia theatres for the summer, but Noah Ludlow decided not to join them. This led to somewhat strained relations between the two men, as Ludlow recalled:

About a fortnight after the close of this New Orleans season a notice was put up in the green-room of the theatre, calling upon all those who were not engaged for the summer, and might wish to continue with the company, and return with it to New Orleans the following season, to apply to the manager by a certain date. As I, among others, did not apply, I was asked by the manager whether I intended to withdraw from the company. To which I replied in the affirmative, stating at the same time that I had resolved to try my fortune again as a manager. This information appeared rather to surprise him; but he remarked, very coldly, that he "hoped I would succeed," and the conversation dropped for the time. Afterwards, I was told, he charged me with creating a rebellion among his company, and inducing some of them to leave him. If he did say so, and I have good reason to believe he did, his charge was unjust. I never made an offer to any member of his company until they applied to me, which some of them did, saying they could not go with Mr. Caldwell's company for the summer, as the salaries he offered would not pay their necessary expenses,—adding at the same time that they might return to him for the ensuing winter, provided they got additions to their salaries. 24

Caldwell's exact whereabouts during June and most

of July, 1824 are uncertain. Of course, if he accompanied
the rest of the troupe by sea to Virginia, a good portion of
this time was spent in traveling. A letter from Edwin
Forrest to his mother fixes the company at Petersburg on
July 26. About the first of September Caldwell left the
company to travel up to Washington to star for four nights
with Warren and Wood. During this brief engagement he
played Hamlet and his popular roles of the Duke Aranza in
Honey Moon, and Vapid in The Dramatist. He concluded with
his benefit on September 13, at which he played Damon,
followed by Young Wilding in The Liar.

By September 29 Caldwell was back at Fredricksburg.
In another letter to his mother Forrest reported continuing
difficulties with Caldwell concerning the roles he was
expected to play. At one point Forrest quit the company in
protest to playing a part he felt himself unsuited to,
much as Caldwell had done in Charleston. But, as Caldwell
had not done, Forrest returned to the theatre two nights
later when he saw his name posted for the important role of
Pythias in Damon and Pythias. "All has gone on smoothly
since, and I have triumphed over him as a tragedian in the
opinions of those who recently esteemed him above praise or

25Richard Moody, Edwin Forrest, First Star of the
26James, op. cit., pp. 405-406. See, also, Hand-
bills, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.
Caldwell's return to Richmond with his company in early November launched a much fuller season than he had previously attempted in that city. He occupied the Richmond Theatre from November 6 to November 27. Caldwell and William Conway shared the starring honors, supported by most of the company which had been in New Orleans, with the exception of those who had joined Noah Ludlow's commonwealth company to tour the South during the summer. The Richmond Compiler of December 1, 1824 contained a communication of critical appraisal of Caldwell and his company which gives some insight into Caldwell's acting style:

Theatrical campaign under management of Mr. James H. Caldwell was closed on Saturday last. . . . In genteel comedy, in certain characters he has no superior, and few equals in this country. . . . his habit of associating with the best society enables him to infuse into his favorite characters much of the spirit of true politeness and gracefulness of action. . . . He is not equal to the great emotions of the Tragic Muse. . . . Among prominent defects in his acting is a drawling tone. . . . Mr. E. Forrest is a young man in Mr. C's Company, whose merit is only to be appreciated by those who prefer excellence in a subordinate character to mediocrity in a higher. . . .

28 Shockley, op. cit., pp. 97, 467-70.
29 Papers of Edward V. Valentine, The Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia. This is one of many notes copied by Valentine from old Richmond newspapers. Mrs. Ralph T. Catteral, Curator of the Research Department of the Museum, extracted this and other pertinent items for me from these notes.
About the last week of the Richmond season, Caldwell ran afoul of the Richmond Common Hall, the governing body of the city. In 1818 the Common Hall had passed an ordinance requiring that exhibitors of public shows must pay an annual tax of two hundred dollars, payable in advance of the performance. Caldwell had failed to secure this license and, as a consequence, warrants were issued against him. He petitioned the Hall, arguing that the fee was inequitable in view of his brief appearance in Richmond. The Hall relented to the extent of reducing the license fee to fifty dollars, plus payment of the costs of the warrants for the fines, the fines themselves being remitted. 30 It may be this experience helped Caldwell to his decision not to return to the Virginia theatres the next summer.

On December 1 Caldwell and the company sailed for New Orleans. 31 Aboard the brig Hollon, in addition to the theatrical troupe, there may have been an interesting piece of cargo which Caldwell was bringing south with him. It was acquired by Caldwell in Richmond under the following set of circumstances. This was the year of the Marquis de Lafayette’s triumphal visit to the United States, and he had visited the Richmond Theatre during the time that Caldwell’s company was playing there. 32 Special furniture had been

31 Ibid., p. 98.
32 Alger, op. cit., p. 133. Alger also states that Chief Justice John Marshall also attended the theatre this summer, and was invited behind the scenes by Manager Caldwell.

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constructed by the Richmond citizens for the General's use while he was a guest at the Eagle Hotel in Richmond. On November 5, after Lafayette's party had departed, this furniture was sold at public auction. Similarly, Lafayette's overnight stay at Yorktown had provided some enterprising auctioneers with an opportunity to execute the same scheme with the furniture which the General and his party had used at Yorktown as the following advertisement in the Richmond Compiler of November 23, 1824 shows:

By C. & G. Clarke. La Fayette Furniture this day at Robt. Poore's and Richard Cowley's Furniture Ware rooms, the furniture used by General La Fayette and the guests at Yorktown consisting of side boards & Bureaus, Dining, Card and Tea Tables. . . and also the elegant Bed, Bedstead & Furniture used by Gen. La Fayette at Yorktown . . .

Being himself an entrepreneur, Caldwell had purchased the bed, "with all its appurtenances, hangings, etc.," which the Compiler of November 25 reported he intended to take to New Orleans "that the citizens may be gratified by a sight of it." There is no record that Caldwell ever actually exhibited the bed, however.

Except for scattered notices of performances, and an occasional theatrical advertisement, the New Orleans season of 1825 went virtually unnoticed by the city's press. The Gazette of January 4 carried a one paragraph account of

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33Papers of Edward V. Valentine, op. cit. This item was taken from the Richmond Whig of November 5, 1824.

34Ibid.
the opening performance at the American Theatre the previous night, but without any critical appraisal of the production. Two events of the season were of some significance. In March William Conway began a brief engagement as a star, opening with Othello in which Caldwell played Iago. The Louisiana Courier of March 3 noted the performance as follows:

Theatrical.--Mr. Conway appeared last evening to an overflowing audience in the character of Othello. . . . Mr. Caldwell played with great spirit. . . . Since we have been in Orleans, we have not seen the piece so well sustained.

The play was repeated three weeks later and the Courier of March 28 was even more flattering:

The presence of Mr. Conway drew forth talents that we did not believe previously to exist in the corps--Mr. Caldwell's Iago, Mr. Wilson's Appius, Mr. E. Forrest in the several parts that he played.

The other major event was the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to the Theatre on the evening of April 11. The occasion was celebrated by the presentation of "the new Historical Play Entitled La Fayette; or, The Castle of Olmutz," immediately after which Caldwell recited an "address written expressly for the occasion, by a gentleman of this place." The theatre was brilliantly illuminated and three large transparencies exhibited. 35 The Louisiana Courier of April 16 gives some idea of the popularity of the General and of the attention he received when he

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35Louisiana Gazette, April 11, 1825.
visited the theatre:

General Lafayette

At 8 o'clock he went to Mr. Caldwell's theatre, where a box had been decorated with great taste and elegance for his reception. . . . The piece continued but neither Cooper, Conway, no, not even Talma himself could have diverted from him . . . the attention of the spectators.

Without further occurrence of note the season closed on May 28. 36

This was the season that saw the beginning of an unusual enterprise which Caldwell associated with his theatrical activities. By act of the Louisiana Legislature, Caldwell and John Davis of the French Theatre were granted gambling licenses. This act essentially was a revenue bill. The annual license fees of $1,500 which Caldwell and Davis each paid were appropriated to increasing the funds destined for the public schools to be established in New Orleans. Somewhat incidentally the legislators intended "to encourage two public establishments alike useful and ornamental" by granting these licenses, which, however, were not to be issued until after "the six first created licenses shall have been issued." 37 Presumably these first six licenses were allocated for less avocational gamblers. This restriction was removed in 1828

36Rees, op. cit., p. 64.
37Acts Passed at the Second Session of the Seventh Legislature of the State of Louisiana, (New Orleans: James M. Bradford, 1826.)
when Caldwell and Davis were privileged to receive their gambling licenses "although the six first licenses should not have been issued." 38 Caldwell continued to receive this legislative sanction for the next ten years, until the Louisiana gambling laws were challenged and changed in March of 1835. 39 It has not been determined that Caldwell ever used his gambling license to operate a gambling place himself. Probably his practice was to do as he did from 1831 to 1835 when he leased his license to others. His return on this investment was excellent. Caldwell paid the $1,500 fee and provided a house at the corner of Camp and Natchez Streets for which the lessee paid him from $7,000 to $7,500 annually.

While the suppression of gambling in 1835 was apparently the result of a popular revulsion to its evils, the act found no favor with the erratic Junius Brutus Booth, who wrote Caldwell from Baltimore on July 27, 1835:

My dear Sir

Your letters I have received but would not reply to for reasons I wish the Public to know--viz: a certain Law has been sanctioned by the Populace of New Orleans to detriment the


39 See infra, p. 240-241.

40 For examples of these contracts see Notarial Acts of Louis T. Caire, April 30 and June 4, 1831; Notarial Acts of Carlile Pollock, May 21 and December 30, 1832 and May 23, 1833; and Notarial Acts of William Christy, October 16, 1835, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.
Interest of Gamblers. In consequence of such a law being approved of by the Mob I shall not condescend to degrade myself by acting on the Stage when my Patrons have to so suffer persecution. I therefore declare to you that I break my Engagement.

yours tr,
JB Booth

The career of James H. Caldwell, both in and out of the theatre, seems almost to be characterized by a compulsive need to accumulate wealth and high social status. And yet this constant striving was often relieved by acts of true generosity and friendliness. One such instance occurred in March of 1825. Caldwell gave to John Varden, his "faithful and trusty machinist" at the American Theatre, a donation of three hundred dollars "in consideration of the unremitting attention, zeal and talent displayed in executing the ideas suggested " by Caldwell in building the American Theatre. In addition to making the gift of money, Caldwell memorialized Varden with his "high estimation . . . of his integrity, honesty, and sobriety never once forfeited in six years of service."  

If frequent repetition gives currency to a story, one anecdote of this theatrical season merits mention here, even though its authenticity may be in some doubt. The several biographers of Edwin Forrest have all repeated the

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41Letter from J. B. Booth to J. H. Caldwell dated July 27, 1835, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.

account of the quarrel between Forrest and Caldwell over the favors of Jane Placide. The common incidents of all these accounts are: Forrest became deeply infatuated with Jane Placide, he rightly or wrongly recognized Caldwell as his rival, and he challenged the older man to a duel. Caldwell is reputed to have laughed at Forrest's hot-headedness and refused to meet him, whereupon Forrest quit the theatre company and posted Caldwell as a coward. The following notice, variously described by Forrest's biographers as having been printed in the newspapers or put up in conspicuous places about the city, is the ostensible "posting":

> Whereas James H. Caldwell has wronged and insulted me, and refused me the satisfaction of a gentleman, I hereby denounce him as a scoundrel and post him as a coward.

EDWIN FORREST

One fact is not open to question: Forrest's resignation marked the end of his career as an apprentice actor under the tutelage of Caldwell. The next time he was to return to New Orleans it was to be as the newest star in the American theatrical heavens.

The whereabouts of Caldwell during the summer of 1825 are as mysterious as are the details of the New Orleans season of this year. He clearly did not return to Virginia, unless it was to visit his family. When Caldwell opened

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the American Theatre for the 1826 season he put a new gas generating apparatus into operation, and it may have been that he spent these summer months in traveling back to Europe to procure the new equipment. The autumn months were spent in Louisville, or even at a theatre in Wheeling, West Virginia in which Caldwell seems to have had some interest, at least in later years. The company's return to New Orleans was delayed because of the low stage of water in the Cumberland River upon which, therefore, steamboats could not operate. Caldwell finally elected to embark his company in keelboats to the mouth of the Ohio River where he eventually was able to find a steamboat bound south to New Orleans.

William Henry Sparks, in his *Memories of Fifty Years*, recalls that he first met Caldwell at Vicksburg as the company was making this trip to their winter campaign in New Orleans. Sparks remembers Caldwell as "possessing fine natural abilities, and wonderful enterprise." "It was a peculiarity of James H. Caldwell," said Sparks, "to do whatever he did with all his might. . . . He was an accomplished gentleman, and a fine classic

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44 *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 23 and 25, 1826.

45 Letter from James H. Caldwell to Noah Ludlow, dated Cincinnati, September 26, 1832, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library. In this letter Caldwell suggested his willingness to leave the Wheeling Theatre to some of his actors for a sharing scheme for the winter of 1832-1833.

46 *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 10, 1826.
sparks joined the company at Vicksburg and shared the dismal descent of the Mississippi River to Natchez—a trip which Sparks remembers as having been whiled away with "song, recitations, anecdotes, and laughter." The group disembarked at midnight,

... a terrible night—dark, and beginning to rain... The road up the bluff was precipitous and muddy. There were no accommodations for decent people under the hill. The dance-houses were in full blast. Boisterous and obscene mirth rang from them; men and women were drunk; some were singing obscene songs; some were shouting profanity in every disgusting term; some, overcome with debauchery, were insensible to shame, and men and women, rushing from house to house, gathered a crowd to meet us as we landed. One tremendous slattern shouted, as she saw us come on shore: "There are the show-folks; now we'll have fun!"

... Caldwell alone was cheerful; Sol Smith joked, and Russell swore. 48

The stop in Natchez must have been brief. Caldwell, in announcing to the public his unfortunate delay at Nash­ville because of low water, had expressed the hope that he would be in New Orleans by January 8. 49 His communication was dated Nashville, December 27, indicating that he would have to travel steadily in order to reach New Orleans by the hoped-for date. Caldwell's letter went on to promise the New Orleans public "much novelty" and many


48Ibid., pp. 446-47. Unfortunately for the reliability of this account, Mr. and Mrs. Sol Smith were not, as Sparks here recalls, members of Caldwell's company this season, nor was Edwin Forrest as he states elsewhere.

49Louisiana Advertiser, January 10, 1826.
new and successful pieces," but gloomily recounted the expenses of "a heavy establishment on his hands—a building constantly receiving improvement and necessarily calling for large sums—a large and expensive dramatic corps—together with auxiliary aid." He predicted that the season would be "the most trying of the manager's career." But at the end of his card Caldwell bravely recalled the warm support and favors of the previous seven years, and again placed his reliance on a generous public. Though he was no doubt writing the usual doleful plea for public support, his anticipations were oddly prophetic: the season was to prove to be highly unprofitable.

The company did not arrive in New Orleans until January 20. The standard opening bill of _Honey Moon_ and _Three and Deuce_ was announced for Monday, January 23, but "the impossibility of completing the new Gas Apparatus" obliged Caldwell to postpone the initial performance until the following evening. When the curtain finally rose to a numerous and expectant audience, the gas generator behaved so uncertainly that "the house at several periods was but dimly lighted," according to the _Advertiser_ of the 25th.

Caldwell lost no time in bringing forth the new pieces he had promised. On January 25 he performed the title role in _William Tell_ "notably." At least once each month the rest of the season he produced one or more original plays, or plays which had never before been
presented in the city. Most notable among these were:
The *Merry Wives of Windsor* on January 30; Bickerstaff's
*The Hypocrite* (based on Moliere's *Tartuffe*), which was
performed for the first time on February 17 and then
several times more prior to the end of the season; von
Weber's opera *Der Freischiitz* on March 18; Waverly's *The
Talisman*, as adapted by "a gentleman of the city;" and
Washington Irving and John Howard Payne's comedy *Charles
II* on, respectively, the 7 and 17 of April. The spectacle
*Cherry and Fair Star* was brought out on April 24 and was
repeated frequently during the final month of the season.

Caldwell himself performed almost constantly,
averaging three or four nights a week throughout most of
the season. This was due, in part, to the absence of any
visiting stars this year. Thomas Abthorpe Cooper had
contracted to visit the American Theatre this year, but on
April 4 Caldwell was compelled to apologize to the public
in the columns of the *Advertiser* for the "forfeiture of
his pledge for the appearance of Mr. Cooper," and by way
of explanation published the following letter:

PHILADELPHIA, March 6, 1826.

  My dear Sir--After hoping week after week to
recruit from my late severe attack sufficiently to
undertake my journey to New Orleans, I still find my
hopes deceived, and that I dare not, in my debilitated
state and still kept under by intermittent fever,
venture upon the road. The extreme lateness of your
arrival in New Orleans will have contracted your
season so much that I trust my absence will not have
any injurious effect. I was seized with a fever in
Albany the night of my benefit, and could not get
through the performances of the evening. But in order
do my utmost to leave Philadelphia on the 17th ult.
I proceeded the next morning to New York, where on the
14th I was obliged, more dead than alive, to submit myself to the hands of a physician. I recommenced my journey but was utterly prostrated by the time I got home, and an intermittent [sic], though otherwise quite well, still keeps me low and strengthless. I have been two or three times on the point of setting out but the dreadful state of the roads rendering it almost certain that I should be unable to proceed and so be left in sickness in some wretched place, have deterred me. I would still endeavour to proceed but I could not arrive before it would be too late for me to fulfill my engagement.

I trust that I shall hear that your season has been productive in proportion to the contracted period of its duration, and sincerely regret that I cannot participate in it.

Most truly your's

THOMAS S. [sic] COOPER.

The nearest thing to a star this season was Alexander Wilson, who joined the company in mid-February and remained until the end of the season playing many of the principal roles. In March a Mrs. Johns, "from the Canada theatre," was featured, but she too seems to have been engaged as a regular member of the company, rather than as a star.

The extant criticism of the company is favorable, generally. Caldwell was frequently praised, but in his portrayal of Mokarra in the spectacle Cataract of the Ganges the Gazette of February 14 found him "more deficient in his part than in any other character at any other time that we have ever seen him." On the other hand, Jane Placide's Zamine in the same piece found favor with the reviewer, who went on to say, "this young lady, malgré the imputations circulated against her, is certainly an ornament to the New Orleans stage." These "imputations" were not exemplified, but one wonders whether the reference
was not to her personal relationship to Caldwell and if there was not, after all, considerable truth to the story of Edwin Forrest's jealous challenge.

On the night of February 15 Caldwell played Jaffier to the Pierre of Alexander Wilson in Venice Preserved. The Advertiser, in reporting the event two days later, said of Caldwell:

The part of Jaffier, the unfortunate outcast, was acted by Mr. Caldwell, who, generally speaking, had a perfect conception of his character, and, I am firmly persuaded, felt every word he uttered. In some scenes, however, his impatience got the better of him, in fact, the only thing that Mr. Caldwell wants is a little more calmness and deliberation to render him a good tragedian. He was particularly fine in the 2d scene in the 3d act.

For some unknown reason the last scene of the fifth act was cut, a liberty against which the Advertiser protested.

The Hypocrite, first performed on February 17, was immediately popular and was repeated several times more during the season. Caldwell played Dr. Cantwell, doing "everything that could be done" to the role, as the Advertiser guardedly observed. Upon repetition of the piece on March 22, "A Looker-On" was moved to confess to the columns of the Advertiser that, while the characters in the comedy were ably supported, particularly those of Cantwell, Mawworm and Charlotte by Caldwell, Russell and wife, "his sensibilities were offended by the play. Said "A Looker-On":

If it were possible to prevail, I would persuade managers generally to lay aside all productions
from the stage that would even cause a blush on the necks or cheeks of our wives and daughters. . . . Were all managers of theatres to use the pruning knife, in all their prompt books as it regards indecent expressions, the illiterate would have less opportunity of displaying their rudeness and vulgarity.

Seemingly, Caldwell did not regard this view as one which was representative or otherwise to be seriously considered; *The Hypocrite* continued in his repertoire until his retirement.

Another piece which was popular with the public was *The Talisman* in which Caldwell played Kenneth of the Leopard, "a character well suited to that gentleman's style." Caldwell, like most managers of the period, was not inclined to regard the efforts of playwrights as worth any more than the condescension shown in producing their plays. For this local playwright the *Advertiser* of April 13 suggested that Caldwell might "do well to reward native genius by following the example of the English managers, in giving the author his 3d night--in other words, a benefit."

For his own benefit on April 14 Caldwell imitated a novelty originated by John Palmer at Drury Lane. He selected five roles from various plays of Shakespeare and, with the assistance of Jane Placide, performed a bill of scenes which included: Shylock in the fourth act of *The Merchant of Venice*; the third act of *Hamlet*; Mercutio in *Romeo and Juliet*; Richard in *Richard III*; and the Duke in *As You Like It.*

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50 *Louisiana Advertiser*, April 7, 1826.
a part of the first, and all of the third act of *Romeo and Juliet*; Mark Antony in the third act of *Julius Caesar*; and the fifth act of *Richard III*, in which he played Gloucester, of course.51

The non-dramatic novelties of the season included such things as the tumbler Mathis and a Mr. Goodacre who lectured on astronomy. A gesture to New Orleans' Irish population was made on St. Patrick's Day with the production of *She Would Be A Soldier*, in which United States troops stationed in the city were used as supernumeraries. The Orphan Boys Asylum received its annual benefit on March 31. Apparently Caldwell deducted about a fifth of the receipts for expenses on these benefit occasions, since the *Advertiser* of April 3 reported, that of "one thousand dollars . . . the sum which will go into the treasury of the Orphan Boys Asylum will be upwards of eight hundred dollars."

Perhaps in hopeful imitation of John Davis's successes with fancy balls at the French Theatre, Caldwell converted the American Theatre into a ballroom for the night of March 24, but attendance was poor. The *Advertiser* rebuked the Creoles for what it regarded as their political enmity to the Americans. The *Argus*, however, held that the Creoles' motives in staying away from the American ball arose either from the lassitude following repeated

51 *Louisiana Gazette*, April 14, 1826; *Louisiana Advertiser*, April 14, 1826.
balls during the Carnival Season, or from the religious restrictions imposed by Lent. Said the Argus:

We think that we may assure Mr. Caldwell, that the Louisiana ladies and gentlemen have nothing against him, and that upon any other occasion they would attend the balls given by him as willingly as those given by any other person.\textsuperscript{52}

Caldwell's pre-season prophecy concerning the heavy expenses of his establishment had been fulfilled to a greater degree than he might have anticipated. He certainly had not stinted himself on production costs, despite the money saved on the salaries of stars. For one thing, Caldwell seems greatly to have augmented the orchestra this year.\textsuperscript{53} Also, the new plays and novelties often were brought out at considerable expense. Der Freischutz, for example, was produced with all new scenery, costumes, and decorations, and the Advertiser of March 18 noted in connection with this opera that "at no time has . . . the American Theatre been so well provided with musical talent." However, Caldwell practiced a small deception on the public with Der Freischutz. In his advertisement in the Gazette of March 18 Caldwell claimed that the opera was to be produced with "all the original music of Carl von De Weber \textsuperscript{sic}." But in a handbill which announced a production of the same piece during the next season there was a note which said:

\textsuperscript{52}\textit{The Argus}, March 25, 1826.

\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Louisiana Advertiser}, February 1 and 22, 1826.
The Manager having received since last season, all the original music composed by Von Weber, he is now enabled to bring out this celebrated opera in a style never before witnessed in New Orleans.54

For the spectacle Cherry and Fair Star Caldwell claimed to have spent three months and $3,000 on its preparation, but the favorable reception of it by his audiences seems to have warranted the time and money—the piece played five consecutive nights from April 27 through May 1, and was repeated several times during the last month of the season. The Advertiser of April 28 commented:

Mr. Caldwell in the manner he has brought forward this piece has redeemed his pledge to the public and we should be rejoiced to learn that it should become a source of emolument to him and help him out of a season that we are apprehensive has not been too propitious.

And unpropitious it seems to have been. The newspapers of the last weeks of the season make several references to the kind of support the theatre had received during the five months of its operation. There was a consensus that the quality of the company and its representations had been high. For example, "D", writing to the Advertiser on May 16, noted:

It is evident that many of the actors and actresses are highly deserving of the patronage they receive /at their benefits/. The present company at the American Theatre possess a vast deal of dramatic talent, and was the Corps Dramatic filled with one or two more heroes who move in the higher walks, the citizens of New Orleans might boast of one of the first companies

54Theatrical Handbill, Kuntz Collection, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
on the continent.

Caldwell's difficulty in securing a well-balanced company was reflected in another communication to the *Advertiser* in which the writer, "Delta," in urging support of Jane Placide's benefit, remarked:

> It must be highly gratifying to the citizens of New Orleans, that she has continued attached to the Theatre of this place, though, under the most disadvantageous circumstances, proceeding from the contrarieties the manager experienced during the past season, to procure suitable performers to complete his Dramatic corps.\(^{55}\)

But public apathy seems to have played its part in Caldwell's troubles this year. As the season drew to a close near the end of May, the *Gazette* of the 26 blasted the vitiated taste of the people:

> When a play of most classic beauty is announced—when all its sentiments inculcate the purest principles of morality, we are always certain to find vacant boxes and an empty pit, which is enough to palsy the exertions of the best of actors. But when a melodrama, a pantomime, or an exhibition, entirely out of nature, is announced, boxes are filled and pit crowded, to see what every fool may enact in the street.

Thus, if the remarks of "Amateurs" in the columns of the *Advertiser* of May 29 are true, Caldwell's loss for this season was fairly severe, and also was due to the current depressed state of the economy:

> Notwithstanding Mr. Caldwell has played (with we believe the exception of two nights only) six nights a week; yet such has been the effect of the present adverse times and the various accidents to which Theatrical seasons

\(^{55}\) *Louisiana Advertiser*, May 10, 1826.
are subject; that all the novelty he could produce and all the talent and energy he could exert, (as we are informed by a gentleman to whom his books have been exposed) have not been able to shield him from a loss exceeding $6000 . . .

A melodrama, deriving "its plot and spirit from Lord Byron" and entitled The Vampire, closed the season on May 29, sharing the bill with another performance of Cherry and Fair Star. Richard Russell, as Caldwell's deputy, made the final curtain speech and thanked the public for its support, despite "the commercial and general distress. Russell said Caldwell's efforts were but an evidence of what he would do in the future, and added:

... although his labors of the season have passed not only without remuneration but with some serious loss to himself, he requests me to state, that he will go on with the same zeal and devotion that has always actuated him for your annual amusement.

This summer of 1826 Caldwell extended his theatrical circuit to yet another Southern city—Huntsville, Alabama. From the first of June until the opening of the Huntsville Theatre on July 24, Caldwell again disappears from our view. He may have gone to Nashville to superintend the building of the theatre which he would open there in the fall, or he may have spent the early summer in New Orleans. His appearance in Huntsville was announced by the following advertisement in the Southern

56 Louisiana Gazette, May 29, 1826.
57 Ibid., June 1, 1826.
Advocate of July 21, 1826:

THEATRE

The ladies and gentlemen of Huntsville, and the County of Madison in general, are most respectfully informed, that the new theatre will be opened for the season, on Monday Evening July 24, 1826. The manager begs leave to assure the citizens, that every possible exertion will be made for the purpose of eliciting the best patronage to the Drama in this city, which a regular conducted Theatre may properly deserve. Every novelty which can be procured will, from time to time, be brought forward. Due regard will be paid to the selection of the pieces, and neither pains nor expense shall be spared to produce them in a manner which, while he flatters himself will give universal satisfaction, will gain a liberal remuneration.

The PRIZE POEM having been handed in by the committee chosen to select from the number offered, will be spoken previous to the commencement of the entertainment for the evening, by Mr. CALDWELL.--The pieces selected for the opening night, are John Tobin's celebrated Comedy of the HONEY MOON, and the Operatical Farce called OF AGE TOMORROW.

Cast lists for the two plays follow and indicate that Caldwell had brought the greater part of the New Orleans company with him.

The Prize Address, with the usual fustian, included these lines:

But see how changed the Alabama's plain,
And how transformed are all its roving train;
See learning rising from the sage's dome,
And beams in brightness o'er the heathen's home:
See mind emerging from its moral night,
And claim its lineage from the "throne of light."
And here behold! the Drama's temple rise
In the bright beauty of its varied dyes.

The theatre was open four nights a week--Monday, Wednesday,

58 Rees, op. cit., p. 65.
Friday, and Saturday—but performances began at eight o'clock instead of the more usual starting time of seven.

The Huntsville Theatre had been newly-constructed as a result of the following set of circumstances as related by Noah Ludlow. Ludlow had preceded Caldwell to Huntsville by two years when he had played a short, split season in Huntsville and Nashville in the summer of 1824. On this occasion a group of prominent men in Huntsville had signified to Ludlow their intention of building a theatre, for which they were raising capital of $25,000. They offered the lease of the building to Ludlow and invited his investment in the stock scheme. Ludlow declined to put up any cash, although he indicated his interest in the lease of the building when completed, and agreed to install some scenery and paint the interior of the building in exchange for shares of stock in the enterprise.\^ Ludlow seemingly assumed that he had a firm understanding with the Huntsville people, although under no contractual obligation, and consequently he was considerably chagrined at Caldwell's invasion of what he considered to be his territory. For some reason which he does not make clear, Ludlow believed that it was "through the machinations and trickery of Alexander M. Wilson" that he was "cheated out of it, and the building was by

\[59\] Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 256-57.
him transferred to James H. Caldwell. . ." Caldwell's "control" of the Huntsville Theatre no doubt rested in the fact that he, unlike Ludlow, was willing or able to invest some money in the theatre building corporation. As late as 1843 Caldwell still owned stock in the Huntsville Theatre, and he claimed Huntsville as a part of his theatrical circuit as late as 1833.

The Huntsville season ended on Saturday, September 2 with Caldwell's benefit at which was played Colman the Younger's Managers In Distress, Tom and Jerry, and the burlesque of the latter play, Tom and Jerry's Funeral.

Exactly when Caldwell and the company arrived in Nashville this summer is not certain, but it must have been shortly after the close of the Huntsville season. According to Rees, the new theatre was not ready upon their arrival and the actors "played a few nights, in their old temple, a 'barn,' until the new one was completed." Ludlow took considerable issue with this appellation of "barn" and recalled the building quite differently from Rees:

This theatre was situated on Cherry

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60 Ibid., p. 407.
62 Letter from James H. Caldwell to C. B. Smith, op. cit.
63 Southern Advocate, September 1, 1826.
64 Rees, op. cit., p. 66.
Street, west side, a short distance north of the Public Square. It was constructed with a pit and two tiers of boxes, in the usual style of building theatres in those days; would seat about eight hundred persons; and although small, compared with the theatres of the present day, was quite large enough for the population of the town then, and for many years following. Calling this theatre a "barn" would have come with a very ill grace from Mr. Caldwell in that city, where the theatre he built and opened in 1826 was never finished internally, according to the original intention. 65

Caldwell's new Nashville theatre was located on the corner of Union Street and Summer (now Fifth Avenue). 66 Caldwell had purchased the ground from a Major William B. Lewis. The building when completed, with the lot, cost him $20,000, which he financed in part by borrowing $2,200 in sums of one hundred dollars. 67 This scheme was similar to the method he had employed in building the American Theatre in New Orleans, which the Nashville Theatre in its architecture resembled. Caldwell had constructed the theatre in eighty-nine days, according to a statement contained in his letter to C. B. Smith in 1833. This lends credence to the supposition that he was probably in Nashville, superintending the building, during the early part of the summer.

The company moved into its new quarters on October


67 Rees, op. cit., p. 55.
9. The Nashville Banner and Nashville Whig of October 11, 1826 reviewed the event in these words:

On Monday evening last, the new theatre in this place was opened with the admirable comedy of the "Soldier's Daughter," and the farce of "Turn Out." We have seldom seen, on our boards, a performance better sustained throughout. All the performers appeared to be animated with an unusual desire to please, in which they succeeded, if we are to form our judgment from the loud and repeated bursts of applause, from near six hundred persons who were in the house. The theatre has been erected within the short space of three months, and is constructed after the plan of the American Theatre in New Orleans. It is altogether such an edifice as does much credit to the Architect, and will, when completely finished, be an ornament to our town. The prize poem, which was recited by Mr. Caldwell, is the production of a citizen of Boston, whose name is unknown to the committee.

The literary success of a Northerner in the prize poem contest was not received with favor by the local press. The second place entry of Isaac Clark of Tennessee, which was read by Jackson Gray on opening night, in the eyes of the Banner and Whig, and in the eyes of the uproariously enthusiastic audience, really deserved the prize.

Caldwell probably had every intention of returning to New Orleans in time to begin his 1827 season on January 1. Consequently, he closed the Nashville Theatre on December 23, 1826. But again he had not reckoned with the uncertainties of water transportation. His playbill

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68 As quoted in Hunt, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
69 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
70 Rees, op. cit., p. 66.
for the opening performance at the American Theatre in New Orleans on February 2, 1827 carried the following note:

The manager . . . respectfully advises . . . the public . . . he arrived on 1st February. . . . The great severity of the season in Tennessee prevented the usual rise in the Cumberland and cut off all navigation for steamboats. The manager made two attempts in keel boats before he could proceed and he begs to suggest the difficulty he has encountered by informing his friends that this is the fourth boat he has had to embark on . . . before he could reach his destination. . . . For the future he will so arrange his mode of travelling that the season shall commence on the 15th day of Dec.\(^7\)

The late opening was not the only thing that got the season off to a bad start. Caldwell had made "a solemn engagement" with the reigning star of the British stage, Edmund Kean, to appear in New Orleans this season. Kean had been playing in the theatres on the eastern seaboard. But on December 22, 1826 the *Louisiana Advertiser* published a letter from Caldwell's agent in New York which informed the New Orleans public that Kean had sailed for Europe. The promise was made that every effort would be made "to engage at any expense and at any risk" a person to replace Kean, but little hope was offered. A few days later notice was given that Lydia Kelly, currently the rage of New York, Boston and Philadelphia, would leave New York the latter part of December bound for New Orleans. Despite Kean's defection and the difficulty of obtaining actors, due to

\(^7\)Playbill, Kuntz Collection, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.
the "rivalry of the numerous New York theatres," Caldwell had obtained a star whose engagement was to prove highly profitable both to him and to her.

The opening bill of the 1827 season at the little Camp Street Theatre was the play Paul Pry--new to Crescent City audiences--and the operatical farce of The Spoiled Child. Again this season Caldwell found himself performing nearly every night of the week. When, true to her promise, Lydia Kelly arrived on February 7, Caldwell played opposite her in the comedies and opposite Jane Placide in the melodramas. Anticipating a heavy demand for tickets during Miss Kelly's engagement, Caldwell announced that seats in the second tier, normally unreserved, might be secured to those who wished them. These expectations of her popularity were so completely realized that, as Lydia Kelly's benefit approached, Caldwell put forth another scheme calculated to swell the receipts even more. The playbill of February 28 contained an announcement as follows:

It having been suggested by the friends of Miss Kelly, that the boxes should be put up to the highest bidder--the public are respectfully informed that the box sheet will be opened on Thursday morning, at ten o'clock.

There are additional boxes neatly fitted up for the occasion in the second tier.

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72 Louisiana Advertiser, December 27, 1826.

73 Playbill, Kuntz Collection, Howard-Tilton Library, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana.

74 Ibid.
Popular though Lydia Kelly was, this plan, as executed by Caldwell's staff, provoked an outraged protest from a citizen who signed himself "Fairplay":

After publicly advertising that the boxes would be sold at auction to the highest bidder; after appointing the time of sale, and drawing to the place those who were anxious to purchase, he put up for sale only a portion of the boxes, the remainder being held for a favored few to whom, it seems, they had been previously let at the usual prices. If Mr. Caldwell expects to "play off" such tricks on the "patrons" with impunity, he may chance to find himself mistaken: he must not presume that the people of Orleans will tamely suffer such speculations to be practised upon them. He is indebted to them for subsistence, and should endeavor to merit their favors, and not wantonly offer to them an insult of the grossest nature. I would advise him not to attempt a repetition. Of course, it is not presumed that Miss Kelly connived at, or was privy to this arrangement.

In the same newspaper of this date, Lydia Kelly felt constrained to insert a "Card" to allay the fears of the public with respect to some additionally reported chicanery:

It having been intimated that a general belief is in circulation, that the Manager of the American Theatre, has purchased the Benefit announced for this evening; I take this opportunity of assuring the Public, that it is utterly without foundation. The whole profits arising from the night, may be considered as exclusively allotted to myself.

L. KELLY

Miss Kelly's benefit took place on March 14, apparently without further incident.

75 The Argus, March 2, 1827.
76 Ibid.
In stark contrast to the season of 1826, Caldwell's theatre this year was visited by a continuous succession of stars. Kean, of course, had reneged, but in addition to Lydia Kelly, New Orleans audiences were treated to the talents of the much-married Mrs. Tatnall and the perennially popular Thomas Abthorpe Cooper. Mrs. Tatnall's first appearance, frequently delayed because of a "continued indisposition," finally occurred on March 8. She played through most of March, and then joined the company as a regular member in April. Before the advent of Cooper, Hercules Mathis the juggler was featured briefly.

Cooper was engaged by Caldwell for fourteen nights, beginning March 28. To avoid the bad public relations which had resulted during Lydia Kelly's visit, Caldwell published in The Argus, and printed on all the handbills, the following conditions of Cooper's engagement:

In order that there may be no misunderstanding of the arrangement made with the manager, respecting the engagement made with Mr. Cooper, the manager respectfully states to the public the following:

1. Mr. Cooper is engaged for fourteen nights, and no more; in which fourteen nights, Mr. Cooper is entitled to two benefits.

2. The box sheet will be opened on Wednesday, at ten o'clock a.m. when boxes can be procured for the whole of Mr. Cooper's engagement, viz: for the fourteen nights.

3. There are twenty-five parquette seats arranged with a separate door of entrance, which can be procured for the fourteen nights. They will be properly secured, if taken.

4. Mr. Cooper will make his first appearance on Wednesday evening, in Shakespeare's justly celebrated tragedy of MACBETH. 

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*The Argus*, March 27, 1827.
Throughout Cooper's engagement Caldwell supported him in the second leads of such plays as *Macbeth* (Macduff), *Hamlet* (The Ghost), *Venice Preserved* (Jaffier), *Richard III* (Richmond), *Rule A Wife and Have A Wife* (Michael Perez), and *The Gamester* (Lewson). For Caldwell's benefit Cooper played the title role in *Virginius*.

Cooper left after his own benefit on April 20 and the theatre was occupied by the equestrian corps from the circus for about a week. They assisted in the performance of such "horse pieces" as *Timour the Tartar*, *The Cataract of the Ganges*, *The Forty Thieves*, and *Lodoiska*. The annual benefits began on May 8 and the company resorted to the standard comedies, farces and melodramas for the remainder of the season, relieved only by the appearance of a Mr. Robertson and his Scenic Phantasmagoria during the week of May 16. This last attraction seems to have been a series of magic lantern effects which included such provocative subjects as:

- The drum of the dead; the fairest rose will fade;
- the head of Timour the Tartar; Cupied turned juggler;
- apotheosis of the marquis de la Romana; the scene of Doct. Young interring his daughter; Frederick the Great at Spandaw; Don Quixotte: Sancho Panza, and the Windmills; his Satanic Majesty; the Egyptian mummies.

"These representations," announced Robertson, "are intended to convince all ranks of society, (the juvenile branches in particular), that all such apparitions, spectres, phantoms and shadows, as have appeared or may appear, are solely the effect of optical illusions." 79

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Jane Placide's "Card" announcing her benefit has an element of mystery in it, particularly when it is coupled with another enigmatic remark which appeared two days later in the columns of The Argus. The "Card" said, in part:

Miss PLACIDE begs leave to announce her FAREWELL BENEFIT, to the ladies and gentlemen of New-Orleans. Grateful for favors conferred on her, in five years services, she respect­fully approaches them for the last time, previous to her departure for the north . . .

And in The Argus of June 4 "Amateur," in urgin her support at her benefit, remarked that she had "lately been the victim of a misfortune incurred in the discharge of a public duty." The circumstances surrounding this "misfortune" and the "public duty" are unknown. It may be that she suffered a physical injury. Her health during the next eight years before she died was poor, and her death resulted from "disease of the spine," according to her death notice in the New Orleans Bee of May 18, 1835. If she had suffered from a fall or some other physical misfortune it may have occurred about a month prior to her benefit, since she did not appear on the stage after April 28 until her benefit on June 4. Her farewell to New Orleans seems to have been genuine in its intent; she did not return to the city for nearly two years. On December 11, 1827 she made her debut at the Chatham Theatre in New York.

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80 Ibid., June 2, 1827.

Caldwell took his own benefit on June 8 as Celestial Calfclinging in a new farce written by a gentleman of New Orleans and entitled *Not At Home*, and the season ended. Although *The Argus* of May 7 had reported the season as a "laborious, though not a very profitable" one, the chances seem good that Caldwell recouped some of his losses of the 1826 season by means of the engagements of Lydia Kelly and Cooper. At all events, he seemed not so out-of-pocket that he could not continue his expansion of his theatrical activities throughout the reaches of the Mississippi Valley.

The locale of Caldwell's summer activities this year was St. Louis. In early May he had sent carpenters and scene painters to St. Louis to prepare a building he had engaged there for a theatre. On June 21 the following proclamation appeared in the pages of the *Missouri Republican*:

> The Proprietor and Manager of the *AMERICAN THEATRE*, at New Orleans, begs leave, most respectfully, to announce to the Citizens of St. Louis and its environs, that he is anxious to establish the Drama in their city, upon a liberal and respectable footing. The Manager conceives that, in conjunction with New Orleans and Nashville, St. Louis will enable him to keep the whole of his establishment together, throughout the year, which advantage will afford the lovers of the Drama much better entertainment than they could expect, if a company were divided in the summer and fall, and then, again obliged to be collected together for the winter. The manager intends to bring the whole of his establishment to St. Louis, and he has every confidence in the liberality of its citizens for an ample support. Every novelty possible will be brought forward, and every exertion

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82 *The Argus*, May 7, 1827.
made to make the theatre a fashionable and general resort.  

JAMES H. CALDWELL.  

Caldwell had intended to open the theatre on June 25, but the company did not arrive—in the steamboat "America"—until the 26. The theatre in which they were to perform was formerly a warehouse, which Caldwell's carpenters and painters had converted. Caldwell had leased the building for seven years with the privilege of purchase, converted it, and added a fifty-foot structure to the rear of the building to serve as a stage. Caldwell later claimed that "this was the first regular theatre" in St. Louis.  

Ludlow disparaged this building as a "dilapidated one . . . a melancholy structure altogether . . . ." and claimed Caldwell had built a stage not fifty, but only forty feet deep. Ludlow's description of the interior of the theatre was particularly damning:  

Into the old building he [Caldwell] put plain, rough benches of pine, one division of which was on an inclined platform, called the "pit;" over this was raised a narrow gallery, with seats of pine; this portion was dignified with the title of "dress-circle boxes," the whole being of the most primitive character and limited capacity. This was not, Ludlow claimed, the "first regular theatre"

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84 Rees, op. cit., p. 55.

85 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 292.

in St. Louis; he himself had preceded Caldwell to St. Louis by six years, and Samuel Drake, Senior had visited the city as early as 1820.

The visitors from New Orleans began their season in the Salt House—for such was the utilitarian past of their theatre—about June 30, 1827. As he had in Huntsville, Caldwell presented his troupe four nights a week—Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Probably because of the physical limitations of the Salt House, the bill of fare was standard: some Shakespeare, the genteel comedies, the farces and after-pieces, and melodrama. Caldwell was the star, assisted by Jane Placide and Mrs. Tatnall in the tragedies and melodramas, and by Mrs. Richard Russell in the comedies and farces. The projected starring engagement of Cooper, which had been announced in the New Orleans Argus of May 7, did not materialize. Caldwell's departure for his Nashville Theatre was delayed by the non-arrival of the steamboat Essex in which he expected to sail, and the company played in St. Louis a night or two beyond their expected closing date. The season was finally

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87 Rees, op. cit., gives conflicting dates for this event. On page 55 he quotes Caldwell: "I opened it on the 30th of June, 1827, with the 'Honey Moon,' and 'Rosina.'" But on page 66 Rees states that Caldwell "opened with a good company in that place [St. Louis] on the 27th of June, 1827." Considering that the arrival date in St. Louis was June 26th, the former date is probably more nearly correct.

88 For a detailed account of the plays of this first St. Louis season see Carson, op. cit., pp. 84-93.
ended about August 23. 89

The theatre season in Nashville was planned by Caldwell to coincide with the meeting of the Tennessee State Legislature in September. 90 The company played at the new Nashville Theatre until about the first of December and left for New Orleans on December 6. 91 By mid-December Caldwell was at home in the American Theatre on Camp Street.

There is little information of interest in this season. Sol Smith, Caldwell's future business rival, was a new recruit to the company along with Mrs. Sol Smith, Sol's brother Lemuel and his wife. Caldwell performed the chief roles until the appearance of J. B. Booth in mid-January, at which time he occasionally supported Booth in such plays as were Booth's favorites, playing, for example, Iago to Booth's Othello and Wilford to Booth's Sir Edward Mortimer in The Iron Chest. For his mid-season benefit Caldwell chose, for the first showing in New Orleans, Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors, which was performed on or about March 31. For his final benefit which ended the season on April 19, 1828, Caldwell recited Bucks Have At Ye All. 92

89Ibid., pp. 92-93.
90The Argus, May 7, 1827.
91New Orleans Bee, December 15, 1827.
92Further details of this season may be found in Smither, op. cit., pp. 137-44. Newspaper sources for this year are limited to files of the Louisiana Advertiser held by the Wisconsin Historical Society. These files were not readily accessible to the present writer.
Within ten days Caldwell and his company were in Natchez and ready to open the new theatre there. The erection of this building had been instituted by a group of Natcheans whom Caldwell later called a Thespian Association. What their precise objective was in erecting a theatre is not known. They may have wished to have a place in which they themselves could perform amateur theatricals, or they may have wished merely to provide a house for Caldwell and other visiting professionals. These entrepreneurs had had several delays and difficulties while trying to complete their project. They had begun to raise capital as early as January of 1826, had let contracts in March of that year, but did not see a cornerstone laid until the first of October. At that point money troubles had beset the group and they were compelled to incorporate in order to issue stock in February of 1828. Caldwell came to their aid shortly thereafter in the spring with a purchase of forty shares of stock and his supervision of the completion and outfitting of the building. He said, "I found four walls, and made a pretty theatre out of it, and furnished it with scenery." As had been the case in Huntsville, Caldwell's willingness to invest in a portion of the cost of the Natchez theatre building had insured him another

95 Rees, *loc. cit.*
theatre to add to his growing circuit.

Sol Smith's description of the Natchez Theatre goes considerably beyond Caldwell's designation of "a pretty theatre". Said Smith:

The new theatre in Natchez was situated at the extreme end of the main street, and in a grave-yard. Two hundred yards of the street leading to it had been cut through this "last receptacle of humanity," and every day in going to rehearsal, our sights were regaled with the view of legbones sticking horizontally out of the earth ten or twelve feet above us, the clay having been gradually washed away and left them thus exposed.

The dressing rooms of the gentlemen were under the stage, the earth having been excavated to make room for them. Human bones were strewn about in every direction. The first night, the lamp lighter being a little "pushed" for time to get all ready, seized upon a skull, and sticking two tallow candles in the eye-sockets, I found my dressing room thus lighted.96

The new Natchez Theatre opened on the night of April 30, 1828 with Honey Moon and Of Age Tomorrow, along with the usual and inevitable opening address—in this instance recited by Mrs. James Rowe. During the season, which lasted for the better part of two months, Caldwell brought out the favorite and successful pieces of the day, himself playing the chief roles since no stars were engaged for Natchez. The Comedy of Errors, which had been so well received at Caldwell's benefit in New Orleans, was introduced, and during the season Caldwell played the first Hamlet which the city of Natchez had seen.97 In the latter

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96Smith, op. cit., p. 52.
97Free, op. cit., p. 186.
production Sol Smith must have played the low comedy character of the First Grave Digger, since in grisly recollection of the theatre's grave-yard location he recalls, "In digging the grave of [sic] Hamlet, I experienced no difficulty in finding bones and skulls to 'play at loggats with.""98

Caldwell closed the Natchez season, which had been well-received by the city, about July 1 and embarked most of the company for St. Louis.99 Caldwell, himself, was not in St. Louis this summer, and managerial duties there were entrusted to his treasurer James Rowe.100 Perhaps due, in part, to his own absence and, in part, to a small, weak company, Caldwell's fortunes in St. Louis suffered this summer. The St. Louis press was highly critical of both the acting company and the technical production of the plays.101 The actors plodded through a long and unremunerative summer until October 14 when the season dragged to a close.

Though not physically present, Caldwell made his presence felt in St. Louis this summer. Perhaps encouraged by his successes in stimulating local citizens to contribute to the costs of raising new theatres in

98 Smith, loc. cit.
99 Free, op. cit., p. 189.
100 Carson, op. cit., p. 93.
101 For a detailed account of this season and its critical reception, see Carson, op. cit., pp. 93-106.
Huntsville and Natchez, Caldwell proposed a similar plan for St. Louis. An editorial in the *Missouri Republican* of September 16 alluded to Caldwell's announcement of this plan:

> Within these few days, we have seen a prospectus by Mr. James H. Caldwell, Manager of the New Orleans, Natchez, Nashville and St. Louis Theatres, for the immediate construction of an edifice sufficiently commodious for all present purposes. The proposed structure is calculated to contain, without inconvenience, six hundred persons—and will have a front of fifty-three feet, extending one hundred back. . . . Without going into minute details of the plan, it may be sufficient to say, that the expense of the building is estimated at $15,000; which sum it is proposed to raise by shares of $100 each. Mr. Caldwell with a commendable liberality, offers to take seventy-five shares, leaving the other half to be subscribed for by the citizens. A part of these have already been taken, and we cannot but believe, that the liberal, moneyed men in the community will avail themselves of an opportunity for investing a small portion of their capital in a manner which promises to be advantageous to themselves and, as we think, to society.

The scheme was never realized. Perhaps Caldwell changed his mind, or did not come forth with his offered investment in seventy-five shares of stock. Perhaps the citizens of St. Louis were not so readily impressed with the need for a more permanent establishment of the theatre in their city. Most likely, the quality of entertainment which Caldwell had provided this summer was so poor as to deter their willingness to abet the fortunes of Caldwell and his company. Caldwell was destined to continue to the end of his St. Louis career in the stuffy little Salt House Theatre.

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Caldwell may have spent the months of July and August of 1828 in Virginia with Mrs. Caldwell and his children, out of the maelstrom of his professional life. More probably he was in New York securing actors for the winter season in New Orleans and, possibly and incidentally, seeing Jane Placide. September found him playing a starring engagement at the Park Theatre.

It seems not unreasonable to imagine that, as he stepped before the elegant audience at the Park to play one of his favorite roles—Belcour in *The West Indian*—Caldwell felt a flush of pride. In less than ten years he had risen from the status of an itinerant actor, summarily dismissed from his first American engagement, to a position of wealth and fame. He was owner of an extensive theatrical circuit and now he was engaged as a star at America's foremost theatre. And to round out this feeling of self-satisfaction was the knowledge that he was a sufficiently strong attraction to compel the rival Bowery Theatre to put up in competition on the same night, the same play, *The West Indian*.103

The engagement at the Park Theatre began on September 2, 1828 and was for six performances and a benefit. Wisely, Caldwell chose the high comedy roles for which he was best suited—Doricourt in *Of Age Tommorrow*, Duke Aranza in *Honey Moon*, Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Charles

103Odell, III, op. cit., pp. 377-78.
Surface in *The School For Scandal*, Frank Heartall in *The Soldier's Daughter*, Colonel Freelove in *The Day After The Wedding*, Young Wilding in *The Liar*, and, for his benefit on September 15, Gossamer in *Laugh When You Can* and the Three Singles in *Three and the Deuce*. He was fortunate, moreover, in being co-starred with the popular Lydia Kelly.

For the next six weeks Caldwell's whereabouts are not known. It is possible that he secured a brief engagement at another city—he visited both the Federal Street and Tremont Theatres in Boston in the autumn of the next year—or he may merely have spent his time in engaging a stock company and stars for his winter season at New Orleans. On October 30 he returned to the Park Theatre for another two-week engagement. His choice of roles was similar to that of his first engagement. Caldwell took his benefit on November 14 in *The Soldier's Daughter*, in the cast of which were his old friends Mr. and Mrs. Dick Russell,¹⁰⁴ who were to return to him this season at the American Theatre in New Orleans.

In the meantime, Caldwell's troupe, under the managership of Rowe, moved from St. Louis down the Mississippi to re-open the Natchez Theatre on November 14. Perhaps because of Rowe's ineptitude as a manager, or because of the absence of Caldwell's business acumen and his attraction as an actor, this short Natchez season was unprofitable

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 385.
also. On December 11, 1828 the company moved on to New Orleans, promising the Natchez citizens to return in February.\textsuperscript{105}

Whatever the disappointments of the summer, the winter season of 1828-1829 was to prove one of the most successful in the history of the little American Theatre in Camp Street. It was a season which began favorably with the opening of the newly-decorated and improved playhouse on December 17, 1828.\textsuperscript{106} In addition to refurbishing extensively the auditorium and enlarging the box seat sections, Caldwell had made some alterations in the stage by raising the proscenium fifteen feet, and building and painting new scenery "considerably wider and more elevated than formerly."\textsuperscript{107} The entire work had been done under the general supervision of Caldwell's talented and faithful scenic artist, Antonio Mondelli.

But the bright new interior of the American Theatre was to be outshone this season by one of the most dazzling arrays of stars ever seen in New Orleans. Whatever Caldwell might have lost by his absence from St. Louis and Natchez, he more than made up for in the time he spent

\textsuperscript{105}Free, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 189-96.

\textsuperscript{106}See \textit{supra.}, p. 71. for a full description of the theatre as it looked at the beginning of this season.

\textsuperscript{107}\textit{New Orleans Bee}, December 12, 1828. The \textit{Louisiana Advertiser} of December 19 gave the dimensions of these new drops as 36 feet wide by 27 feet high, "nearly 1000 square feet of canvas."
in New York acquiring the personalities who visited New Orleans this winter. The first of these was not long in making her appearance. Mrs. Alexander Drake, the foremost actress of the Western theatres, began an engagement on December 20. She and Caldwell's old friend Mrs. Crooke—formerly Mrs. Entwistle of Baltimore, Washington and early New Orleans days—supported Caldwell through the first month of the season.

Junius Brutus Booth made his first appearance of the season on January 7, 1829 in his popular character of Richard III.\textsuperscript{108} Although Caldwell's erstwhile stage manager, Dick Russell, was with the New Orleans company, Caldwell had engaged Booth for the stage manager's job, as well as featuring him as a star.\textsuperscript{109} In addition to managing the productions efficiently, Booth was to prove a steady attraction at the box office throughout the season, particularly when his name was coupled with those of Cooper, the Slomans, Edwin Forrest and Jane Placide. At the beginning of the season the glory was his alone, however, and he was warmly received. As one enthusiast wrote to the \textit{Louisiana Advertiser} on January 12 after Booth's \textit{Hamlet}:

\begin{quote}
I congratulate the lovers of the drama upon the arrival among us of this distinguished actor, now the first in America—and to Mr. Caldwell, we owe our thanks, for thus enabling us to enjoy
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{108} \textit{Louisiana Advertiser}, January 8, 1829.

those mighty productions of the old English masters.

Booth played at the American Theatre until January 25, at which time Caldwell sent him with a part of the stock company to open the Natchez Theatre as had been promised. 110 Booth's group opened in Natchez on January 29. 111

In the meantime, Caldwell introduced to the New Orleans public George Holland, the English comedian who was later to attach his fortunes to those of Caldwell in the enterprise of gas lighting. Holland now filled a two week engagement until mid-February, at which time he was sent to Natchez, replacing Booth, who returned to New Orleans on February 19. As additional variety to the tragedies of Booth and the comedies of Holland, Caldwell was able this season to present some of the favorite English comic operas, having acquired the services of Mrs. Edward Knight, who was engaged from January 27 to February 20.

But if the patrons of the American Theatre thought they had been well served by Caldwell up to this point, they did not reckon with the delights he had in store for them the remainder of the season. Beginning March 9, 1829 there was virtually a nightly offering of star-studded productions of the best drama of the day. As the Louisiana Advertiser of that date noted, when announcing Venice Preserved:

\[\text{Louisiana Advertiser, January 21, 1829.}\]

\[\text{Free, op. cit., p. 196. Cf., also, Gates, op. cit., p. 85.}\]
Seldom has an audience in America had a chance of witnessing so much histrionic excellence concentrated on a single piece, as will be exhibited tonight at Mr. Caldwell's theatre. . . . Mrs. SLOMAN, Mr. COOPER, and Mr. BOOTH are to sustain the principal characters. What attractive matter to the lovers of genuine drama.

Nor was this to be all. On the 13th Jane Placide returned to the little Camp after nearly a two year absence, and joined Cooper, Booth and Caldwell in a presentation of Pizarro. The next night was Othello, with Booth in the title role, Cooper as Iago, Caldwell as Cassio, Mrs. Sloman as Desdemona and Jane Placide as Emilia. For Cooper's benefit on Monday night, March 16, Caldwell as Macduff and Mrs. Sloman as Lady Macbeth assisted the popular actor in Macbeth, a play which the Advertiser said Cooper generously had chosen "as affording a field for the display of the kindred power of a highly gifted actress," Mrs. Sloman. And, to the great good fortune of New Orleans theatre-goers, this spirit of generosity was more than equalled on the night of Mrs. Sloman's benefit, March 18, when Booth, Cooper, Mr. Sloman, and Mrs. Drake assisted in a bill which included Jane Shore and Catherine and Petruchio.

Perhaps a recurrence of the illness which may have resulted from her misfortune of two years previous was the "severe indisposition" that cut short Jane Placide's triumphant return to the New Orleans stage, and she was unable to proceed with her engagement until the night of March 23 when she and Caldwell played with Cooper in Wives As They Were. Two nights later she replaced Mrs. Drake in the cast of Jane
Shore, a cast which also contained Booth, Cooper and Mrs. Sloman. Caldwell's advertisement on this occasion expressed his "more than common satisfaction in having it in his power to offer at this time a greater compilation of talent than has ever been presented at any one time in any Theatre on the continent."\(^{112}\) He seemed satisfied, too, that this offering would be an irresistible attraction to the public--parquette and dress circle seats were raised in price to a dollar and a half.

The season thus far had depended heavily on tragedy--particularly Shakespeare--due to the presence of Booth and Cooper. It shifted to a lighter vein the first week in April with the introduction of the child actress Louisa Lane, in her adult years to be the famous Mrs. John Drew. Booth, Caldwell, and Mrs. Sloman kept to the tragic muse even on the first night of her engagement, however, when they played *Romeo and Juliet* on March 28. Miss Lane, on the same evening, performed all six roles in the burletta *Actress of All Work*. Cooper concluded his engagement on March 30 with a farewell benefit performance of *Julius Caesar*, in which he played Marc Antony to the Brutus of Caldwell, the Cassius of Booth, and the Portia of Mrs. Drake. And even after these offerings there was to be no turning from the tragic muse: Edwin Forrest had arrived in New Orleans on March 16.\(^{113}\)

\(^{112}\) *Louisiana Advertiser*, March 25, 1829.

\(^{113}\) *Ibid.*, March 17, 1829.
Perhaps because the New Orleans public remembered him as a mere member of the American Theatre stock company of three seasons past, Forrest's return to the city was not heralded with the same enthusiasm as had greeted Cooper and Booth. The Louisiana Advertiser, in briefly noting his arrival in the city, had incorrectly called him Edmund.\textsuperscript{114} Forrest had been delayed in leaving New York because of ice blocking the harbor. His ever increasing throng of admirers in New York had used the delay to stage a testimonial dinner in Forrest's honor.\textsuperscript{115} Though New Orleans at large might be apathetic, Caldwell was undoubtedly aware of Forrest's increased professional stature and popularity, having no doubt seen Forrest perform in New York at the New Bowery Theatre while he himself was engaged at the Park the previous September and October.

Whatever the personal animosities that had existed between the men in the past—either as professional rivals or as claimants for the affections of Jane Placide—they were disregarded by Caldwell, at least, as he proudly promoted the talents of his new star. His announcement in the columns of the Louisiana Advertiser of April 8 stated:

\begin{quote}
The public are respectfully informed that the distinguished AMERICAN TRAGEDIAN MR. EDWIN FORREST, With whom an engagement was concluded last summer, has arrived and will perform TWELVE NIGHTS only, two benefits inclusive. The Manager, having kept the pledge
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{114}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115}Ibid., April 4, 1829, reprinted from New York Critic.
made last year to assemble together the most positive talent in the histrionic art, at this time, feels particular satisfaction that the regular stock season will be closed with the most powerful attraction on the continent. That the pieces in which MR. FORREST plays may have the greatest aid that can be produced, the Manager has the double satisfaction to inform the patrons of the American Theatre that he has also engaged MISS PLACIDE and MR. BOOTH to play with MR. FORREST.

As a further mark of his confidence in young Forrest, Caldwell again raised the price of parquette seats to a dollar and a half.

For his first offering on April 8, Forrest chose to play Damon in Shield's tragedy of Damon and Pythias, supported by Jane Placide as Calanthe. On the 5th he played Othello to Booth's Iago, Caldwell's Cassio and the Emilia of Jane Placide. Orleanians must have had hours of animated discussion comparing Forrest's interpretation of the Moor with those of Booth and Cooper as seen a month earlier. For the most part during his engagement, Forrest stuck to his muscular roles in Shakespearean tragedy, in romantic dramas and in a few melodramas. He played Lear on April 20, Hamlet on April 29—Caldwell as the Ghost—and Richard III to Caldwell's Richmond on May 4. Amidst these plays of major interest were interspersed such plays as William Tell, The Stranger, Brutus, Pizarro, Venice Preserved, and the New Orleans premiere performance of Mrs. Mitford's

116 Smither, op. cit., pp. 152 and 391, gives this date as April 10, but it was announced in the Louisiana Advertiser for April 8 and I find no evidence that the performance was postponed.
new tragedy of Rienzi.

Critical comment during Forrest's engagement was limited. "Pythias," writing in the Louisiana Advertiser of April 15 was moved to comment at some length on the burgeoning of native American talent, his remarks "owing their origin to the sensations produced upon witnessing the performance of Forrest, the other night in Damon." He, perhaps like many other citizens, was astonished by "the rapid advancement of this most meritorious young actor, not only since he left this part of the country, but particularly during the last year." Of his performance as Damon, "Pythias" said:

Every scene . . . might be selected as an example of his peculiar excellence. The whole character was represented by him so true to nature, and so near to the idea of perfection, that it is almost impossible to hold up a part distinct from the rest. That, however, where he parts from his wife and child, may be adduced as a specimen. Here he became lost in the affectionate husband and father; and the stillness of the house, and the emotion visible in every face were ample testimony to the tremendous power with which he moved the hearts of those who listened to him.

"Pythias" admiration seems not to have represented undivided opinion of Forrest's acting, however. The editor of the Advertiser, in giving notice of Forrest's benefit in Rienzi, remarked:

We do not profess ourselves to be among those who admire the versatility of Mr. Forrest's tragic powers: we think, that like all others in his line, his genius has its limits, and when confined within its own peculiar sphere, emits those vivid flashes which strike the audience with admiration and awe, and ever and anon calls forth bursts of
unrestrained applause.\textsuperscript{117}

Having completed his contracted engagement, Forrest nobly offered his services in behalf of the Male Orphan Asylum—a gesture which Caldwell seconded with an offer of "other interesting entertainments."\textsuperscript{118} If the crowd which filled the American Theatre on this occasion is an indication of the kind of box office for the whole of the season, Caldwell's bank balance must have been an imposing figure. The receipts for the orphans amounted to thirteen hundred dollars.

After Forrest's final performance, the season drew quickly to a close with the usual round of benefits for the members of the company. Caldwell's own benefit, announced for May 20, was twice postponed because of inclement weather, but he finally invited the favors of the public on May 22 with \textit{The West Indian}, his recitation of Collins' \textit{Ode on the Passions}, and the farce \textit{Is It A Lie}?

At no time since he had arrived in New Orleans almost ten years earlier had Caldwell's pretensions to the approbation of the public been so high. As \textit{The Argus} of May 20 noted:

\begin{quotation}
To this gentleman are we indebted and to his bold and hazardous enterprise for the planting of the English drama in this city.\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{117}Louisiana Advertiser, May 6, 1829.

\textsuperscript{118}Ibid., May 7, 1829. See, also, \textit{The Argus}, May 7, 1829.

\textsuperscript{119}This allegation of being the pioneer of English drama in New Orleans seems already to have been accepted as fact. Both Ludlow and Smith, but particularly Ludlow, take considerable umbrage at the propagation of this myth at various moments in their respective autobiographies.
risk he has embarked his fortune in building a superb edifice that does honor to our city, and if his company has not always been of the best, this season at least he has brought together all the talent of the United States, not in the usual way, but at guarantees, which have been unsuccessful, and by which he might consequently find himself a looser. [sic] Mr. Caldwell has represented all the plays of Shakespeare with Cooper, Booth, and Mrs. Sloman, Mrs. Drake, Miss Placide and in the same manner with Mr. Forrest, who received the enormous sum of $3000 for twelve nights. Besides those great tragedians, we have had Holland, Sloman, Miss Lane, Miss Celeste and Constance, and with all this great array how many crowded houses have we seen? but very few—yet certainly if ever a manager merited encouragement, Mr. Caldwell has merited it this season.

How much this recapitulation is a case of the attempt to provoke sympathy to insure as large a box office as possible on Caldwell's benefit night, and how much is actually true, is uncertain. The article suggests that all these actors received salaries commensurate with that of Forrest's, but in the case of Booth, at least, this is somewhat misleading. Booth was on salary as a member of the stock company, and Caldwell received full measure from his services as both actor and stage manager. It is not easy to believe that, with the possible exception of Cooper, the other stars received anything like Forrest's salary of three thousand dollars, although Caldwell may very well have given them guarantees of a fixed amount, as the Argus suggests. Certainly it had been a costly season. Not only had Caldwell invested heavily in high-priced talent, but he had conducted two theatrical seasons at once, since the Natchez Theatre had remained open from January 29 through May 2, 1829. His Natchez season was not a paying one; the audiences
were miserably small despite the stars which visited the
city after their New Orleans engagements. The standards of
the people of Natchez seem to have been higher than Caldwell
had gauged them to be, and there were grumblings in the
press about the poor quality of production and the failure
of Caldwell himself to put in a single appearance on the
Natchez stage. 120

Natcheans could not be aware of it, perhaps, but
Caldwell was, in fact, thoroughly occupied with a project
which was radically to change the whole course of his future
life and fortune. In the winter of 1829 Caldwell undertook
the first of several non-theatrical activities which were
to be the means of his acquiring wealth and social status
far beyond that which was the normal expectation of an
actor of the nineteenth century in America. James H.
Caldwell this year launched the first illuminating gas
company in the city of New Orleans, and, while this first
venture was quickly aborted, the event marked a definite
turning point in his personal fortunes.

On February 7, 1829 Governor Derbigny signed into
law Act Thirty-two passed by the state legislature, "An Act
to incorporate the New-Orleans Gas Light Company." 121 The

120 For a more detailed account of the Natchez season
of 1829 see Free, op. cit., pp. 196-208 and Gates, op. cit.,
pp. 85-86.

121 Acts Passed at the First Session of the Ninth
Legislature of the State of Louisiana, (New Orleans: John
Gibson, State Printer, 1829).
act set forth the usual legal provisions governing a corporation, such as the means of electing directors, their terms of office, and the responsibilities and rights of the organization. As stated in the act, the object of the company was "to introduce into the city of New-Orleans and its faubourgs, the use of gas lights." The company was privileged to raise capital of one hundred thousand dollars immediately by the sale of stock, and if, in the judgment of the directors, additional capital was required, to extend this limit to three hundred thousand dollars. D. F. Burthe, Nathan Morse, James Foster, Jr., J. W. Breedlove, Harvey Ilkins and James H. Caldwell were named as supervisors in conducting the stock subscription, which was to commence on the first Monday in March, 1829.

The books of subscription were promptly opened on this date, March 2, at the offices of the Mississippi Marine and Fire Insurance Company, but just how successful the sale of stock was is unknown. However, on May 4, 1829 the stockholders met in the same offices and elected for the ensuing year George Eustis, James Foster, Jr., D. McGregor, Martin Dwidde and James H. Caldwell as directors of the company.

Although the terms of the act of incorporation were extremely generous--an exclusive privilege for twenty-

122 *Louisiana Advertiser*, March 2, 1829.

five years for selling gas light to the city and to any individuals who wished to subscribe, permitting the laying of pipe in the city streets, granting the power to make ordinances and by-laws--nevertheless, the company was restricted by one important clause: the right of its charter was to be forfeited if the company had not commenced operations within three years. As it turned out, this forfeiture did occur, and while Caldwell may not have so considered it at the time, it proved to be a fortuitous event for him. The next time the state legislature granted an exclusive privilege for a gas light company it was in his name alone that the charter was issued.
The four years beginning with the summer of 1829 and ending in the spring of 1833 is a period of curious contrasts in the theatrical career of James H. Caldwell. During these years he further expanded and consolidated his theatrical empire in the West. At the same time his ventures into commercial enterprises of a non-theatrical nature began to demand more and more of his time and drew him away from a close and personal supervision of his theatres. At the end of this period he was publicly to announce his retirement from the stage in order to devote his full time to his other business interests. This retirement endured a brief two years, and whether or not it was other than sincerely conceived as Dick Russell later claimed, it presaged Caldwell's ultimate retirement in 1843, when the burden of his other activities made his continuing in the theatre unprofitable.

The first summer of this period began somewhat obscurely, so far as extant records of Caldwell's activities are concerned. Caldwell did not go either to Natchez or St. Louis this summer. He probably was at Nashville in the fall—the press reported his return from there to New Orleans in December—but it is not likely that his company spent the entire six months from June to December in the
Tennessee city. Caldwell himself was back at the Park Theatre in New York for a brief second engagement in mid-September. Again he appeared there with the popular Lydia Kelly, and again he performed his standard repertoire.\textsuperscript{1}

The \textit{New York Mirror}, on the occasion of his opening performance on September 10, 1829, found Caldwell's comedy "light and sepulchral," and two days later the same paper referred to him as "stiff and heavy-voiced." His engagement was for two weeks during which time he continued to act with Lydia Kelly and appeared twice opposite Mrs. Sloman. He took his benefit in \textit{The West Indian}, assisted by the latter lady, on September 21, and appeared at Miss Kelly's benefit as Dr. Cantwell in \textit{The Hypocrite} on September 23.

From the following it may be seen that Caldwell was at the Boston Theatre sometime between the end of his engagement at the Park and his arrival at New Orleans in early December:

The regular season, and the last at this house for many years commenced on 22d of September. . . . The only star of any note was Mr. Caldwell, manager of the New Orleans Theatre, who afforded a rich treat to those who fancied chaste acting. He afterwards appeared at the Tremont, the same season.\textsuperscript{2}

From Nashville Caldwell and his company arrived at New Orleans in the steamboat Nashville on December 3, 1829,

\textsuperscript{1}Odell, III, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 441.

\textsuperscript{2}William Warland Clapp, Jr., \textit{A Record of the Boston Stage}, (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1853), p. 270.
according to the Argus of the following day. The season was opened on Wednesday, December 9 with a play of Buckstone's previously unseen by New Orleans audiences, Luke the Labourer, which served to introduce a twenty year old actor later to be one of America's most popular comedians, John Gilbert. Caldwell starred in the comedy of The School of Reform on the same bill. The company this season appears to have been a reasonably strong one and included, besides young Gilbert, such old favorites as Jackson Gray, Jane Placide, the Russells, the Rowes, and Henry Pearson. It was a company well-designed to abet the "getting up of the finest old comedies with judicious casts" and of introducing "new pieces of tried merit," as Caldwell promised. The first star appeared shortly in the person of James Howard, the vocalist, who was followed within a week by the tragedian Thomas S. Hamblin.

No doubt hoping to repeat his great success of the season of 1826-1827 when her appearance at the American Theatre had encouraged him to double ticket prices,3 Caldwell next presented Lydia Kelly, his co-star from the Park Theatre, as the reigning attraction. She began her engagement on January 6, 1830, playing opposite Caldwell in The Belle's Stratagem. She performed again the night of the 7th and on the 8th played Beatrice to Caldwell's Benedick in Much Ado About Nothing. Then, her engagement was suddenly

3See supra, pp.
broken off and she did not appear again. The explanation for this mysterious termination of her engagement is found in the account of a lawsuit which she brought against Caldwell. Their disagreement arose because Lydia Kelly refused to play roles "out of her established line," whereupon Caldwell dissolved her contract. Miss Kelly sued for damages and Caldwell filed a counter-suit claiming damages to himself. The judgment was that a manager has no right to compel a star to appear in a character not within her established line of acting, and the jury found for the plaintiff, Miss Kelly. Caldwell promptly appealed and the case went all the way to the Louisiana Supreme Court, where the judgment of the lower court was upheld on the grounds that Caldwell had broken the contract and, further, that the contract did not specify what parts Miss Kelly should play. This dispute with Lydia Kelly seems to have caused an irreparable rent in her association with Caldwell, which previously had been amicable and profitable to them both. She never again appeared on the stage of a theatre managed by Caldwell.

No such antagonism developed as the result of a similar lawsuit between Caldwell and Herr John Cline, the Cockney rope dancer, which was also contested this season. Despite a lengthy court battle which stretched out through

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two years of re-trials and appeals, Cline continued to appear for Caldwell in the years following the final disposition of the case. As in the Kelly suit, the disagreement arose over the contract between manager and performer. Caldwell had engaged Cline for two engagements at New Orleans of six nights each with benefit performances on the seventh and fourteenth nights. The financial arrangements were that Cline was to receive everything over $250 of the nightly receipts and a clear half on his benefit nights. Cline opened at the American Theatre on February 19, 1830 and the next day Caldwell wrote him a note suggesting that Cline could curtail his engagement "to as few nights as he pleased." Cline responded on March 6, agreeing to cancel the second six-night engagement. Caldwell then replied that he had changed his mind and "did not feel in the humor to comply" with Cline's proposal not to play after March 13. On March 8 and 9 Cline demanded money from Caldwell which was refused, whereupon Cline declined to play until he was paid. On the latter night their dispute took place before the theatre audience and Caldwell ended by paying for the previous night. However, the same situation arose the following night, the 10th. Cline brought suit against Caldwell in Parish Court on May 7 for breach of contract. The trial lasted from 10 o'clock Friday morning until 3

For accounts of this case and its subsequent development see Cline v. Caldwell, Louisiana Reports, II, p. 396; 4 La. 19-20; 4 La. 137-41; VIII Martin (La.). See, also, New Orleans Bee, May 10, 1830.
o'clock Saturday morning and resulted in the jury finding for the plaintiff within five minutes after retiring. Cline was awarded damages of $1,000 and costs. Caldwell, of course, appealed the decision, but was unsuccessful in gaining a new trial until the appeal was heard by the Louisiana Supreme Court in May of 1831. That body found the evidence inconclusive and remanded the case for a new trial by jury. The situation had been complicated by the fact that Caldwell had instituted a suit against Cline before Cline had brought suit against him, but Caldwell's case had not come up for a hearing until after the Supreme Court reversal of the decision in favor of Cline. Unfortunately for Caldwell, the jury in his suit was undecided and was dismissed. After three trials in the Parish Court the case was finally disposed of by the Supreme Court in June of 1832. The Court upheld the damages to Cline in the amount of $900, without interest, and ordered Caldwell to pay court costs in the lower courts and Cline to pay those in the Supreme Court. Caldwell's attention this season must have been further diverted from his theatre by the activities of the Gas Company, of which he was a director. The Argus of January 6, 1830 announced that the company was about to let contracts for "carrying the works into operation." Apparently New Orleanians had

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6New Orleans Bee, May 7, 1831.
7Cline v. Caldwell, 4 La. 137-41.
8Supra, p. 136.
not besieged the offices of the company to buy stock, however, since the newspaper offhandedly remarked that "the remaining shares of the capital stock" were available at the company offices.

The offerings at the American Theatre had been good. In December James Howard, the vocalist, had appeared in a number of English operas. He was supported by Jane Placide, who also played opposite the tragedian Thomas J. Hamblin who arrived in January. The Cowell family--Joe, Mrs. Cowell, and young Sam Cowell--began an association with Caldwell on January 4 that was to extend through the remainder of Caldwell's years of theatrical activity in New Orleans. Other stars included the previously mentioned Lydia Kelly, who was replaced by young Clara Fisher in late January, Herr Cline, and Madame Feron, lately of the San Carlos at Naples, La Scala at Milan, the Italian Opera at Paris, Drury Lane at London, and the Park at New York. In March Caldwell presented the Corps de Ballet from the Orleans Street Theatre. In April the French dancers, Miles. Celeste and Constance, repeatedly pleased audiences with the opera Masiniello. There were several novelties including the exhibition of a miniature railroad and steam carriage, and for Mondelli the scene painter's benefit, "A Splendid Naval Exhibition of the Glorious Feats of the American Navy against Tripoli in 1803." Several new plays

9Louisiana Advertiser, May 18, 1830.
had been offered, the most notable of which were James Robinson Planché's *The Green-Eyed Monster*, and James H. Kennicott's *Irma, or, The Prediction*. The latter play was the winner of a prize of $300 which Caldwell had offered the year before for the best tragedy by a native author.\(^{10}\)

The play created considerable interest in the community and played to good houses in its four representations. Both the *Argus* and the *Advertiser* commented extensively on the merits of the script and offered detailed suggestions for improving it. The production of the play was generally commended, particularly the acting of Jane Placide as Irma—the play was said to have been written for her particular talents. The *Argus* of April 13 was "pained to hear the beautiful poetry of the author mangled in the mouths of those who personated the first parts," however, and the *Advertiser* of the day before said of Caldwell's performance of the villain,

> Of the playing we will remark, that though some believe Mr. Caldwell incapable of doing justice to the character of Remington, yet we saw in his delineation of it, some peculiar touches, and several very fine imitations of Mr. C. Kemble, which cannot fail to please.

In general the press felt that Caldwell had exerted himself in an effort to please the public, but had often been badly rewarded for his pains. The *Advertiser* of January 23 so commended him as did the *Argus* of a month later. Yet, the *Argus* of March 5, on noting the occasion of

\(^{10}\text{New Orleans Argus, April 6, 1830.}\)
the debut of Madame Feron, felt constrained to mention the misfortune of the singer's having to contend with actors "below mediocrity" and "an orchestra badly directed," so that "she was only seconded by herself; she was supported by her own talent alone." The Advertiser, commenting on the ending of the season on May 24 noted that "we have often had cause to complain of the imperfection of some of the characters personified," although, said the writer, "we trust we have credit for having done it with the best of motives."

How Caldwell fared financially can only be conjectured on the basis of a few bits of evidence. The Advertiser of April 19 claimed that Celeste's benefit took in $1,200. How much of this went into Caldwell's till is not known. He attempted to borrow $6,000 from the City Council in late March, but the loan, while passed unanimously by the Council, was vetoed by the Mayor. To what purpose he expected to put this money is not known. He was making investments in real estate at this time, as is evidenced by his purchase of a large lot on Camp Street from Peter Crocker, a free man of color, for $8,500 on March 11.

The New Orleans theatrical season ended with Caldwell's benefit on May 22, on which occasion were offered the Hibernian melodrama Brian Barohme, later one

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11 New Orleans Argus, March 29, 1830.

of Tyrone Powers's favorite vehicles, and A Bold Stroke For A Wife, in which piece Caldwell sustained five characters.\(^\text{13}\)

This summer Caldwell freed himself from managerial responsibilities in order to appear as a star at his own and other theatres in the upper regions of the Mississippi and Ohio Valleys. He achieved this situation by leasing his St. Louis and Nashville Theatres to Jackson Gray and James S. Rowe.\(^\text{14}\)

The plan of leasing had been put into effect in March of this year when Caldwell had leased the Natchez Theatre to Sol Smith. Smith had undertaken the venture as a means of paying a rather sizeable debt which he owed in Cincinnati, but he quickly found that business in Natchez was costing him more than he was making, and he was compelled to divide his Natchez troupe between that city and Port Gibson, Mississippi. According to his account, Smith rode horseback the fifty miles between the two towns playing alternate engagements. According to Sol the effort almost killed him, "but I paid my debts!" he said.\(^\text{15}\)

The Natchez Theatre was closed by April 23.\(^\text{16}\)

Caldwell was not in St. Louis for the first month

\(^{13}\)\textit{Louisiana Advertiser}, May 21, 1830.

\(^{14}\)\textit{Carson, op. cit.}, p. 110.

\(^{15}\)\textit{Smith, op. cit.}, pp. 62-64.

of the season there which began about June 10 to 12.¹⁷ No doubt he remained in New Orleans overseeing the start of the considerable improvements and decorations made on the Camp Street Theatre during the summer. He arrived in St. Louis for his starring engagement about the first of July, and made his first appearance as Gossamer in Reynolds' *Laugh When You Can* on July 3.¹⁸ During the next nine days he performed four more times including appearances in *Much Ado About Nothing* with Jane Placide as Beatrice, *Rule A Wife And Have A Wife*, and *The Stranger*. Despite a fairly strong company, Gray and Rowe had not been doing good business and Caldwell's appearance provided no relief from the box office doldrums. Though Caldwell played with his "usual spirit and effect," he played to "not very numerous" audiences, and the situation led one writer in the *St. Louis Beacon* of July 8 to deplore the indifference and neglect of the play-going public and to fear for the success of Caldwell's projected plan to "erect a suitable and handsome building, calculated for all the purposes of the Drama."¹⁹ Caldwell found little encouragement to extend his announced engagement of five nights and, after his benefit on July 12, made plans to leave St. Louis. His

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¹⁷Ibid., pp. 110-12. Carson has a discrepancy in dates for this opening, indicating June 10 in one instance and June 12 in another.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 115.

¹⁹Ibid.
departure from the city was delayed by the late arrival of
the steamboat Huntsman, however, and he appeared for a
single night on July 17 as the Three Singles in Three and
The Deuce.

After Caldwell's departure the St. Louis season
dragged on until August 24, when Gray and Rowe moved the
company to Nashville, where they opened on September 13.
Caldwell's whereabouts during these weeks is unknown. On
September 2, 1830 Caldwell began his third engagement at
the Park Theatre in New York, so he may have spent the
month of August in the eastern city recruiting a new
company and stars for the American Theatre in New Orleans.
As might be expected, Lydia Kelly was not Caldwell's co-
star during the three weeks of this engagement. Instead,
Clara Fisher, who had substituted for Miss Kelly after the
altercation with Caldwell at New Orleans, appeared with
him at the Park as he played his favorite roles of Belcour
in The West Indian, with which he opened, Bronzely, Puff,
Young Mirabel, and Charles Surface, his benefit role on
September 23. Caldwell shared this Park engagement with
Charles Kean, the two actors playing alternate nights from
September 1 through September 25.

In October Caldwell went to Richmond. The Richmond
Whig of October 2, 1830 carried the following advertisement

20Hunt, op. cit., p. 25.
21Odell, III, op. cit., pp. 483-86.
here partly quoted:

Mr. Willard begs most respectfully to inform the Public that in consequence of Mr. Caldwell's Arrival, the Theatre will open this evening instead of Monday, as advertised in yesterday's paper, under the direction of Mr. Caldwell.

Mr. Caldwell, Manager and Proprietor of the American Theatre, New Orleans, is engaged for four nights only; and will appear this evening.

Mr. and Mrs. Cowell, from the New York and Philadelphia Theatres will have the honor of performing for the first time before a Richmond audience.

Cowell had been engaged for the winter season as stage manager of the American Theatre in New Orleans to replace Dick Russell, who this season undertook the management of the Boston Tremont Theatre. Willard (doubtless Henry E. Willard who later was to manage the National, New Chatham and Olympic Theatres in New York) had hired Cowell for a month to manage the Richmond Theatre. Caldwell's position in Richmond clearly was as star and not, as the advertisement might suggest, as manager or director.

For the most part, Caldwell's offerings in Richmond were the light comedy at which he excelled. He opened on October 2 with *The Honeymoon* with Mrs. Cowell as Juliana. On the 4th he appeared as Belcour in *The West Indian* and Baron Willinghurst in *Of Age Tomorrow*; on the 6th in *Much Ado About Nothing* to the Beatrice of Mrs. Cowell; and on

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the 8th as Leon in *Rule A Wife And Have A Wife* and as Young Wilding in *The Liar.* For his benefit on October 9, Caldwell appeared as Gossamer in *Laugh When You Can* and as the three singles in *Three and the Deuce.* In the card announcing his benefit which appeared in the Whig of October 7 there is a notice that this was Caldwell's last appearance "previous to his engagement in Philadelphia," but the records of the Philadelphia stage do not indicate any engagement there. The fact that Lydia Kelly began an engagement at the Chestnut Theatre on October 20 conceivably could have resulted in Caldwell's cancelling.

By November 17 Caldwell was in Nashville, where Gray and Rowe were winding up the season there. He performed that night with Jane Placide and George Holland in *The Soldier's Daughter,* and performed twice more before the company quit the town: on November 20 in the title role of *Rob Roy* for Holland's benefit, and on the 22nd in *The Russian Daughter* for Jane Placide's benefit. As it had in St. Louis, Caldwell's appearance at the Nashville Theatre had done little to swell the receipts, according to Sol Smith, who arrived in Nashville at the same time. Said Smith:

All I remember of this engagement is this: a great number of "stars," so called, were playing,

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24 *Richmond Whig,* October 2, 4, 6, and 8, 1830.

25 *James, op. cit.,* p. 454.

26 *Hunt, op. cit.,* pp. 28-29.
and the houses were awfully empty! The names of Mr. Caldwell, Mr. and Mrs. Pearman, Mr. Geo. Holland, and (to make matters worse) the writer hereof and his wife, were all announced in flaming capitals at the head of the bill on one occasion, without attracting to the house forty dollars!²⁷

The steamer Rapids returned the Caldwell company to New Orleans on December 12, "all in good health and spirits for the winter campaign," as the Advertiser of the next day related. Caldwell's advertisement in the same paper reported that "during the recess considerable improvements have been made to the interior, and the house has been newly decorated." Caldwell claimed to have "the aid of the first talents in the country," but the Bee of December 14 cautiously and somewhat cynically decided that "when the language of the proprietor of a Theatre is submitted to our judgment, we shall, like the public, wait for convincing proofs that he may not be under a mistake himself." Caldwell also claimed that his Theatre had, the previous season, "obtained. . . the pre-eminent name of being the best regulated Theatre in the Union" with respect to policing. Said the Bee, however:

We think it strange that no such report has, 'till today, reached our ears, and intimate as we are with the good police regulations of the Orleans Theatre, the Park, the Philadelphia and Boston theatre, we conceive that some insincere friend has flattered Mr. Caldwell into a belief of the reality of this part of his statement.

Promptly the theatre was opened to a "respectable

²⁷Smith, op. cit., p. 65.
and well filled house" which witnessed Caldwell and Jane Placide in Much Ado About Nothing. Caldwell as Benedick "was in his proper sphere, and did ample justice to the character," and Miss Placide performed Beatrice "with spirit and judgment," according to the Advertiser of December 16, the next day. For the first week Caldwell acted nearly every night, supported by the Cowells and the Noah Ludlows and Sol Smiths, who had returned to the Camp Street Theatre company this year.

True to his pre-season promise, Caldwell presented a succession of talented visitors to the stage of the American Theatre. The first of these was George Holland, who performed a series of his low comedy roles in late December. He was followed by Thomas Cooper, the aging tragedian, on December 27. The Advertiser, noticing his performance as Othello on December 29, discredited the charge that Cooper was "falling into the 'sere and yellow leaf'" and noted that his Othello "exhibited the vigor and manly bearing of the warrior, tempered down by the gentlest passion of youth." Caldwell lent his support as Cassio.

William Pelby began a short engagement not long after Cooper's arrival and when both Cooper and Holland were re-engaged by Caldwell during the early days of January, New Orleans audiences were treated to alternate nights of tragedy and comedy. On January 19 Clara Fisher arrived and appeared with Caldwell in Much Ado About Nothing. The Advertiser of that date devoted considerable space to urging the public to a greater show of support for
Caldwell's efforts to please:

How far the manager has benefited by the liberality which he has displayed thus far in catering for the public, we are unable to judge; but we are inclined to believe, from the complaints of our cotemporaries [sic], that he does not meet with a corresponding liberality of feeling on the part of the public. . . . That Mr. Caldwell has done all within his power to meet the wishes of the American population in New Orleans, every candid man must admit. Every one who visits the Camp street Theatre is struck with admiration—the interior arrangements, the splendour of the scenery, which strike the eye in rapid succession, and the drapery and decorations, all bespeak the vast expense and labour which must have been bestowed on this public institution. The manner in which dramatic talent and novelty has been brought out and exhibited this season so far, is certainly no less gratifying to the friends of histrionic art.

The Advertiser's gloom was premature, however, and Clara Fisher was enthusiastically received. Of their performances in Wives As They Were And Maids As They Are, a communicant to the Bee of January 29, 1831 said of Miss Fisher and Caldwell, "the principal parts were perfectly sustained by this fascinating [sic] young lady and our talented manager. We never saw him act to better advantage."

The attraction of Clara Fisher was withdrawn on February 18, however, when she left New Orleans for Natchez. This year, with a large group of stars coming south, perhaps as an added inducement to their coming and certainly with an eye to his own purse, Caldwell had decided to open the Natchez Theatre. He could, and did, rotate his stars between New Orleans and Natchez, thereby guaranteeing them a longer engagement in the South and at
the same time avoiding their over-exposure in New Orleans. Thus, for example, after about a month at the Camp Street Theatre, Clara Fisher went to Natchez for a month and then returned to New Orleans for another engagement.

The Natchez Theatre had been opened under the managership of Noah Ludlow on January 26, 1831. The Natchez company included, besides the Ludlows: the Sol Smiths, Mrs. McClure, William McCafferty, Eliza Petrie, John Gilbert, E. S. Conner, and A. J. "Rowley" Marks. Ludlow recalls this season as "tolerably successful," but Sol Smith, perhaps with the bitterness of the recollection of an "injustice" towards his wife while there, prefers to recall that "upon the whole, the season could not be said to be a successful one." The Natchez Theatre closed with Ludlow's benefit on April 25, 1831.

In New Orleans Clara Fisher was followed at the Camp Street Theatre by Mr. and Mrs. Cramer.Plumer, vocalists, who made their debut on February 19, and then appeared in a series of productions of the popular English operas. The efforts of the Cramer Plumers were abetted with the arrival

28 Gates, op. cit., p. 89.
29 Smith, op. cit., p. 69.
30 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 379.
31 Smith, op. cit., p. 69.
32 Gates, op. cit., p. 90. Ludlow, op. cit., p. 379, remembers the date as "about the 1st of May".
33 Louisiana Advertiser, February 21, 1831.
of the young tragedian, Charles Kean, on February 26, and during the weeks in which he fulfilled his engagement of nine performances he alternated nights with the singers. He had arrived opportunely, since the Cramer Plumers proved to be poor box office.

Caldwell found frequent occasion to act despite the presence of his succession of stars. His appearance with Mrs. Plumer in The Soldier's Daughter on February 25 was lauded by the Advertiser of the 28th as follows:

But the transcendent honors of the night decidedly belonged to Mr. Caldwell and Mrs. Plumer. That gentleman's reputation in the higher walks of comedy no ways suffered in his Frank Heartall; he was, as he ever is, at the height of his part, and developed it with correctness and dignity.

However, about a month later the press was not nearly so kind in its notice of his portrayal of Iago to the Othello of Charles Kean. Said the Mercantile Advertiser of March 23:

The play of Othello, last night, was badly played altogether... It appears to us that it would be prudent for Mr. Caldwell, as an actor, to confine his efforts to his own line of characters, in which he unquestionably shines, as a comedian; but when he departs from that line, he loses his superiority on the stage, and appears only in the light of mediocrity.

It was the reprise of an all-too-familiar refrain to Caldwell.

34 *New Orleans Bee*, February 26, 1831.

35 See, e.g., *Louisiana Advertiser*, February 2, March 2 and 21, 1831.
Clara Fisher returned from Natchez before Kean's departure and the two of them assisted at Caldwell's mid-season benefit—Kean in *Town and Country* and Fisher with Caldwell in the farce *Perfection*. Immediately after, Kean departed for his stint at Natchez. Before the end of the season, two new stars appeared—Mr. and Mrs. Pearson—and Kean, Fisher and the Plumers were present through April.

The season seems to have been quite successful. Certainly, if the quality and variety of entertainment which Caldwell had offered the New Orleans public are any indication, the patrons should have been well satisfied and, in consequence, Caldwell's purse well filled. While there is no evidence to support the latter surmise, it is true that at the time of his benefit on May 30 three of the daily papers devoted considerable space to extolling his merits and recommending the patronage of the public at that event. Conveniently forgotten were the unpleasant moments of the past season, such as the occasion of Clara Fisher's benefit on April 11 when the *Mercantile Advertiser*, while allowing that "Miss Fisher did her best," was forced to notice that "such shameful

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36 *Louisiana Advertiser*, March 25, 1831; *Mercantile Advertiser*, March 25, 1831; and *New Orleans Bee*, March 26, 1831.

37 See *Mercantile Advertiser*, *Louisiana Advertiser* and *New Orleans Bee*, all of May 30, 1831.
accompaniment has been but seldom witnessed even in barns... as was heard last evening from the orchestra of the Theatre." Or, on the occasion of the April 21 appearance of the Plumers in the opera *Marriage of Figaro* when the same paper explained the poor house as follows:

We cannot account for this, unless it be the slovenly manner in which their excellent pieces are got up. On this occasion, the furniture of the stage was severely criticised by the audience--the dirty tables, chairs, and a couch or bed, and other miserable appendages for the mansions of nobles. Mr. Caldwell has, unquestionably, expended great sums of money on the theatre--but he has not confined it to the stage alone, which is always more observed by the audience than any exterior frippery.

The *Mercantile Advertiser* of May 14 found that the Pearmans, too, had been poorly provided for in the way of musical accompaniment for their *John of Paris*:

And, it is now evident, that if Mr. Caldwell wishes to unite and attract the immense and opulent audience of this city, he must strengthen his orchestra--provide operatic talent--and cultivate the opera in his establishment... He cannot say that he has tried the experiment--the theatre has never been provided with superior music.

The other side of the proscenium arch drew the critical attention of the *Louisiana Advertiser*. A communicant to its issue of March 29 complained of "certain young men... dressed in the habiliments of gentlemen" who insulted public decency by "making a disturbance among the Cyprian Damsels who by Mr. Caldwell have judiciously been located in the upper row of boxes." On April 28 in the same paper there appeared a letter from the Head of the Police of Caldwell's establishment, John Coon, and his
deputies which apparently answered a charge against them appearing in the Argus of the day before accusing them of negligence in failing to remove "a person in Liquor" who had fallen from his theatre seat. The officers claimed no negligence and insisted that the unfortunate, "as soon as perceived by us, was removed." A final item of comment on audience behavior, in which the actions of the theatre personnel were praised, is contained in the following from the Advertiser of May 25.

Some witless being, bearing the form and visage of man, but lacking the prudence and instinct peculiar to his nature, gave the alarm of fire, that created a scene of confusion and dismay; which, however, was soon dissipated by the presence of mind displayed by MISS PLACIDE, then on the stage.

The season was closed with Caldwell's benefit, as usual, at which he assayed the role of Belcour in The West Indian, following The Highland Widow which featured Jane Placide in the role of Elspat McTavish.

This summer the Caldwell theatrical enterprises were extensive and far-flung: St. Louis, Cincinnati, Louisville; and Nashville. Actually, some of this activity had been initiated before the close of the New Orleans season. It will be recalled that Caldwell had sent Ludlow to open the Natchez Theatre in late January and Ludlow had maintained a season there until about the last of April.38 Meanwhile, the St. Louis Salt House had opened by March 30,

38See supra, p. 155.
probably under the supervision, if not the actual management, of Charles Keemle, the editor of the *St. Louis Beacon*, whom Caldwell had constituted his "agent for the St. Louis Theatre, during my absence, to act and to do all things as if I myself were present," according to a card Caldwell had inserted in the *St. Louis Beacon* the previous summer.  

George Holland, who had been featured at the American Theatre in New Orleans until mid-February, was the first star, and the papers announced the expected appearance of the Pearmans and Clara Fisher. Miss Fisher never appeared during the season, but the Pearmans arrived by April 13.

Charles Muzzy, an actor who was to become a regular in Caldwell's New Orleans company for the next two seasons, apparently became stage manager of the St. Louis troupe about this time, although a newspaper of April 16 states that the Theatre is "under the management of Mr. Pearman." Caldwell's precise managerial arrangements in St. Louis are further clouded by the fact that when Ludlow arrived in St. Louis the theatre seems to have been under the management of Muzzy alone, who announced in the press "that circumstances . . . compelled him to surrender the possession of the present Theatre." One thing is

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39 Carson, *op. cit.*, p. 120.
40 Ibid., p. 122.
41 Ibid., p. 123.
42 Ibid., p. 126.
certain: Caldwell had a seven year lease on the theatre building, and whatever arrangements existed in St. Louis had to stem from him. It is possible that through Keemle he had sub-leased the theatre to a small sharing company and/or Pearman and Muzzy, or it is perhaps more likely that Keemle merely shifted the management of the theatre from one personality to another as they arrived in St. Louis or as the situation required it. In any event, with the arrival of Ludlow and the troupe from Natchez, the managerial situation became unequivocal. Ludlow was clearly described as the agent for Caldwell in the notice announcing the opening of the theatre. Ludlow later recalled, "Our season here not proving profitable, we closed after performing six weeks." And after July 9 he and the greater portion of the company were on their way to Louisville, but not to Nashville as Ludlow incorrectly recollected in his memoirs. The Louisville papers of this time show him to be in that city by July 25.

Meanwhile, Caldwell had travelled with the Camp Street Theatre company from New Orleans to Cincinnati. The

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43 This seems substantiated by the fact that the troupe on hand was, for the most part, still in St. Louis with Sol Smith when Ludlow departed in July, and, therefore, probably had been assimilated into Ludlow's company upon his arrival in mid-May.

44 Ibid., p. 126.

45 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 379.

46 Ibid., p. 380.

47 Ralph Leslie Rusk, The Literature of the Middle Western Frontier, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1925), 1, p. 448.
The Manager of the American Theatre, New Orleans, respectfully presents himself to the public of Cincinnati and informs them, that last year he purchased a lot of ground, upon which he had intended to have built a theatre, suitable to the population and growing importance of this fast-increasing city. Certain prejudices, soon after, arising against the location, the manager was induced to pause until he could either procure a lot equally eligible, or, that the objections, to what he called a desirable site, should wear away.

With a desire not to interfere with the prejudices of any set of men, particularly those whose principles would be opposite to the existence of the theatre at all, the manager will at least attempt conciliation, by abandoning the site originally purchased for the purpose. By setting himself down with his establishment in the city, he will avail himself of the time and opportunity, and the aid of those who know it a matter of notoriety that the arts and sciences in the most civilized countries of antiquity as well as amongst the moderns, have advanced with the most rapid strides to which the advantages of the drama have been in the greatest degree extended,—to make such choice of a lot as cannot be objected to, and upon which must be erected a properly-constructed and well-appointed and **permanent Cincinnati Theatre**.

For the present occasion, the manager has the pleasure to announce to the ladies and gentlemen of Cincinnati and its vicinity, that he has converted the building, on Sycamore Street, formerly occupied as a circus, into a **spacious, elegant and airy theatre**, capable of containing eight hundred persons. The dress boxes will hold two hundred; the pit four hundred and twenty; and the gallery one hundred and eight persons. Every auditor can see and hear distinctly from any part of the house.

The Scenery is entirely new, the whole of which, together with the decorations, has been executed by Mondelli, principal artist of the

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48Caldwell may have been in Cincinnati to effect this purchase either before or after he visited St. Louis in the summer of 1830. See supra, p. 147-48.
American Theatre, at New Orleans. Theatrical activity in Cincinnati had existed for nearly thirty years before the arrival of Caldwell and included the professional activities of "Billy" Turner, the Drakes, Ludlow and Aaron Phillips, Joshua Collins and William Jones, and Sol Smith. The theatre in which Caldwell settled his company this summer of 1831 had been built by Collins and Jones in 1820. It was located on Columbia Street between Sycamore and Main Streets and was known either as the Columbia Street or the Globe Theatre.

Said Ludlow:

This building was of brick would seat about eight hundred persons, and was the first one erected expressly for a theatre in Cincinnati. It was built by subscriptions of the citizens.

Caldwell began his Cincinnati season with the traditional Honeymoon, himself playing Duke Aranza, on June 20, 1831. The season lasted until October 15, at which time Caldwell and his troupe moved to Alexander Drake's Louisville Theatre which Ludlow and his half of Caldwell's ensemble had vacated on October 3. This building was the one which Drake

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49Rees, op. cit., p. 70.


51Ludlow, op. cit., p. 175.


53Ludlow, op. cit., p. 175.
had converted to a theatre in 1818 and now called the City Theatre after he had remodelled it the year before. It now was fifty-two feet wide, by a hundred long, and thirty-four high, and contained three rows of boxes and a pit with a seating capacity of about seven hundred. It was somewhat ironic that Ludlow, who just two years previously had erected his own Melodramatic Theatre in Louisville, now was reduced to working for Caldwell and performing in the theatre which had been a rival to his own, Drake's City Theatre. Ludlow was to describe this low state of his fortunes as "a succession of six or seven years of ill-luck."

There are no details of Caldwell's short Louisville stay, and both his and Ludlow's movements are somewhat uncertain from this time. Part of this uncertainty arises from Ludlow himself, who, in his autobiography, records a Nashville season beginning July 23, when he was, in fact, in Louisville. He furthermore claims that he closed the Nashville Theatre "about the 27th of October" and journeyed by land to Louisville, but contemporary accounts show the Nashville playhouse was open until December 3. Briefly, the correct sequence of events seems to be as follows: Ludlow was in St. Louis from mid-May to early

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54 Rusk, op. cit., p. 405.
56 ibid., p. 389.
57 Hunt, op. cit., pp. 33-35.
July, as he correctly recalls, while Caldwell was in Cincinnati from late June to mid-October. Ludlow came to Louisville—not Nashville—the last week in July and remained there until the first week in October when he then removed to Nashville. Caldwell moved into Louisville about two weeks after Ludlow had left and then departed for New Orleans in time to arrive by November 13. Ludlow's account of the winter and spring of 1832 is also largely in error and will be discussed subsequently.

The steamboat Lafourche returned Manager Caldwell and his actors to New Orleans and in ten days the company had opened the newly decorated and improved Camp Street Theatre. Pier glasses had been added to each of the pillars behind the boxes, the seats in the auditorium had been recovered, a festooned curtain had been hung from below the second tier of boxes, and the entire interior repainted. To keep out cold and noise from the stairway, doors were placed at each side of the entrance.

In announcing the 1831-1832 season Caldwell had promised the New Orleans public "the First Comedies and Tragedies of the age, and a variety of New and Successful

58 Rusk, op. cit., p. 448, is clearly in error in claiming Caldwell's presence in Louisville as late as November 12. See Louisiana Advertiser November 14, 1831 and New Orleans Bee, November 19, 1831 for notices of Caldwell's arrival in New Orleans on November 13. Also, Rees, op. cit., p. 71, would seem to be in error in stating that the Louisville season concluded as late as November 9, since a four day trip to New Orleans from Louisville would have been impossible.

59 Louisiana Advertiser, November 24, 1831.
Pieces." "During the Season," he said, "short engagements will be fulfilled by several of the most distinguished performers of the day." The promise was largely kept. None of the stars engaged this year played longer than a month. The light comedian John Herbert began the parade in early December. He was followed by the erstwhile manager of the Federal Street Theatre in Boston, H. J. Finn, who played from mid-January to mid-February. William C. Forbes played a brief engagement at the end of January, and William Keppell was present during three weeks of February. The child prodigy Master Joseph Burke played two engagements, one in late February and early March and the other in mid-April. The talented mimic and dialectician James H. Hackett went through his repertory of Yankee roles for a week beginning March 19, and was followed by the popular George Holland during the first two weeks of April. John Henry Barton, who began this year a long and close association with Caldwell, was the last star of the season from the 25 of April to the 12 of May.

Caldwell himself found frequent occasion to appear on stage, although there are few critical notices of his acting. The Bee of November 29, 1831, in reporting his Young Rapid in A Cure For the Heartache, remarked on his "versatility in the various branches of the drama," "He is ever at the top of his part," said the Mercantile

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60 Mercantile Advertiser, New Orleans Bee, Louisiana Advertiser, all of November 21, 1831.
Advertiser of the same performance. The latter paper on December 6 praised Caldwell, Cowell, Herbert, Miss Placide and Miss Petrie as a cast "excellent indeed" in Speed The Plough. Caldwell's pre-season assertion of "a regular stock company . . . not surpassed in any Theatre of the United States" would seem nearly correct according to the Mercantile Advertiser of December 19, which found in the casts "very little to censure and much to applaud," and called "always perfect" the performances of Caldwell, Cowell and Gray. Caldwell's Dr. Cantwell in The Hypocrite was "excellently portrayed" on January 25, 1832, according to the Louisiana Advertiser of the next day, and he gave a "fine and spirited performance" as Hotspur to the Falstaff of Cooper on April 6, according to the same newspaper.

From both a critical and a commercial standpoint the season could be said to be tremendously successful--there were frequent newspaper references to "crowded and fashionable" houses--had it not been for one unpleasant controversy which arose in respect to a policy Caldwell inaugurated this season. Always in the past Caldwell had scrupulously deferred to the contemporary prejudice against opening the theatre on Sunday. This year Christmas Day, New Year's Day, and the 8 of January--New Orleans' spirited holiday in celebration of the delivery of the city from the British by Andrew Jackson in 1815--all fell on Sunday. Caldwell was doubtless reluctant to forego the huge receipts that customarily fell to him on those holidays, and,
throwing caution to the winds, performed the highly moral and traditional George Barnwell on a bill with The Gambler's Fate, another moralistic melodrama, on Christmas night. The reaction quickly set in. "Juvenal," writing to the Louisiana Advertiser of December 27, expressed his shock and indignation, not only that Caldwell had opened the theatre, but that the theatre was thronged. "I had thought," he wrote, "that Mr. Caldwell was a moral man, at least a man that would not have offended the feelings of that large and respectable portion of the community who thinks it their duty to keep holy the Sabbath day . . . ."

Caldwell's supporters were not long in springing to his defense and to the defense of the "minority of our residents . . . pleased to see the American Theatre opened on Sunday nights," as "Juvenal" had charged. Said "An Old Resident" in the columns of the Advertiser of the next day, "Juvenal may go to Church if he pleases--but I will go to the Theatre." "Juvenal's" response to this plea for individual freedom was the sanctimonious observance that "the good in all ages have endeavoured to enhance the morals of the country in which they have lived." He was joined by "Juno" who, while admitting the right of every individual to exercise freely the dictates of his own inclination, warned against that which violates the bounds of moral principle. 61

As the New Year approached the controversy increased in heat and depth. On December 30 the Advertiser itself took

61 Louisiana Advertiser, December 29, 1831.
the editorial position that Caldwell's innovation was
to be found in none of the Protestant countries of Europe
and not in the United States, with the exception of New
Orleans. Said the paper, "Our city we had fain hoped was
advancing in the scale of religion and morality . . . and
we are sorry that a check should have been so rudely inter-
posed." In the same issue "Juvenal" again appeared in
print answering an allegation which had appeared in another
paper to the effect that seventy-six ladies had been
present in the theatre on the Sunday night in question.
"Juvenal," darkly hinting that perhaps Caldwell had been
the author of this bit of information with which he
quarreled, said that the article had smelled "rather too
strong of the green room." He repeated his arguments of a
majority position, and expressed the fear of an unpopular
image of New Orleans in the eyes of other, particularly
northern, communities. On the other side of the issue,
"Senex," who professed not to be a theatre-going man as
did "Juvenal" and "Juno," argued that the Scriptures in no
way forbade amusements on Sunday, that intemperance and
drunkenness--the real enemies of the United States--were
carried to greater heights than in countries where the
theatres were open. He concluded that the public "are
greatly obliged to Mr. Caldwell for making the first bold
effort to correct the moral opinions and practice in this
particular." But one who signed himself "Vindex" sided
with "Juvenal" and argued that those few persons who had
been present in the theatre on Sunday night "went there expressly to see how the think [sic] took." He warned Caldwell that his credit would be hurt in Cincinnati, "Where I know he wishes to conciliate the affections of the people (who are all religious persons) as he expects ere long to reap a plentiful harvest there; and I hope he will."

The flame of controversy burned even higher the next day, Saturday, December 31 and the eve before another Sunday night performance. Again the Advertiser rebuked Caldwell and wished "that a greater degree of deference had been paid to the opinions and feelings of this community." Caldwell was reminded that "his very existence depends on the approbation and countenance of the American population of New Orleans—a population descended from a stern and religious race of men." "Juno" again appeared in print with a lengthy disquisition disputing the moral and theological arguments of "Senex." But the coup de theatre was Caldwell's communication which unfurled the banner of chauvinism:

MR. EDITOR—You have disseminated so many opinions of your own, and published so many of other people's, upon the subject of opening the Theatre on Sunday, a practice common in the whole continent of Europe, in Catholic as well as Protestant countries, whether of English, French, German, Russe, Prusse, Dutch or Italian—moreover, my name has been so cavalierly used by you and your incognito correspondents, that I claim the privilege of your columns, to say a few words for myself; which words shall smack more of piety than any of the articles that have appeared, which I view as so many anathemas, can boast of.
I thank Heaven that I was born in a free country.
I thank Heaven that I am a citizen of the United States.
I thank Heaven that the Constitution of the United States grants to me the liberty of thinking, writing, printing and acting for myself, as every man ought—though his thinking, writing, printing and acting should differ from all other men's thinking, writing, printing, and acting.
I thank Heaven that the majority can rule the minority, as it ought.
I thank Heaven that the majority is not against me, as it might.
I thank Heaven that the minority is not the majority, for fear it would proscribe and ruin me, as it would.
I am happy in the knowledge that the majority of the people of New Orleans think that, instead of an evil it is a moral good to open the Theatre on Sunday evenings.
To conclude—I thank Heaven that those who think differently from the majority, have the right to act as independently as the subscriber to this article, by expressing their opinions. May they live long to express them, and long live the Republic to protect them.

JAMES H. CALDWELL

American Theatre, December 30, 1831.

Caldwell's patriotic sentiments might have had greater effect had they not appeared side by side with the following cynical observation however:

MR. EDITOR—What is the use of your spending the time of your compositors, and filling your columns with pieces written and printed for the eye of the manager of the American Theatre. He heeds no such advice. In fact, I know from one of the persons attached to the Theatre, that Mr. C. has declared that so long as he can realize $700 to $1000 a night, he is not going to close the doors for all publications that can be cram'd into a newspaper. Now just permit me to remind this avaricious manager, that he may carry things too far for his ultimate interest. Let him remember that for less disrespect for public opinion, a Park Theatre, a Boston Theatre, and some others, have been made to suffer to the no small injury of the managers' income. Let
those who advocate his cause, say what they please, Mr. C. will be made to respect public opinion in New Orleans, as well as any other place, where Americans reside.

PRENDRÉ GARDE.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the furor the Theatre was well-attended on New Year's night. As the Bee, with tongue in cheek, reported on January 3, 1832:

Camp Street Theatre.--The theatre was, on Sunday night last, "to overflowing full." Oh, wicked, wicked. Those who have visited the theatre on Christmas and New Year's night can no longer be honest and moral men; they have, in the short period of some eight hours, lost all their claims to probity and morality.

But, ultimately--after the January 8 performance--Caldwell capitulated, but without public confession of his transgressions, however. Sunday performances were quietly abandoned for the remainder of the season, and Caldwell even closed the theatre during Passion Week to make "some alterations already fixed upon." Since the Advertiser of April 14 suggested that the thinness of the houses during Master Burke's second engagement were the result of the "conscientious scruples of our citizens on the near approach of Passion Week," one suspects that it was the thinness of his purse and not the thickness of his skin

62Or, as the editor of the French side of the Bee of January 2 phrased the subject with Gallic incisiveness, "Nouveau triomphe de la raison sur les préjuges: la salle était raisonnablement pleine, c'est tout ce que nous pouvons dire de la représentation de dimanche, n'y ayant pas assisté."

63See, e.g., Louisiana Advertiser, April 16, 1832.
which led him not to cross the grain of public opinion again. In any event, the theatre's saloon benefited by some enlargement and decoration. It was not until four years later, after he had opened the magnificent St. Charles Theatre, that Caldwell was able to overcome prejudice or public opinion had shifted to the extent that he could hold Sunday performances.

After Barton's benefit on May 12, Caldwell had undertaken the starring chores himself, perhaps in an effort to recoup some of the losses sustained during Barton's appearance, since several newspaper notices remark on the "beggarly account of empty boxes." At Caldwell's own benefit on May 19 he performed in a new melodrama, Maurice the Woodcutter, and as Vapid in The Dramatist, and the theatre was closed. 64

This season had been probably a successful but certainly a busy one for Caldwell. In addition to starring himself at the beginning and end of the season and supporting the visiting stars, Caldwell had been occupied with planning for the opening of his newly-built Cincinnati Theatre and arranging for the summer seasons at Nashville and Louisville. The Natchez Theatre had been open for two months during the past winter, again affording additional engagements for six of Caldwell's stars. His own claims of being in Louisville and Cincinnati to the contrary

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64 Louisiana Advertiser and New Orleans Bee, May 19, 1832.
notwithstanding, Ludlow was present during this Natchez season which lasted from about January 20, 1832 to at least March 23, 1832, when the last performance is recorded. Considering the trust which Caldwell had reposed in Ludlow during the preceding summer and which he was again to place in him this year in managing the Louisville theatre, it is reasonable to assume that Ludlow's function in Natchez was that of Caldwell's manager. Ludlow claims that he closed a season for Caldwell at Louisville on February 3 and then opened the Cincinnati Theatre in Columbia Street on February 12, where he remained until the 24 of April. Then, says Ludlow, Caldwell asked him to return to Louisville, which he did on May 7. There is no evidence to support this itinerary as recalled by Ludlow. On the contrary, after leaving Natchez, he is next established in Cincinnati on April 24, as the following reprint from a Cincinnati paper which appeared in the Louisiana Advertiser of May 10, 1832 clearly shows:

CINCINATE [sic], April 24th

The Theatre.--We congratulate the play-going public on the arrival of Mr. Ludlow (agent for Mr. Caldwell) with a Dramatic Corps. On referring to our advertising columns it will be seen that the Theatre on Second [Formerly Columbia] Street, will be opened this evening, when, we doubt not, the performers will be greeted by full benches, with a hearty welcome.

Thus, Ludlow's movements during the winter seem to have been

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65Ludlow, op. cit., p. 397.
67Ludlow, op. cit., p. 397.

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as follows: After closing the Nashville Theatre on December 3, 1831 he proceeded to Natchez where he remained until late March, then moved to Cincinnati where he remained until June 25.  

Caldwell, after leaving New Orleans in late May, played at Drake's Louisville Theatre from June 6 through June 30. Caldwell then opened his New Cincinnati Theatre on July 4, 1832 and it is possible that Ludlow's half of the dramatic corps then joined Caldwell's half at the new theatre, although Ludlow's name does not appear in the bills after Caldwell's arrival in Cincinnati. It is more likely that Ludlow spent the remainder of the summer as Caldwell's agent in Louisville where he is known to have been by September.

Caldwell had made elaborate plans for the opening of the New Cincinnati Theatre. In December of 1831 he had advertised in Nashville and New Orleans newspapers his offer of a prize of fifty dollars for "the best poem of from forty to sixty lines" to be read on the occasion of the opening. He further offered a medal of the value of a hundred dollars for the best brief history and defense of

68 Rusk, _op. cit._, p. 448.
69 Zuber MS., _op. cit._
70 See Letters from James Caldwell to N.M. Ludlow dated September 15, 24, and October 1, 2, 1832, Harvard Theatre Collection. Ludlow, _op. cit._, pp. 398-402, claims to have spent this time in company with George Holland and J. W. Forbes leisurely traveling in Kentucky and resting in Louisville.
the drama. The device of the prize address was a familiar one with Caldwell—he had used it in Cincinnati the preceding year in opening the Columbia Street Theatre, and, of course, in New Orleans and Nashville—but the winning poem in the present instance seems to contain some sentiments of a more particular and personal relationship to Caldwell than had the flowery lines recited at the openings of his other theatres. These lines, in particular, would seem to have some reference to Caldwell's recent brush with the forces of religious intolerance in New Orleans:

Hail to this shrine! Oh! never may the flame Enkindled here be dimmed by clouds of shame—
Patrons of genius! be it yours to guard
This virgin temple, spotless and unmarr'd,
High o'er its gates inscribe this ban to sin,
Let not pollution dare to enter in.
Then even prayer in holy brow may bend,
And bless the Drama, as religion's friend.

This inference is strengthened by Caldwell's own words:

In the face of much prejudice, and against some opposition, this extensive edifice has been raised—a signal, though a strong proof that I do not think the Drama conquerable by such arms as have been used against it, and determined, by making it more worthy of the support of the enlightened and liberal part of the community, that is shall never sink itself by vices and abuses of its own. . . . I shall endeavour to show in the course of my managerial career, in Cincinnati, that if not the first, the theatre is amongst the first and highest schools of literature and the

71New Orleans Bee, December 17, 1831. See, also, Hunt, op. cit., p. 11.

72Rees, op. cit., p. 74. The author of this poem was Miss Caroline Lee Hentz, who also had pretensions as a dramatist. See infra, p. 178.
arts, and that poetry, painting, and music are nowhere so perfectly combined as within its walls. 73

For a description of the New Cincinnati Theatre we are dependent on the rather sketchy observations of Noah Ludlow:

The building fronted on Third Street, and stood on or near the corner of Broadway... It was a very convenient and well-built theatre, of seventy feet front by one hundred and thirty-seven deep, a large pit and three tiers of boxes, seating about seven or eight hundred people. 74

As he had in New Orleans, the progressive manager installed gas lighting in his new theatre and thereby took the first step toward the establishment of a gas lighting company in Cincinnati. Actual construction of the theatre had commenced during the summer of 1831, according to Ludlow, and had "proceeded... to about the first floor, and then stopped until the next spring." The work was resumed the spring of 1832 and was completed in time for the opening on July 4.

The opening performance featured Caldwell as Frank Heartall in The Soldier's Daughter, which was followed by the farce of No Song No Supper. The playbill announced a cast which included most of the stock company from the past season at New Orleans, but which added the names of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Russell, who, having apparently become disenchanted with the uncertainties of management at Boston and at the Richmond Hill Theatre in New York, had once more joined their

73Ibid., pp. 71-72.
74Ludlow, op. cit., p. 396.
fortunes with those of Caldwell. The night of July 6 found Caldwell playing opposite Jane Placide in the melodrama of The Stranger and on the next night performing as the Duke Aranza in The Honeymoon. On July 9 he again starred with Jane Placide in The Gamester. Other stars of the season included Barton, Scott, Thorne, Edwin Forrest, Booth, and Mrs. Duff. On August 1 Caldwell played Cassio, Scott, Iago, and Barton, Othello, and on August 23, for the benefit of the New Independent Fire Engine and Hose Company, the cast of The School For Scandal included Caldwell as Charles Surface to the Joseph Surface of Scott and the Teazles by the Russells.

One of the plays which enjoyed a measure of success in the Cincinnati season was written by the winner of the prize address contest which Caldwell had sponsored for the opening of his New Cincinnati Theatre. The play was Lamorah; or, The Western Wild, authored by Caroline Lee Hentz. In accordance with the custom of the time Mrs. Hentz had no proprietary rights in the script once it had been produced by the manager. However in this instance, Caldwell seems to have shared the rights to this script in some way with the actor John Barton. While the complete details of this arrangement are not known, some hints may be

Rees, op. cit., pp. 72-72.
Zuber MS., op. cit.
derived from a series of letters which Caldwell wrote from Cincinnati to Ludlow in Louisville, where Ludlow was managing the Louisville Theatre for him. On September 15, Caldwell sent by J. M. Scott a letter to Ludlow in which he said, "Scot will hand you the manuscript of Lamorah!," after which Caldwell detailed instructions for a week of attractions to feature Scott and Barton, the latter scheduled to arrive in Louisville on September 20. In a lengthy postscript Caldwell gave orders to Ludlow as to the salaries the two actors were to receive:

You will give Scot $10 each week, and one third of his benefit his salary is $25 - back $15 is retained for a debt here in town which you will forward. Altho Barton is to receive only half his benefit he nominally shares after $175 - this is not that he expects anything but he stands upon that order of rank and shares the Lamorah 4 years more under the circumstances of the piece & Scots playing he would not expect it yet to gratify his ideas - you can receive him as having to share - this is for your private information you will act accordingly.

Caldwell's expectations of the magnanimity of Barton were not realized, however, for in his next letter to Ludlow, dated September 26, he had these remarks to make:

By the tenor of Bartons letter to me in which without saying a word about it I am lead

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Letters, Caldwell to Ludlow, op. cit.

Caldwell's handwriting would tax the talents of an expert cryptographer, and his eschewal of the common usages of punctuation in no way diminishes the difficulty of transcribing his letters. Except where meaning is obscured passages quoted are reproduced as they appear in the originals.
to suppose he expects to share out of Lamorah. I am not certain tho he says "I fear with the exception of a few dollars effected by Lamorah my Louisville friends will do nothing for me until my benefit." Which means perhaps that he is to share actually out of it altho as Scot played of course the expenses should be more - that was not thought of and I understood him to mean he only wanted nominally to share for the dignity of the thing as he expected he could not for the profit - however - if he expects it and asks for it make no hesitation further than asking him how small and pay it for he is a good fellow - I had of course rather not, for the piece would have been of course attractive without him.

The matter is alluded to once more in a letter dated October 1:

Barton talks about sharing in a letter I have from him - pay him - for altho I of course would not have shared after $175 giving him Lamorah & Scot - nor did I expect it or understand it - yet as his engagements have been unfortunate I willingly accord it to him - you can tell him all this for I like candor and truth needs no cover - the manner of course will accompany the interest.

From the foregoing it seems likely that Barton and Caldwell had a joint interest in the piece, probably with Barton receiving a guarantee of $175 when the piece was played. Caldwell seemed to think that Barton's interest in sharing in the profits beyond his guarantee was only nominal--a conception apparently not shared by Barton. On October 2 Caldwell wrote Ludlow that he "had better perhaps put up Lamorah for the benefit of the Author."

These business letters of Caldwell's are interesting not only because they are among the few extant specimens of his correspondence, but also in that they provide a more intimate glimpse of the man than is afforded by his public
communications which appear in newspapers and playbills of the day. The beneficence displayed towards Barton was part of a general sense of well-being which seemed to possess the manager this summer. Not that he did not have some minor troubles. In his first in the series of four letters to Ludlow, that of September 15, Caldwell had the painful duty of reporting the death in Cincinnati of the actress wife of one of Ludlow's company in Louisville. He instructed Ludlow to inform the man and tell him "if he has any thing at her lodgings, come up and see after them." Almost as though it was of no moment, Caldwell also remarked that he had paid her "general expenses." Another incident, not further described, involved the young actor John Gilbert. Wrote Caldwell on September 26:

Gilbert is a villain that is all - and let every villain stand for what he is "as Dogberry says - all I intend to do for the future whenever I meet a rascal is to shun him and never deal again with him -

One wonders what Gilbert had done to incur Caldwell's wrath, but it was not true that Caldwell thereafter "shunned" him since Gilbert was a regular member of Caldwell's New Orleans company for the next two years.\(^{80}\)

During this summer season there appeared at both the Cincinnati and Louisville theatres an entertainer who is highly representative of the theatrical tastes of the age. Caldwell's own enchantment with the man is evidenced in

\(^{80}\) See Smither, op. cit., p. 550.
the following extract from his letter to Ludlow dated September 26:

There is now at Cincinnati perhaps the most extraordinary man in the world - Gouffe the Man Monkey - he set all Paris running after him for a whole year and played the part of Jocko which he is now acting here 200 nights in London - he is one moment convulsing the house with laughter at another subdues all eyes in tears - in awakening sympathies he has the power of a Miss Placide or Mrs. Drake - in dispelling care he is equal to Hillson in Magic effect he is equal to Booth, and all these different powers and effects he elicits as a Monkey he is indeed a wonder!

Then perhaps having read over the glowing words he had just set down, Caldwell without a trace of false modesty suggested to Ludlow:

Suppose you were to have this published as an extract of a letter rec'd from Cincinnati it will do good . . .

Much of Caldwell's correspondence to Ludlow is, of course, concerned with money and the day-to-day problems of running two theatrical establishments. He was highly optimistic about the venture and wrote to Ludlow on October 1, "Now I think the Season will turn out well and money will be made." But by the close of this letter Caldwell was moved to request of Ludlow:

I wish you as early as you can to remit me the amount rent for the number of weeks you have played since opening at Louisville - on the 21st this month I have my rent to pay at Nashville and plenty to pay here -

This last request raises a number of questions concerning the arrangements Caldwell had with respect to the theatres at Louisville and Nashville. Was Ludlow merely
Caldwell's agent at Louisville and on salary, or was he leasing the theatre under some profit-sharing scheme with Caldwell dictating the policy? The latter alternative seems the more probable, since all of Caldwell's letters are filled with dicta to Ludlow on the arrangements of the bills, monetary arrangements and the assignment of actors. Ludlow was housed in Drake's theatre in Louisville, of course, for which Caldwell must have had to pay rent, but the theatre in Nashville was nominally his, though he did not own it outright, and it is curious that he says he had rent to pay at Nashville, unless he is using the word to mean paying off the debt he had incurred there in building the theatre. The Nashville season had been opened on May 30 by Charles B. Parsons, but whether on a lease basis or as a manager for Caldwell is not known. None of the company there had appeared at the American Theatre in New Orleans the past winter. Parsons closed the Nashville Theatre on June 28, reopened it on September 1, and ended his stay there on October 20. It is likely that Caldwell sent his stars to Nashville as a third leg to a summer circuit which included Cincinnati and Louisville as seen above. As evidence of this, in writing Ludlow on October 1 Caldwell has a postscript in which is contained a message to Barton saying that Caldwell had not written him because of his uncertainty as to whether Barton was going to Nashville.

or returning to Cincinnati. It turned out that Barton did go to Nashville and opened an engagement there on October 9.  

Caldwell closed the New Cincinnati Theatre on October 15 and made preparations to return to New Orleans. Ludlow and his company stayed on at Louisville possibly as late as about December 20, shortly before Drake returned to his theatre there. As has previously been noted Ludlow has forgotten this season in Louisville. He apparently did not clip the notice which appeared in the New Orleans Emporium of November 30, 1832, which said:

Mr. Ludlow, who has, for nearly twenty years, been an actor and manager of a theatre, has retired from the stage. He took leave, as he alleges, "professionally, forever," of the audience at Louisville, Kentucky, in a brief and appropriate address, on the 10th of November.

Ludlow correctly recalls his subsequent unhappy experience in the world of business in New Orleans, however.

In winding up his affairs in the North Caldwell expressed to Ludlow in his Letter of September 26 some concern for the fortunes of the actors under Ludlow's command. Said Caldwell:

Had you not better say to the people that perhaps the arrangement is for them to be here in the Winter

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82 Ibid., p. 44.
83 Rusk, op. cit., p. 450.
84 Ibid.
85 Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 403-408.
but in shares - if they are eventually to go - the best thing is at once to tell them - you will necessarily have to do with a limited number of people at the closing of the concern as many will look out for situations - there is one thing certain they may rely on that I will leave them for a sharing scheme the Wheeling Theatre - so that I will not however they deserve leave them entirely out of employ - not that I shall certainly take on me to have aught to do with it - indeed I think it doubtful - but I will do the best I can for them at all events.

There is no other allusion to Wheeling in Caldwell's career, but the above would seem to indicate that he had had, or still had, some proprietary interest in the theatre in that city.

The summer and fall of 1832 witnessed the invasion by cholera of the North American continent. This epidemic with its resultant vast mortalities had considerable effect of the fortunes of Caldwell's American Theatre. By October the disease was raging in New Orleans and Caldwell's company, en route to the Crescent City, was compelled to delay their journey at Natchez. The troupe included Field, Barton, Mr. and Mrs. Muzzy, Mr. and Mrs. Gray, Scott, and Mrs. Duff—a talented aggregation which displayed its capabilities to the Natcheans from November 9 through 16. Caldwell did not linger in Natchez, however; the Louisiana Advertiser of November 8, 1832 announced his arrival in New Orleans Monday, November 5 aboard the steamer Chief Justice Marshall.

86Free, op. cit., pp. 233-34.
By November 21 the company had assembled in sufficient strength to open the Camp Street Theatre. In his announcement of the opening bill of *The Soldier's Daughter* and the first New Orleans performance of *Victorine*, Caldwell informed the play-going public that "the general stock company has been improved, and . . . it has been pronounced the best regular stock company in the union" [sic]. He also indicated he planned the same scheme of short engagements for his stars as he had followed the previous season, and listed Mrs. Duff, Barton, Scott, Mr. and Mrs. Hilson, Gouffe the Man Monkey, Forbes, Mrs. Knight, Master Burke, James Wallack, and Edwin Forrest as scheduled to appear during the season. The *Bee* of September 20 had reported that Fanny Kemble and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean had been engaged, but Caldwell did not list them and they did not appear during the season. Caldwell also promised to get up "the celebrated spectacle of CINDERELLA, with all the necessary scenery, machinery, dresses and decorations, and in a style that shall prevent its suffering by comparison with any other Theatre." To this ambitious end Caldwell had advertised in the New York papers during the summer for chorus singers to be engaged for one year at New Orleans and Cincinnati.

Despite the presence of cholera in the city, the

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87 *New Orleans Bee*, November 17, 1832; *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 21, 1832.

88 *New Orleans Bee*, July 12, 1832.
opening of the theatre was attended by a large and appreciative audience, according to the newspapers. Caldwell was described by the Advertiser as being "perfectly at home in Frank Heartall," the lead role in The Soldier's Daughter. It was an auspicious beginning to a season which was to prove to be one of the most brilliant in the ten year history of the Little Camp. True to his word Caldwell presented all the stars he had announced, with the exception of young Master Burke. Although he had listed James M. Scott as a star, he was, in fact, a regular member of the stock company this season, though he was often featured in the bills. Within a week after the opening of the theatre Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Hilson and Mrs. Mary Ann Duff had been presented. By December 5 the Bee was able to observe: "The American theatre, at the present moment, not only presents a livelier appearance but holds out greater attractions than have ever, heretofore, been exhibited to our play-going community, so early in the season." The newspaper went on to commend Caldwell for his "unceasing exertions to gratify the public," and pointed out to him the wisdom of maintaining a good stock company and offered the view that "if the manager of the principal western theatre, supposed that the citizens of New Orleans, Louisville and Cincinnati would always fill his houses, unless he displayed the same liberality which characterized the administration of his northern contemporaries, experience... has now corrected the error." The Bee then proceeded to
extol the virtues of Barton, Scott, Mrs. Duff and Hilson, all of whom had been appearing at the theatre just previously.

Mrs. Knight followed Mrs. Duff as the reigning female star in late December. The latter lady was tremendously popular in New Orleans and throughout the West. She was admired as much for the circumspection of her private life as for the talent she displayed in public. During this autumn a rumor reached the East that she had perished in the cholera epidemic, and New Orleans newspapers were happy to notice in their columns her vital presence on the local stage. 89

George Holland returned to New Orleans in late January, apparently by way of Nashville, where the Bee of December 8 reported him playing. 90 On the first of January, 1833, Caldwell presented Lamorah!, but it proved to be unattractive and only played a single performance. Caldwell's other Cincinnati and Louisville attraction, Monsieur Gouffe, also was presented in early January, along with another novelty act, a Mr. Fletcher who exhibited statues. Caldwell no doubt was deferring to popular tastes in the presentation of such novelties—he had even enlisted the services of the pugilist O'Rourk at a performance on

89 New Orleans Emporium, December 14, 1832; Louisiana Advertiser, December 15, 29, 1832.

90 This would seem to indicate a later season at Nashville than existing records indicate. See supra, p. 185.
"To give variety to his patrons and to secure all the talent that offers," Caldwell brought back Mrs. Duff, the Hilsons and Forbes in repeat engagements in mid-January. On January 15 Forbes was starred in a dramatization of Bulwer-Lytton's novel *Eugene Aram*. According to James Rees, the dramatization was made by Caldwell—apparently his sole excursion into the realm of dramaturgy. Horse spectacles made possible by the employment of the stud from Brown's Circus were offered in early February, and in mid-month, after four months preparation and "unaided by stars" Caldwell brought forth the operatic spectacle of *Cinderella*. The *Argus* of February 22 praised the production for its ingenuity and splendor in machinery and decorations. The music was a hodge-podge of pieces from "the most famous composers, both French and Italian," played by an orchestra considerably increased in size for the occasion. While the singing was "not entitled to much praise . . . since the company was not selected for operatic pieces . . . Messrs. Caldwell and Thorne are entitled to the first rank as musicians in their company,"

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91 *Louisiana Advertiser*, December 22, 1832.

92 *New Orleans Bee*, January 17, 1833.

93 Rees, op. cit., p. 42. But see, also, Ludlow, op. cit., p. 405. Ludlow disparaged this literary effort and correctly doubted that it was ever acted "more than once or twice."

94 *New Orleans Argus*, February 18, 1833; *New Orleans Bee*, February 18, 1833.
said the Argus. Cinderella proved to be immensely popular and was played for a week and repeated again during the season for a total of nineteen performances. Its eleventh performance on March 5, according to the Bee of that date, was played "at the particular request of fifty ladies and gentlemen, who live a little out of town... while they may have the advantage of a moonlight night to return home."

Two popular stars appeared late in the season. James W. Wallack was engaged for late March and early April. He was assisted by Mrs. Knight, who also returned for a final engagement. On May 1 Edwin Forrest began an engagement which featured the first New Orleans performances of his vehicles Metamora and The Gladiator. With these two stars, Forrest and Wallack, the season now included the "real tragedy" of which the Bee complained there had been little up until then. The Argus of May 4 was lavish in its praise of both Caldwell and Forrest:

In these "piping times" of melting weather, when crowded assemblies are neither savory or salutary, we congratulate the manager upon winding up the campaign, which is about to terminate so honorably to his enterprise, and, we trust so advantageously to his treasury, on the engagement of the popular and admired actor [Forrest], who has so signally displayed the talents of a first rate performer, and by his liberal patronage of American authorship has exemplified his feelings of enlightened patriotism.

95 Smither, op. cit., pp. 403-405; 496.
96 New Orleans Bee, March 18, 1833.
But the fickle public's adoration of Forrest quickly switched to anger at what it regarded as a lack of respect on Forrest's part when he failed to appear before the curtain in response to repeated calls for him following his performance of May 15 in Brutus, played for the benefit of Mrs. Russell. Their irritation was increased by the fact that Forrest had failed to respond to a similar call at his own benefit on May 13. The Argus of May 18 explained the first occasion thus:

It is true a call was made for Mr. Forrest, on the night of his benefit; but before he could prepare himself to appear, the call was desisted in, and a kind of pledge given, unauthorized by him, that he would address the house on Wednesday night/Mrs. Russell's benefit night./.

Forrest himself, in a communication to the same issue of the Argus, excused his non-appearance on Wednesday, the second occasion, as follows:

After the arduous and exhausting duties of the evening, and many unjust and ungenerous sentiments having been circulated concerning the motive of my non-appearance, I beg leave respectfully to assure the public, that my immediate retirement from the Theatre was owing to fatigue, and to my ignorance that, on an occasion of this kind, such an expression of feeling was with propriety, to be expected by any one but the beneficiary.

Forrest then went on to "disclaim all intention of disrespect," but in a postscript said:

It is said the announcement of my appearance for the benefit of Mrs. R. was considered a pledge that I should address the audience. I sanctioned no such pledge--nor was such pledge intended to be understood in the announcement. E. F.

No doubt Forrest knew that he was expected to appear on the
night of Mrs. Russell's benefit—such information would hardly have been kept from him in light of the temper of the town—but he held to his own particular principles in the matter.

Caldwell was present in the theatre during the second uproar, ironically enough for the purpose of delivering Collins' *Ode On The Passions*, but it was Dick Russell who had to bear the brunt of the audience's wrath.

Mr. Russell did not address the audience at all. He came out, doubtless with that intention, and by the usual bows and gestures endeavored to obtain a hearing; but the Forrest address folks would not accord it to him.97

And poor Russell was to reap the bitter harvest of the public's continued rancor the next season as well. The theatre had no more than opened for the 1833-1834 season, when the subject of Forrest's and Russell's conduct of the previous season was raised again. "Pro Bono Publico," in writing to the *Bee* of November 27, 1833, recalled Forrest's "cold contempt" and reminded the New Orleans public that it had "raised, nourished, and helped with ardor, Mr. E. Forrest [sic] to his present elevation." The same writer in a second letter to the *Bee* of November 29, 1833 softened his attack on Forrest somewhat due to his learning, as he said, that Forrest had a constitutional timidity of appearing before an audience to deliver his own sentiments." "Pro Bono Publico" therefore shifted his attack to Russell.

97 New Orleans Argus, May 20, 1833.
His recollection is the best record of the precise events of the previous year:

The public will doubtless recollect, that on the night in question, Mr. Forest, for the second time, refused to obey the call of the audience. After a considerable time spent in confusion and fruitless expectations of his appearance, Mr. Caldwell appeared to recite "Collins' Ode on the spassion." The spectators, very justly, I think would not hear him. After a further space, amidst "confusion more confounded," Mrs. Russell came on to commence the after-piece; the audience immediately gave her one or two rounds of applause, thereby plainly evincing that they had no offence against her; and . . . the lady so understood it, and very properly retired.

We come now to the immediate and grand cause of offence offered by Mr. Russell. He rushed on the stage, and in language more suited to a Beer Garden than an American Theatre, demanded, with clenched hand, shaking it repeatedly in the faces of a larger assemblage of ladies than, I believe, ever visited the house on any one occasion before, "What had Mrs. R. done that she should not be heard? . . . Had Mr. R. contented himself with simply stating that he could not find Mr. Forest, the whole blame or odium would have rested there. . . . The public will expect an answer or apology.

Forrest seems to have chosen to ignore the threat implied in the above as well as the one alluded to by the Advertiser of March 19, 1834 when it reported it had learned "with regret and indignation," that Forrest was to be called to account for his insult of the past year at that evening's performance. The evening seems to have passed without undue incident, however, and Forrest sailed through this engagement for Russell and Rowe, as he had the previous year for Caldwell, secure in his national prestige.

The final weeks of the season of 1832-1833 found additional stars appearing. Madame Brichta of the Italian
Opera arrived and thus permitted the theatre to perform Cinderella with a real singer in the title role. The Ravels, celebrated acrobats, played as the chief attraction during the week of May 17 while the stock company played comedies and farces. Noah Ludlow made one appearance in support of his wife's benefit on May 9. She had been a member of the company this season despite her husband's withdrawal from theatrical life to engage in business. Ludlow's one appearance on the boards of the American Theatre was just about a month prior to his abandonment of his life in the business world and his return to the theatre. 98

On May 28, 1833 Caldwell performed at his own benefit and announced to the New Orleans public his retirement from the theatre. It was a festive evening. Caldwell performed his favorite role of Belcour in The West Indian, a role in which the Argus said he was unrivaled. "We have understood," said the newspaper, "that his representations of this part, in Dublin and Liverpool, previous to his arrival in the United States, was received by judges with the greatest approbation." 99 The other entertainments of the evening consisted of a display of the acrobatic talents of the Ravel family, including Jean Ravel's celebrated back somersault, George Holland singing

98 Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 403 and 408.

99 New Orleans Argus, May 27, 1833.
"Assembly Ball," and the pantomime ballet, The Invisible
Harlequin. Jackson Gray was listed in the cast of The West
Indian as having "volunteered for this night only, being
his last appearance on any stage," but as he was a member
of Russell and Rowe's company the next season, this was no
doubt merely a device to attract his admirers to the per­
formance and swell the house.

Inevitably Caldwell made a speech. While the address
is known to have been copied by at least one newspaper of the
day,\(^{100}\) it does not survive in toto. The following fragment
will give some indication of the nature of Caldwell's
words, however:

I am about to withdraw from management,
perhaps forever; and have to recommend to your
notice my successors--not strangers, but
gentlemen long known to you--Messrs. Russell and
Rowe. I have leased my Theatre to these gentle­
men for five years; and if that may be called
industry which for fourteen years has been used
to render the American Theatre enviable in the
eyes of the Dramatic world, and which, cheered
by your smiles and encouraged by your munifi­
cence, has made it one of the first dramatic
establishments in the land, I may venture to
assert confidently, that it will lose nothing
in the hands of my successors, whose talent and
whose industry have GROWN WITH MY GROWTH, and who
will NEVER swerve from the intended course of their
predecessor.\(^{101}\)

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\(^{100}\) The Daily Picayune of August 2, 1837 carries a
request for a copy of the newspaper--lost from the files
of the journal which had originally published this address--
without, however, identifying that newspaper.

\(^{101}\) As quoted in Handbill, "To the Masters, Pilots,
Engineers and Boatmen of the West," signed by Dick Russell
and dated New Orleans, December 10, 1836, Theatre Collection,
Harvard University Library.
Caldwell's retirement and plans for the future were noted in the *Argus* of May 27. It was reported that, while he had leased his theatrical circuit of New Orleans, Nashville, and Cincinnati to Russell and Rowe, he had not wholly retired from the theatre:

Mr. Caldwell has the intention of visiting the North, and Europe this summer, and of returning in the fall. And although he retires as manager, he will not entirely abandon his profession. He will select a certain number of characters, (his own and the public's favorites) with which he will continue occasionally to perform in the different theatres, and by restricting himself to those few he will be enabled to render them more perfect.

There then followed a lengthy resume of Caldwell's theatrical activities--chiefly as a manager and builder of theatres--and an encomium to him as a force for progress in the American section of New Orleans through his decision to build the American Theatre there in 1822 and his subsequent purchase of real estate in the area.

The decision to pass over the mantle of his theatrical empire to others was not made impetuously by Caldwell. Nearly eighteen months before he had written the following letter to Dick Russell:

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New Orleans, Dec. 16th, 1831.

DEAR RUSSELL:

I had long intended, as a kind of legacy for long services, that you and Rowe should be my successors; since you left me I had fixed on Rowe, and told him so; and perhaps the most fortunate act of your life has been the writing of your last letter.

(Signed) J. H. CALDWELL.
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Russell at the time of this letter was managing the Richmond Hill Theatre in New York, and perhaps had written Caldwell requesting to be allowed to return to his former position as stage manager of Caldwell's company. It may have been the above reply that prompted him to rejoin the company in Cincinnati that summer.

The lease which Richard Russell and James Simon Rowe signed with James Henry Caldwell gave them possession of the American Theatre, New Orleans, the New Cincinnati Theatre and the New Nashville Theatre for five years beginning June 1, 1833. They were also to have the use of all the scenery, furniture, stock wardrobe, books and music contained within those establishments, with the agreement that they would be returned to Caldwell at the expiration of the lease, along with whatever replacements of them which had been made during that time. Not included in the lease were the stoves in the New Cincinnati Theatre, the private house adjoining the New Nashville Theatre, and Caldwell's private theatrical wardrobe. Caldwell was, also, to retain possession of the gambling license granted him by the State of Louisiana. Russell and Rowe were to take over the unexpired apprenticeship of one Horace


104 As in past years, this year Caldwell again sold the gaming license of the American Theatre to an outside party, Pierre Pradet. See Notarial Acts of Carlile Pollock, op. cit., May 23, 1833.
Eversell, who probably was apprenticed to the scenic artist. In the event of the sale of a lot next to the American Theatre on which stood the painting room, Caldwell was to assume the cost of building a similar structure on the theatre's lot. Caldwell was to have the right to pull down as much of the gas house as might be necessary to build a street from Camp through to St. Charles on the south, or uptown, side of the theatre. For these privileges Russell and Rowe were to pay an aggregate of $12,000 annually at the rate of $500 a month for the six months from July to December and $1,500 a month during the months of January to June.

Caldwell's farewell to the stage and his relinquishment of his theatrical empire to others marks a definite turning point in his career as a manager. Behind him lay fourteen years of successful effort to establish himself as the leading entrepreneur of theatrical activity in the West and Southwest. He was the owner of three theatres, the employer of a first-rate stock company, and the promoter of some of the best talents of star rank in the American theatre of his day. Nearly all of his time and energies had been devoted during this period to the establishment of this empire. Now, having just reached the age of forty, James Caldwell was looking forward to new and different enterprises to which he could apply his imagination and industry. During the next ten years he would, in some respects, achieve even greater heights in the theatre,
but the demands of his numerous non-theatrical activities would divide his attention, consume his time, and demand his creative talents. At the end of the next ten years he would again retire from the theatre--this time, permanently.
CHAPTER V
1833-1835

In the light of subsequent events, Caldwell's retirement from theatrical life was later viewed with considerable cynicism by those who had cause to wish that that retirement had been as final as Caldwell's announcement had indicated. Noah Ludlow, in later years commenting on Caldwell's intentions said:

I have always had doubts of the sincerity of Mr. Caldwell when he declared, as before stated, his determination of abandoning the profession of the stage forever. I considered it then, and do now (/in 1880/), nothing more than a ruse,—a stroke of policy, with an eye to the future. Mr. Caldwell was ambitious to become president of the "Gas Bank" at New Orleans, of which he was already a member of the board of directors;¹ an ambition not censurable, and a position which he well deserved, inasmuch as he had been one of the most active and efficient persons in establishing the gas-works of that city, and in obtaining a charter for that bank, the offspring of the gas company. It was not long ere this ambition was gratified. His situation as president of that bank gave him influence with the directors, sufficient to enable him to procure large loans from the bank; and to those loans he had recourse when his own treasury became exhausted. He mortgaged the ground and the improvements, as far as the latter had advanced, and by these means,


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in the short period of time as before stated, he erected in New Orleans the largest theatre in the United States at that time.

That Caldwell had the ambitions and plans that Ludlow accuses him of is highly likely. On March 1, 1833 Governor A. B. Roman had signed into law an act of the legislature which granted to Caldwell the exclusive right to introduce and vend gas light in the city of New Orleans for twenty-five years. And a week later, with Jane Placide's power of attorney, he purchased in her name the property on which he was to erect the St. Charles Theatre. Beyond the close proximity of dates there seems to be little relationship between the two events, however.

By his own statement Caldwell had no intentions of retiring from the arenas of theatre or business. In a letter written to a Mr. C. B. Smith, in which he recounted the major events of his career up to 1833, Caldwell concluded:

Mine has been a busy life. . . . I have not yet quitted its busy scenes for private retirement, or I might issue 3 vols. of memoirs which to say the least of them, would I am sure prove an incentive to exertion in my brothers of my profession.

The letter had been written by Caldwell at the request of John Tayleure, a picture dealer and book seller in London.

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2Argus, March 11, 1833.


4Letter from James Caldwell to C. B. Smith, op. cit.
Caldwell wrote the letter while himself in London. He had joined Jane Placide there probably sometime during the early part of the summer of 1833, although this is not certain. Jane had left New Orleans for Liverpool on May 5 in the ship Tallahasse in which James Wallack had also travelled as a passenger. Her reasons for making the long voyage are not clear. It may be that she undertook the journey as a therapeutic for the illness which had beset her for the past few years and which was to take her life two years later. On October 7, 1833 she made her first appearance at Covent Garden in one of her favorite roles, Elvira in Pizarro. This fact was reported by her in a letter to John Tayleure, apparently written in response to a request by Tayleure for a lithographic portrait of her. Jane responded that she had no such "resemblance of myself but will send you one from America." If the promise was ever kept the picture has been lost, since no portrait of the lovely actress seems to be extant. Tayleure apparently had given her portraits of himself and his wife and, as Jane noted, "different portraits of one whom I never saw, but venerate from the resemblance I can trace to my ever regretted Mother." This is probably a reference to Jane's maternal grandmother, Mrs. Frighton, who was a distinguished vocal performer at

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5 Argus, May 8, 1833.
6 Letter from Jane Placide to John Tayleure, October 21, 1833, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.
7 Ibid.
both Covent Garden and Drury Lane.

Aside from the obvious pleasures associated with visiting his native country in company with the lovely Miss Placide, Caldwell's presence in England can be explained as a double business trip. He had come to England, as was still customary with American managers of the time, to recruit actors for his theatres, and he had come to purchase supplies and equipment for the gas plant he proposed to build to fulfill the conditions of his state charter. But while in London Caldwell again took advantage of the various good offices of John Tayleure, as the following communication indicates:

My Dear Tayleure

The Arms of the Rowe family you took so much pains in finding are now at the engravers who says they are correct and will make a fine appearance from the Seal to which they are now being transferred.

Yours truly
James H. Caldwell

London
228 Picadilly
Oct. 6th 1833.

On December 29, 1833 James Caldwell returned to New Orleans from Liverpool in the steamboat Tallahassee, in company with several actors which the Bee of the following day reported had been engaged for the theatre. Caldwell may have acted as agent for Russell and Rowe during his sojourn in England. Possibly he engaged for

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8Letter from James H. Caldwell to John Tayleure, October 6, 1833, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.
them John Sinclair, a singer and the father of the notorious Catherine Sinclair, who was to receive national attention in her divorce suit against her husband Edwin Forrest. Sinclair did not arrive in the same ship with Caldwell, however, as he began his engagement at the Camp Street Theatre on December 16, before Caldwell returned. The English vocalist, Mrs. Austin, may very well have come to New Orleans with Caldwell, as no doubt did Jane Placide, and these may be the actors to whom the Bee referred since Mrs. Austin appeared for the first time on January 13, 1834 and Jane Placide on the 9th. Two actors known to have been engaged by Caldwell while in England were Charles Hodges, the vocalist and Miss Nelson, both of the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, who made their first appearances at the Camp Street Theatre this winter, according to the Mercantile Advertiser of February 21.

Caldwell made one contract while in England that was not made for the benefit of his lessees Russell and Rowe, one which lends some support to the notion that he already had the plans for the St. Charles Theatre in mind when he sailed for England. The Bee of December 27, 1833 reported:

Mlle. Celeste has entered into an arrangement with Caldwell to pay a professional visit to America to perform in New Orleans and other places, for twelve months, and to receive 4,000 pounds for her services.

When Celeste finally made her appearance it was for Caldwell at the St. Charles in December of 1835, and not for Russell
and Rowe, indicating that Caldwell may have spent some of his time in England lining up talent for the St. Charles. It is equally possible, of course, that the contract was made on a managerial basis with Caldwell merely serving as Celeste's booking agent in the United States.

During the twenty-four months of 1834 and 1835 Caldwell remained true to his statement contained in his announcement of his retirement from the theatre. He performed occasionally as a star at the American Theatre and assisted at the benefit performances accorded Thomas A. Cooper and John Howard Payne, but most of his time and energy went into furthering his non-theatrical interests. These interests were business and politics. While Caldwell's activity in these two areas—and in the theatre—was often contemporaneous, each of these enterprises will be discussed as separate entities but with occasional reference to their inter-relationship.

There is no question that Caldwell's decision to retire from the theatre, even temporarily, was a direct result of his success in obtaining from the Louisiana Legislature an exclusive franchise for the manufacture and sale of illuminating gas in the city of New Orleans. The bill which Governor Roman signed into law on March 1, 1833 was a simple but liberal one.⁹ Its preamble recalled the act of

February 7, 1829 which incorporated the New Orleans Gas-light Company and noted the dissolution of that company for its failure to comply with the section of its charter requiring it to supply gas lighting within three years after incorporation. The five provisions of the present charter were:

SECT. 1-- . . . That James H. Caldwell, of the City of New Orleans, his Successors and Assigns, shall have and be entitled to the sole and exclusive privilege of introducing and vending Gas-lights in the City of New Orleans and its Faubourgs, and particularly the Faubourgs St. Mary and Marigny, for and during the term of Twenty-five years from and after the passage of this Act, to such persons or bodies corporate who may voluntarily choose to contract for the same.

SECT. 2-- . . . That in order to enable the said James H. Caldwell, his Successors or Assigns, to carry this Act into effect, he or they shall be authorised to lay pipes, at his or their own expense, in any of the streets of the said City or Faubourgs, where the same may be required; provided, the same shall not interfere with, or any way damage, the pipes laid, or to be laid, for supplying said City or Faubourgs with water; and provided further, that the same shall be laid under the superintendence of the Surveyor of the City for the time being, in such manner as may produce the least possible inconvenience to the City or its inhabitants; and provided also, that the streets shall be restored to their original state.

SECT. 3-- . . . That in case said James H. Caldwell, his Successors or Assigns, shall not put in operation the said Gas-lights within two years from the passage of this Act, then and in that case, the present grant, and the powers and privileges herein contained, shall cease and be forfeited.

SECT. 4-- . . . That if any person or persons shall wilfully, by any means whatever, injure or destroy any part of the Gas-pipes

10 Ibid.
constructed by said Company under this Act, 
or any of their works, buildings, or machines, 
such person or persons so offending, shall 
each of them be liable for all damages occasioned 
thereby; and may furthermore be proceeded 
against by indictment, at any time within 
twelve months after such offence committed, and 
be punished by a fine not exceeding One Thousand 
Dollars, or imprisonment not exceeding Twelve 
Months, or both, as the discretion of the Court. 
SECT. 5 - - That this Act shall be in 
force from and after its passage.\(1\)

Although the Act did not itself so state, an article in 
the Argus of March 9, 1833 announced that "the capital may 
be increased to $500,000." Caldwell, said the paper, would 
begin construction of the works as early as possible and 
would begin by:

\(\ldots\) laying one mile of pipes, extending 
from his theatre along Chartres street to the 
French theatre, with branches through Canal 
and other of the principal streets. To effect 
this a sum of from fifty to perhaps seventy- 
five thousand dollars will be required, and 
within that extent it has been ascertained that, 
including the Camp street theatre, the Exchange 
and other public houses, near three thousand 
lights will be taken.

The Argus invited the particular attention of northern 
capitalists to an attractive business opportunity and urged 
the municipal authorities to contract for the lighting of 
the city streets by gas.

With his characteristic industry Caldwell set to 
work immediately to promote the project. Widespread accept-
ance of the idea of gas lighting by the public and working 
capital were the two most pressing needs of Caldwell. In

\(1^{11}\)Ibid.
the sympathetic pages of the Argus he set out to secure both. In lengthy articles which appeared on May 5 and 6, Caldwell supplied information which sought to prove the healthful effects of gas lighting and its economic advantages over all other known forms of illumination. On May 9 he sought to prove that the opinion that gas lighting produced "disagreeable and noxious" fumes was false. From the first it was clear that Caldwell did not himself have the financial resources necessary to effect so great an enterprise as the establishment of a large utility company. Through the Argus of May 4 he appealed for funds:

The capital required to prosecute to completion the lighting of the whole of the city, say ten miles of pipes, is estimated at the sum of 100,000 dollars; and with this capital the whole can be completed within three years. Mr. Caldwell cannot, himself, invest so large an amount at once, in this undertaking; and, consequently to facilitate his operation, and with a view to the public benefit, he is desirous of disposing of one half of his privilege. He has very properly given the preference of the purchase to the city, and a committee of the city council has been appointed and, we believe, has had one or more interviews with him on the subject. It is greatly to be hoped . . . that the council will make the proposed investment. Unless they do, Mr. Caldwell will sell either at the north or in Europe.

One . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . One . . . . weighty reason can be advanced, why the city should, at once, become co-proprietor with Mr. Caldwell. It is this:--the Commercial Bank will soon be in operation, and that institution must almost immediately commence laying their pipes for furnishing the city with water. An arrangement may be made between the two companies, to their mutual advantage, and a saving of one half of the expense of laying the pipes made.
According to the *Argus* of May 9 Caldwell had offered to sell to the city one-half of his corporate rights and privileges for $20,000. The *Argus* not only thought this a reasonable figure, but anticipated great returns on the investment, citing the high premium demanded by gas company stock in other cities and the fact that the city would benefit in savings over the present expensive system of lighting the city streets with oil lamps. Moreover, argued the *Argus*, the capital to be invested would not cost a cent, but would come from a bond issue which could then be sold at a profit of, perhaps, five per cent.

In the beginning Caldwell may have planned only to use the gas generating plant which served the American Theatre, as the March 9, 1833 *Argus* article announcing Caldwell's plans to lay pipes from the theatre to the Vieux Carre seems to indicate. And, indeed, on April 5 the *Argus* noted that a pipe had been laid across Camp street to the Garrick's Head Hotel, owned by Caldwell, and a specimen lamp put up and lighted in front of the theatre. But, although the city council did not accept his proposal to become a partner in the gas business, sometime during the spring of 1833 before he sailed for Europe, Caldwell must have raised sufficient capital to encourage him to make the trip to England to buy equipment for gas works of a capacity more suited to the size of the enterprise he envisioned.\(^1\)\(^2\) Within two months after his return

\(^1\)\(^2\) It may have been that Caldwell prevailed upon
to New Orleans, ground was broken for the erection of the
gas works on the square bounded by St. Mary and St. Marks,
Gravier and Perdido streets, to roughly the site occupied
today by the Veterans Administration Hospital. A month
later, March 24, 1834, the Advertiser reported that Cald­
well had received, in the ships Chieftain and Asia "all
his pipes, apparatus &c. making three hundred tons, with
a foreman and workmen, for erecting the first section of
his Gas Works, which are expected to be completed by the
first of July." There was considerable confidence, on
the part of the press at least, that Caldwell would reach
this goal. As the Mercantile Advertiser of April 5
expressed it, "The magnitude of the undertaking required
a man of no ordinary enterprise, and we feel justified in
asserting that JAMES H. CALDWELL is that man." By April
17 Caldwell was able to announce in the pages of the
Louisiana Advertiser, the conditions for the sale of gas
to the general public. Cost would be seven dollars per
1,000 cubic feet, with an expected average consumption of
3,000 cubic feet per annum. Bills were payable monthly.
Each consumer was to be furnished with a meter at his
expense; prices of meters were twelve dollars for three

James Rowe to accept a "paper" purchase of some property
owned by Caldwell for $75,000. (See Notarial Acts of
William Boswell, op. cit., May 29, 1833.) This act of sale
was abrogated ten months later (see Notarial Acts, Boswell,
March 11, 1834) after Caldwell had started the gas works.

13 Louisiana Advertiser, February 20, 1834.
lights, fifteen for five. The company would provide a service pipe to the dwelling, but the consumer was to provide all fittings, branch pipes, burners, etc. The company was to have the liberty to read meters once a month. By June 3 it was clear that gas service would not be instituted on the first of July as had been promised, but encouraging progress on the construction of the works had been made. All the plant buildings were up to the roof and ready to be slated. The Advertiser of that date called attention to the roof of the main building which had, it said, "an appearance of strength, beyond any roof of wood; it is wrought iron, composed of 279 pieces, and not an inch of timber is raised in any part of it, it is really beautiful to look at." Also, being built was a cistern of cast iron to hold 120,000 gallons of water, the foundations for which had required 100,000 bricks, according to the paper. Working conditions at the plant must have been something less than pleasant because of the close proximity of the Charity Hospital. The Advertiser, after a visit to the gas works on June 16, reported a "horrid stench all around the outward walls of the hospital, issuing from under the walls at certain instances are gutters of feculent matter, decayed vegetable and animal substances... sufficient to poison the whole atmosphere."

While the generating plant was going up, other
workmen were busy laying pipes to service potential customers. A twelve inch main pipe was laid from the plant to Camp Street by June 3, and service for two miles was promised by August 1, another promise which the company was unable to fulfill, however. The necessary digging of trenches in the city streets to receive the gas pipes created considerable hostility on the part of the populace, particularly those who had the misfortune to have to pick themselves out of one of the muddy holes on a dark night. Eventually Caldwell was petitioned by "Many Citizens" to close up these holes at night. One irate citizen demanded:

We take the liberty of requesting . . . the Council to pass resolutions requiring . . . the proprietor of the gas works to cause a barrier to be placed across the trenches he may dig for the purpose of laying his pipes, so as to prevent blind horses from running their drunken Jehu's into them, and overturning their cargoes of honest citizens into the mud.

In digging the trench in Canal Street between St. Charles and Carondelet the workmen uncovered a large box of several human skeletons. The speculation was that this was perhaps the site of the burying ground for the old Spanish fort which had stood at the corner of Canal and Magazine street a block away.

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14 Ibid., June 3, 1834.
15 New Orleans Bee, November 20, 1834.
16 Louisiana Advertiser, November 14, 1834.
17 Ibid., August 26, 1834.
Actual production of gas did not take place until August 6, 1834 and then only on a trial basis. Two nights later Orleanians were treated to a simultaneous display of light from the Theatre in Camp Street and the Exchange in Chartres Street:

At the Theatre, a figure of Neptune's trident, was lit at the top of the flag staff—in the front, 1776 was formed in Gas, and produced a light by which a person could see to read distinctly, at 200 yards distance. At the Exchange the effect was no less pleasing and satisfactory. The light was so brilliant and clear that persons passing within 60 yards of it, could easily be distinguished from the corner of Customhouse street. The experiment is now proved; and, those before skeptical, are now most loud in its praise. Without doubt in a very short time preparations will be made by our city authorities to light all New Orleans with Gas.

The author of this last prediction was perhaps more impressionable than certain members of the city council and the mayor of New Orleans, Denis Prieur. Considerable time was to elapse before New Orleans' streets were to be blessed with this modern miracle of illumination. And, in the meantime, Caldwell had had other difficulties with the city government. Sometime prior to April 10, 1834 he had applied to the council for a loan of $20,000 on corporation bonds to enable him to prosecute his gas lighting design. Although the council finally approved

18 Ibid., August 7, 1834.
19 Ibid., August 12, 1834. See, also, Bee, August 11, 1834 and Argus, August 12, 1834.
20 Ibid., April 10, 1834.
the loan, it was only after considerable opposition by two of its Creole members, Messrs. Bermudez and Gaiennie. The latter gentleman was the more vocal of the two. He objected to aiding Caldwell on the grounds that the theatre manager was "a bird of passage, who only remains amongst us for a portion of the year, and then migrates to spend the dollars he has amassed, in the north." 21

As far as Caldwell's activity in the construction of a gas works went, the councilman charged that Caldwell only made "a parade of placing his pipes along the streets, the better to obtain the loan he petitioned for."

The matter dragged on into the summer of 1834. The city attorney offered objections to the transaction on the grounds that the security which Caldwell offered for the loan was in the form of property already mortgaged. 22 The council overcame this objection by resolving that the security should be accepted, provided Caldwell produce a renunciation by his wife to all claim on the mortgaged property. 23 Finally, on July 26, 1834, an agreement was

21 Ibid.

22 Mercantile Advertiser, May 27, 1834.

23 Argus, May 29, 1834. Louisiana's community property laws required Caldwell to secure such a renunciation, or his wife's consent, whenever he transacted business of this kind. He finally removed this annoyance in 1838 by obtaining from her a general renunciation. See Notarial Acts of William Christy, op. cit., November 27, 1838.
reached: Caldwell received twenty $1,000 corporation bonds, with dividend warrants, payable semi-annually, and with an interest rate of five per cent, for which he mortgaged to the city the American Theatre and its lot and the gas works and its lot. He was to have five years to repay the loan. Since Jane Placide actually owned the latter property, she appeared at the transaction to give her consent to the mortgage of it. Maria Carter Caldwell's renunciation was annexed.

With some of his most immediate financial problems solved, Caldwell was, as has been indicated above, able to proceed with some alacrity towards completing the gas works and laying pipe. But it was November, and not October 1 as had been promised, before anything like commercial production of gas was achieved:

GAS WORKS.--The six fire companies, with their engines, assisted again yesterday in filling the tank at the Gas Works. The crowd of spectators that stood watching during the morning was very great, and every one appeared to be highly delighted with the neat appearance of the works. The great tank will hold about 140,000 gallons of water, and is now about one-third full. Preparations are already making to furnish gas and now that the enterprise is so far advanced, we hope our citizens will come forward and order the light for their stores, counting rooms and homes. Bishop's large hotel is to be immediately lighted by it, and we hope soon to see it in the Exchange.

Caldwell's single ownership and operation of the


25Louisiana Advertiser, November 3, 1824.
New Orleans Gas Light Company came to an end when he decided to capitalize the company more heavily by sale of stock. In a letter which appeared in the Bee of November 17, 1834, Caldwell invited subscription to a capital stock of $500,000, stating his desire "of more rapidly extending to the inhabitants of this city and its faubourgs the great benefits of Gas Light, the which to do thoroughly will require a much larger capital than my individual means can at the present moment enable me to control."

Commissioners appointed to open the books of subscription included such prominent American businessmen as Samuel J. Peters, Glendy Burke, James Freret, George Eustis, and Richard O. Pritchard. The books were opened on November 24, closed on the 28th and then re-opened with considerable fan-fare on December 9 to remain open until the 31st. One reason for the extension of time was the hope that the city council would subscribe for 500 shares of the stock, despite Mayor Prieur's veto of the original resolution to make such a purchase. Prieur had assigned as his reasons for the veto the penurious state of the city treasury and his conviction that the corporation had already sufficiently aided Caldwell "in ceding to him the right ... of his furnishing lights for the city, and in loaning him a sum of twenty-nine thousand dollars." The

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26 *New Orleans Bee*, December 9, 1834 and *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 28 and December 12, 1834.

27 *New Orleans Bee*, December 9, 1834.
veto was not a popular one with the press. The Bee of December 30 presented a lengthy report made to the council by Dr. McFarlane, the subcommittee chairman to whom the purchase question had been referred and a staunch champion of Caldwell in the council. McFarlane in recommending the purchase to the council, lauded Caldwell who, "after twice crossing the Atlantic in the prosecution of this object, /had/ commenced the stupendous undertaking... /and/ substantiated its entire practicability." "Mr. Caldwell," said McFarlane, "has voluntarily transferred to a stock company directed by commissioners... the present works and his charter... at their original cost, $85,000, and all that he demands as a recompense... is a bonus of 500 shares of the stock, to be paid for out of the excess of profits over and above 8 per cent per annum dividend." McFarlane's committee recommended that the 500 shares be purchased by the mayor immediately and paid for with city bonds given for thirty years bearing five per cent annual interest.

McFarlane also urged the negotiation of an immediate contract with the company for lighting the city streets with gas. Caldwell had already, with the help of the city bonds he had borrowed, put up lamps in Chartres Street from Canal Street to the Exchange. 28 On the basis of this successful experiment McFarlane, and most of the

28 Louisiana Advertiser, December 19 and 20, 1834.
city's newspapers, now asked that the rest of the city's streets be so lighted. Caldwell himself was now in a position to bring considerable pressure to bear on the council for the negotiation of such a contract, since he was by this time a member of that same city council. Before continuing with the fortunes of the gas company it is necessary to make note of Caldwell's entry into the political arena.

The Mercantile Advertiser of March 19, 1834 carried the following brief announcement:

We are authorized to announce JAMES H. CALDWELL, Esq., a candidate for Alderman of the sixth ward at the ensuing election.

In subsequent issues of the daily newspapers Caldwell and James Freret were listed as recommended candidates for this post, but after March 25 Caldwell's name disappeared from the notices. An explanation for this withdrawal appeared in a card which Caldwell inserted in the Louisiana Advertiser of April 5:

To the Electors of the Sixth Ward

GENTLEMEN--I stand before you as a candidate for alderman and willingly would I have run the risk of your suffrages, but I am a petitioner to the Council for a loan, to assist me in a very heavy enterprise for the city's ultimate benefit, viz: the Gas Works now being erected, and as it unfortunately happened, that the result of the petition cannot now transpire before the election, and uncertain as I am of its success, I cannot conscientiously serve if elected, standing as an applicant for a loan. Therefore, fellow citizens, accept my gratitude for your intended favors, and suffer me to withdraw myself as a
candidate, whilst I remain, as I have always been, your obliged and obedient servant,

JAMES H. CALDWELL.

New Orleans, April 4, 1834.

On April 7 Freret and John Macready, Caldwell's replacement, were elected.

In November one of the aldermanic seats from the sixth ward again became vacant on the council due to the resignation of James Freret. Caldwell was again proposed for the office. He encountered some opposition in the candidacy of Thomas Banks. In a communication to the columns of the Bee of November 7 "Many Citizens of the 6th Ward" in supporting Banks' cause said of Caldwell:

Mr. Caldwell . . . may be a deserving man . . . but can his pretensions be said to be equal to those of Mr. Banks.

The present situation of our city, demands that our representative should not alone be free from personal views of self aggrandizement on entering the council but that they should be above the suspicion of interested and personal motives. It is equally necessary, that they should be taken from the body of the citizens, and not from a clan of interested men, who are ever on the alert to turn a public employment to their own, or to the advantage of their immediate partisans. Whether Mr. Caldwell be obnoxious to either of these objections we leave it to others to decide.

And the same signatories in a letter to the same journal of November 10--now compelled to abandon their advocacy of Banks because he was not a resident of the ward--now

29. *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 5, 1834. This paper gives Freret's name as "Frost," clearly a typographical error. See *Bee*, November 14, 1834 and *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 13, 1834, for other references to Freret's resignation.
supported a Myford McDougall. They expressed their continued opposition to Caldwell by describing him as "a man who is decidedly obnoxious to the great body of merchants and mechanics in our ward." But Caldwell's current popularity as the city's benefactor prevailed and he was elected with 159 votes out of 201 cast, a majority of 117. Said the Bee of November 14, in announcing the results, "As both of the gentlemen are Jackson men, we trust that the wiggies Whigs will not claim the result as a victory." But "XYZ" writing to the editor in the same issue of the paper, while admitting that Caldwell was "known to be an unwavering friend to the administration," found in Caldwell's election some peril to plebian interests. "XYZ" called attention to Caldwell's suitably humble origins as "an actor, who is known to have exercised the profession of umbrella-making, in England, to a considerable extent," but he went on to voice his suspicions of Caldwell's newly-acquired patrician sentiments. He reminded his readers that "this worthy personage established a regulation at his theatre, by which all persons who wore round jackets were excluded from the reputable part of that establishment." The editor of the Louisiana Advertiser made the following punning reference to Caldwell's election:

Mr. J. H. Caldwell has been elected Alderman of the Sixth Ward. It is to be hoped that, in consideration of the honor, he will do his constituents the service to introduce into the Council Chamber his gaslight, for it
cannot be denied that that body has much need of being enlightened.\(^\text{30}\)

But the "enlightening" of the city's streets was not to come for some months more. Not only was the resolution by the council to purchase the 500 shares of gas light stock still stalemated, but the mayor stubbornly persisted in his resistance to a contract with the gas company for the lighting of the streets. The mayor's resistance stemmed from the fact that Caldwell, when he solely owned the gas company, had charged only $25 per lamp for lighting Chartres Street. Now the company was asking $40 for the erection of each lamp plus $35 per light per year for supplying gas. Alderman Caldwell, without attempting to refute the logic of Mayor Prieur's figures, spoke glowingly of "great advantages to the city" to be derived from gas lighting and the superiority of it over the current system of lighting with oil. The council voted to persist against the mayor's objections.\(^\text{31}\) A committee of the council, appointed to ascertain the least terms on which a contract could be made, decided that the terms offered by the company were as low as the company could afford.\(^\text{32}\) On February 18, 1835 the ordinance relative to the illumination of the city with gas was finally

\(^{30}\) *Louisiana Advertiser*, November 14, 1834.

\(^{31}\) *New Orleans Bee*, January 12 and 19, 1835.

\(^{32}\) *Whig (Argus)*, January 27, 1835.
adopted. In the debate preceding the vote Alderman Caldwell, assuring the council that what he said was for the interest of the city, reminded them that "the company were no longer making an experiment . . . and did not stand in need of the assistance of the council for success." He threatened that "it was in the power of the company to deprive the city of the immense advantages which they offered, for they had their charter, and it could not be taken from them." Caldwell argued that the old oil lamps had cost $100 apiece and $45 to light, while the gas lamps were offered at $45 and gas at $35--advantages which might not obtain forever, he cautioned. After amendments assigning to the company liability for the lamps and service pipes in the event the company went bankrupt, the ordinance was passed.

But the gadfly conscience of Mayor Prieur again stung the council with its objections. The doughty mayor still was not convinced that Caldwell's price and the prices set by the company needed to be so far apart. With gentle but persistent logic he raised the questions of hidden costs of lamplighters' salaries, of maintenance, of vague language in the ordinance with respect to the ownership of equipment in the event of the company's demise, of standards of quality of the gas purchased by the city, and

33New Orleans Bee, February 20, 1835.
of the determination of the order in which streets were to be lighted and whether the company or the city had the right to designate them.\textsuperscript{34} And with that, the mayor again vetoed the ordinance.

Caldwell responded to the mayor's veto not as a member of the council, he said, but as a private citizen. He wrote a letter to the council in which he tried to refute the mayor's objections to the contract with his company.\textsuperscript{35} In explanation of the disparity in price between his former charges to the city and those proposed in the new contract, Caldwell stated:

At the time I made that offer to your honorable body, I was desirous to remove the ill-grounded opinion that New Orleans could not be lighted with gas, and therefore wished the eclat of a contract with the city, to obtain which, I put the price of the lamps and posts at a certain loss (altho' I did not think at that time the difference would be so great as upon actual experiment I have found it)--the post, frame, lantern, service pipe, burner, digging, filling and repairing pavement, costs \$40.--"To vouch this is no proof," might very truly be said; but your honorable body which had access to my books and saw the invoices, after deliberate calculations were satisfied that the actual cost had been \$40, of the lamps and posts laid--and reported accordingly, and that the same committee was satisfied that to give equal light to that in Chartres street that the gas company could not afford it at a less price than \$35 per annum.

Caldwell went on at some length to prove statistically that the gas company could not afford to experiment as he had. He also set out to prove the economic superiority of gas

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., February 27, 1835.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., March 10 and 11, 1835.
over oil lighting. He conceded that his desire to have the "eclat" of a contract with the city had lead him to serious miscalculations in the amount of loss, with the danger that the public "would take advantage of my labors and rise on the ruins of my fortune." But, "confidence gives zest to energy, success has superceded them both," and his one wish now, he said, was that the lighting contract be given the company, "before I shall cease to have any control in it." He concluded by inviting the mayor and the council as a committee of the whole to visit the gas works and determine for themselves the cost of gas to light the city.

By April 11, 1835 the Bee, for one, had become somewhat impatient with the haughty tactics of the gas company. The paper recognized the city's debt to Caldwell "for the manifest benefits he has conferred on our community and city in his 'sock and buskin' profession, his introducing gaslights, and his conduct in the city council." "We love Caldwell well," said the Bee, "but we love the public welfare more." The paper deplored the exclusive monopoly which had "practically prostrated the city corporation at the foot of this company," and appealed to Caldwell, as the chief of that company, "to see that justice be done to the city." In a not-so-veiled threat, attention was called to the action of the city corporation of Philadelphia which had passed an ordinance creating a municipally owned gas works. But on April 24 the Bee sounded an optimistic note born of
the fact that Caldwell, Joshua Baldwin and Jason Berry, being at the same time city aldermen and commissioners of the gas company, would see that in any contract justice would be done to both the company and the constituents whom they represented. The Bee, referring to the reasons for the mayor's last veto, urged that these three men serve to moderate the terms demanded by the company.

But no such compromise was to be reached for almost another year. It was March 16, 1836 before a different group of directors of the company, under the leadership of Thomas Barrett, resolved to accept a contract from the city council for lighting the public streets at the rate of $30 a lamp.36 And, in the meantime, the ambitions of the gas monopoly had taken another turn. The destruction of the United States Bank by the Jackson Administration in July of 1832 had created throughout the country a rash of state chartered banks. In the South, from fifty-one banks in 1830, the number rose to eighty-two by 1837.37 The directors of the Gas Light Company sought, and were granted by the Louisiana Legislature, a charter which enabled them to engage in banking practices. In its original application the company asked to be capitalized for one million dollars, but when the bill reached the

36 New Orleans Bee, March 16, 1836.

Senate the capital had been raised to six millions and a privilege of six branch banks had been requested.\textsuperscript{38} The company proposed as a bonus to loan money "on incontestable security" to "one or two petty projects of internal improvement," as the \textit{Bee} of March 2, 1835 disparaged the scheme.

Caldwell was the principal advocate for the company to the Senate. In a letter to Judge Samuel Moore, chairman of a Senate committee appointed to investigate the company, Caldwell based the company's request for banking privileges on its need to acquire more working capital to extend its services to a growing New Orleans and on the potential service to other Louisiana towns in assisting them to gas illumination.\textsuperscript{39} He estimated this capital need at $3,655,000. No real opposition to the bill developed in the Senate. The committee reported favorably six to four. On March 17 the bill received a perfunctory third reading,\textsuperscript{40} and on April 1, 1835 Governor E. D. White signed the act into law.

The details of the terms of this charter will not be given here, but the following list of its sections is of some interest:

1. (Section 1) The charters of 1829 and 1833

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{New Orleans Bee}, March 2, 1835.
\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}, March 17, 1835.
\textsuperscript{40}\textit{Ibid.}, March 18, 1835.
creating the other two New Orleans Gas Light companies were annulled.

2. (Section 2) James H. Caldwell, Thomas Banks, Joshua Baldwin, T. C. Cash, George M. Lee, R. F. Canfield, Jason Berry, J. R. Sterrett, and William Debuys were declared commissioners.

3. (Section 3) The New Orleans main bank was capitalized at six million dollars and branch banks were established at Alexandria, Port Hudson, Springfield, Napoleonville and Harrisonburg.

4. (Section 5) The state treasurer was authorized to subscribe to shares not to exceed $100,000 and the New Orleans city treasurer to shares in the same amount.

5. (Section 40) Caldwell was to convey to the new company: the square of ground upon which the gas works stood together with all the buildings, works, conduits, pipes, machinery and materials. In return Caldwell was to receive from the company bonds in the amount of $120,000 bearing interest at five per cent per annum in sums of $1,000 each.

6. (Section 41) Caldwell was to renounce all his individual rights and privileges conferred by the legislature and to have the right to subscribe for 500 shares of capital stock, to be paid for out of the excess of profits over eight per cent per annum. Moreover, he was to be entitled to dividends on his 500 shares, "notwithstanding the same shall not have been paid for by the aforesaid
excess over eight per cent."\footnote{Ibid., April 7, 1835.}

On May 30, 1835 the act of sale took place and Caldwell's sole ownership of the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company came to an end.\footnote{Notarial Acts of William Christy, \textit{op. cit.}, May 30, 1835.} The sale price undoubtedly was a good one, but the inventory of the property transferred is a fair indication of the amount of money that Caldwell already had invested in the project:

1. The square between Gravier, St. Mary, Perdido and St. Marc Streets, previously purchased by Jane Placide on April 29, 1833 and inherited by Caldwell.
2. All buildings thereon for manufacture of gas, viz., a coal house, a retort house, a purifying house, a station metre house, a governor house, a blacksmith shop and apurtenances, scale beam and scales, tub for measuring coal, six double benches of retorts, hydraulic main, standing pipes, wash-barrows, three coke rakes, one atmospheric condenser, two purifiers, thirty-six perforated wrought iron plates, one syphon pump, one great forge, one pair bellows, one large vice, one anvil, one large crane, hammers, tongs, punches, etc.
3. One iron tank 15' x 50', one wrought iron gasometer 15' x 50' with standards, supports, pulleys, counterweights, etc.
4. Sixteen main valves for purifiers, metre and governor--inlet and outlet pipes of gasometer.
5. About 212' of 12" main pipe from meter round works into tank.
7. All 6" and 12" main pipes laid in Gravier, Camp, Chartres and Conde Streets. All 1 1/2" and 2" main pipes laid in Canal and Common streets with service pipes to consumers--total about four miles of pipe.
8. One Cart and harness.
9. One wrought iron coke screen, one coke shovel, one iron wheeled truck.
And so the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company was firmly launched. It was not the vessel itself, nor the ultimate good it might provide, but the manner in which it had been constructed that provoked the criticism both before and after its launching. The intrepid Bee pointed to the inconsistency and inadequacy of a charter which created a Gas Light and Banking Company but which, at no place in its contents, required the company to provide gas! "Its gas is now a mere matter of moonshine; and is but a subsidiary operation for trebling its dividends," said the Bee.43 "The banking privilege is valid, whether the company does or does not light the city with gas."44

Public favor seemed to be on the side of the company, however, and George Holland, the former comedian and now secretary of the gas works, was able to make frequent announcements of the progress of pipe-laying.45 This favor was earnestly solicited by the company, as the following account of a public relations stunt, reported by the Bee of June 8, 1835 with tongue in cheek, would seem to indicate:

REVENON A MOUTON.--Mutton, etc. has been cooked by gas at Banks' Arcade; and served up to some of our gourmands by Caldwell and Co. of New Orleans Bee, May 30, 1835.

43 Ibid., April 9, 1835.

44 Ibid., April 9, 1835.

45 See, e.g., New Orleans Bee of April 8 and May 9, 1835.
the gaslights. We expect soon to 'cut capers'
dressed in the same style; and to be at liberty
to discard all stoves, fires, lights, etc. by the
succedoneur of gas. Oil, candles, chimnies
may receive their quietus in time, by the general
utility of gas for light and heat; since Caldwell,
Banks, Berry & co. have become gas blowers; and
Rea, Gibson, ourselves and co. have become gas
puffers. Even the Bee must aid the Bulletin to
bring the News by an extraordinary Courier from
the True American as 'glad tidings of great joy.'

And its favor was concretely expressed by the public in
an oversubscription of 10,000 shares of the company stock
by June 13 when the books were closed. ¹⁴⁶

Caldwell had reached his goals: his fellow citizens
were to receive the great benefits of his altruism in bringing
gas lighting to them, and he was prepared to submit quietly
to the shower of money which would descend on him from
the corporation he had created. On June 16, 1835 he wrote
to the Directors of the New Orleans Gaslight and Banking
Company the following letter which was published in the
Bee of June 19:

GENTLEMEN.—Thirteen years ago I intro-
duced gas lighting into New Orleans, by lighting
the American Theatre with 250 lights, from two
gasometers 10 by 12 feet each. At that time
there was only one gas company in the United
States, the charter of which was obtained in
Maryland, for lighting the city of Baltimore.
Gas lighting was then in its infancy even in
Europe, at least its great utility had not at
that time been fully exercised. In 1829, a
company was chartered for lighting the city of
New Orleans, which was dissolved for a failure
to comply with the requisitions of the charter
to commence operations in three years. In 1833,
I obtained a charter in my own name, with exclu-
sive privileges, provided that I should commence

¹⁴⁶Ibid., June 15, 1835.
the work in two years. Without delay, having
previously withdrawn from every other occupation
in which I was at that time very extensively and
profitably engaged, I commenced operations for
the great enterprise, and after traveling 30,000
miles in Europe and America, for better informa-
tion than I at that time possessed, I commenced
the New Orleans gas works in March, 1834, and
lighted from them several public buildings on the
10th day of November following. In the short
space of three months there were nearly 900
lights taken, a fact unparalleled in the history
of gas lighting.

The difficulties encountered in an
individual's attempt to carry through his own
private means, a great public work into execution,
may be imagined when it is remembered that it
was during the general pecuniary embarrassments
of the summer and fall of 1834, that the gas
works were established, added to which there was
a total want of confidence on the part of the
city council and the generality of the citizens,
in the success of the whole undertaking.

Confidence gives zest to energy; and the
general satisfaction which burst from the first
lighting of Chartres street and Camp street, left
scepticism no loop to hang doubt on.

Gentlemen, had wealth been my aim, and
I had calculated an age of life to hoard it in,
I should have kept my own little charter, and
should have crept along with my own single means,
reaping all the profits and only extending the
works out of them: but I had a higher motive,
a nobler feeling--I wished to conquer prejudice,
that the great benefits of gas lighting, and gas
cooking, gas heating, &c. &c. might be extended in
blessings on the people, to accomplish which in
the fullest extent, in the plenitude of imagination,
I conceived the charter under which, gentlemen,
you are now sitting here. Many of my friends
opposed it who would willingly have largely
subscribed towards my little charter; but I wished
legislative influence more: I considered that a
bank attached to this infant constitution would
create a more immediate increase of gas lighting.
The charter you have now, gentlemen, is an
excellent one. You are the only Gaslight and
Banking Company in the world. Your noble capital
and extensive privileges will enable you to do
much good, particularly for the cause through which
the charter was obtained. New discoveries are
yearly made in the improvement and application of
gas--perhaps the late discovery of a gas vacuum engine, by your energies, may be brought into operation for draining low grounds, or raising water. Pursue, gentlemen, with your great means, with but a moiety of the impulse, the course which has established gas lighting in New Orleans, and the Gaslight and Banking Company will be immortalized.

Gentlemen, I have achieved all my ambition in this enterprise sought for, as an individual. I made the bold assertion that I would carry this bank into operation--I have done it; but that is not enough; there are two great institutions bound together, and are inseparable, in your charter--the Gaslight--and Banking Company. The last department will require at its head a merchant--the first, a practical and intelligent man acquainted with gasworks. I disclaim all personal views, all personal feelings. As President of this board--to which honor I was unanimously elected two months ago--it is my duty to tell you that the interests of the stockholders require a merchant at your head, and a practical man at the head of the gasworks. These offices properly filled, I know no institution which can do more service to the community, and none in the world whose stock can rise to so great a value.

I beg leave respectfully to resign the Presidency, pledging myself to return to it at any future period, if required and necessary, or to any other situation which may benefit the whole or any part of the institution.

With the feelings of deepest interest for the Gaslight and Banking Company, of personal friendship to every member of the board,

I remain, Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
JAMES H. CALDWELL.

Caldwell was now able to turn his attention to other interests and projects, many of which already had been conceived. One of these, an enterprise which he was to promote with considerably less success than had resulted in the case of the gas company, was the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad. The idea for such a road was first proposed in Nashville, and the plan at the time was to link by rail the cities of Nashville and Jackson, Mississippi,
and to link Jackson with the Mississippi River.\textsuperscript{47} But on November 20, 1834 a New Orleans and Nashville Rail Road Association was formed at New Orleans, and a week later it had so organized itself as to have selected officers, an executive committee, and received pledges of subscription.\textsuperscript{48} At the latter meeting George Eustis was elected president, James W. Breedlove, vice-president, and Thomas Barrett and Joshua Baldwin, secretaries. The executive committee included Mayor Denis Prieur, M. W. Hoffman, Clarke Woodruff, Thomas Barrett, Samuel J. Peters, L. Millaudon, Joshua Baldwin, W. A. Gasquet, H. C. Cammack, and James H. Caldwell—all prominent businessmen.

During December the association employed a surveyor to select a probable route,\textsuperscript{49} and sought legislative support. Almost immediately the fortunes of the group encountered legislative setbacks of a sort which eventually were to contribute to the failure of the project. The House of Representatives restricted the exclusive privilege requested by the railroad to twenty years and further emasculated the privilege so that any rival company could surmount it.\textsuperscript{50} On December 27, 1834 the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47}\textit{Mercantile Advertiser}, April 28, 1834.
\item \textsuperscript{48}\textit{Louisiana Advertiser}, November 28, 1834.
\item \textsuperscript{49}\textit{Ibid.}, December 9, 1834.
\item \textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid.}, December 15, 1834.
\end{itemize}
bill was passed without amendment by the Senate,\(^{51}\) and on January 30, 1835 Governor Roman applied his signature to it.\(^{52}\) The company was capitalized at $6,000,000 and both the state and city were empowered to take 5,000 shares of stock each. The company was given twenty days in which to sell 20,000 shares at which time the commissioners, of whom Caldwell was one, would then become a board of directors. Various provisions for expropriation of land, tax exemptions, and liability were included. Still to be acquired—significantly—were land rights and other privileges in the state of Mississippi, through which the road was intended to pass.

It developed that there was some apathy to the project at the other end of the proposed line, under the apprehension that the route would harm Nashville.\(^{53}\) But of more moment was the antagonism which developed within the state of Mississippi. The company proposed its route around Lake Pontchartrain to the west via Pass Manchac and then due north to Jackson, the present route of the Illinois Central Railroad. Within the state of Mississippi this route found almost no supporters. Natcheans to the West, foresaw losses to the railroad between that river city and Jackson. But it was the rich planters in

\(^{51}\)Ibid., December 28, 1834.

\(^{52}\)New Orleans Bee, February 14, 1835.

\(^{53}\)Ibid., June 11, 1835.
southeastern Mississippi who objected most strenuously. They saw no merit in a road which bypassed their area of plantations and villages in favor of an uninhabited wasteland. A route following the north shore of the lake via Madisonville and Poplarville and then northeast to Nashville would no doubt have removed their objections.

The Bee of June 25, 1835 noted all these objections and urged the company to reconsider its circuitous route, some 200 miles longer than the one just described. The paper saw the proposed plan as a mere venture in land speculation, an attempt to enhance the presently worthless lands west and northwest of Lake Pontchartrain. Warned the Bee, "The legislature of Mississippi will not consent to the construction of the road as it is at present surveyed; or (in other words) it must pass east of Pearl river;" and as proof of this allegation noted that the largest portion of the Mississippi legislature was composed of members from the eastern half of the state. It was a warning that Caldwell, in particular, later may have wished that he had heeded at this time.

Another business with which James Caldwell had a brief and unhappy association was that with the improbable name of the Louisiana Cottonseed Oil Factory and Insurance Company. Caldwell's first interest in cottonseed oil was evidenced at a city council meeting on April 4, 1835.\(^{54}\)

\(^{54}\)Ibid., April 7, 1835.
The mayor had written the council reprimanding it for not heeding his request to buy sperm oil for the city's street lamps for the year, and therefore passing up a bargain. Caldwell, within the council meeting, proposed as an amendment to Alderman Mercier's resolution authorizing the mayor to purchase the necessary oil that the mayor be instructed to purchase cottonseed oil, "as an encouragement to domestic manufactures." Mr. Mercier opposed the amendment on the grounds that there was no manufacturer of the article in the state. Notwithstanding Mr. Mercier's logic, the resolution as amended was passed. The mayor obediently set out to find cottonseed oil, but prudently decided to test the burning quality of the product first. He reported to the council about the first of May that such oil was "of a very inferior quality; does not burn well in winter time; and does not give so much light as sperm oil." He therefore requested permission to purchase the latter. The council instructed him to purchase the cottonseed oil necessary. On May 6, 1835 only a month after the Council had met, the Bee reported the incorporation by the legislature of the Louisiana Cotton-Seed Oil Factory and Insurance Company, with, among others, J. C. Caldwell as directors. At a meeting of its board of directors on June 22 Caldwell was "unanimously elected

\[55\text{Ibid.},\text{ May 6, 1835.}\]
Within the next two months the company, and Caldwell, were in trouble. The following three news accounts in the Bee give some indication of the problems.

That of July 20 said:

We regret that the stock of the Louisiana cotton seed oil factory and insurance company is below par; and certainly cannot account satisfactorily for such a misadventure. It is also a matter of surprise as well as regret, when we know the auspicious circumstances under which the company were likely to commence operations; the whole of the stock being taken; the object of the company being likely to realize considerable profit; and the privileges conferred by the charter being of a lucrative nature—for the company are vested with all the privileges of exchange. Having the privileges of insurance and brokerage, of a profitable speculation in a patent invention, and of all the stock being taken, we fear that there must be some mismanagement of the affairs of the company. Is there so?

On July 22 the following appeared:

We have been accused of having wantonly asserted that the stock of the cotton seed oil company was below par; and a simple direct negative was the only answer. A denial is no proof; and we never knowingly misrepresent or falsify. Although 5 dollars were paid on each share of the stock, 200 of them have been sold at public auction for 50 cents; 10 for 38; 195 at private sale, 4 months, for $3.50; and 80 for $3.50. Who now has falsified? or do we write merely from personal pique towards Mr. Caldwell? Does not a discount of 3 per cent prove that the stock is below par?

And on August 26 the paper reported:

We cannot participate in the dispute between the directors of the Cottonseed oil insurance company and their late president. They were justified in demanding his resignation; he was justified in a commercial point of view, in

56Ibid., July 1, 1835.
making the most of his means. If he required them to purchase 90 shares at $25 for 15 paid, and they chose to submit to the terms, that is their concern: they are surely qualified to judge for themselves. We have no private ill will towards Mr. Caldwell: and if we had, we would not gratify it by censuring him on the present occasion. We hope however that the affairs of the company will prosper under the presidency of Mr. West.

In addition to his successes, and his occasional failures, in business and political life, some measure of the social heights to which James Caldwell had climbed at this time can be understood by mention of several civic functions he was asked to perform during this period. The Reverend Joel Parker affair was one in which he should have taken little pride. The Reverend Parker shepherded the flock of the First Presbyterian Church in New Orleans. During the summer of 1834 he had journeyed to Hartford, Connecticut. There he delivered himself of an address which, it was later charged, "did most grossly calumniate the citizens of New Orleans." Parker was alleged to have said:

That of the Catholics, the men are almost without exception Atheists; they regard religion only as intended for women and servants; and do not give themselves any trouble on the subject; the Protestants can hardly be said to be in a much better state.\footnote{Louisiana Advertiser, December 15, 1834; New Orleans Bee, December 15, 1834.}

Either news of these supposed remarks did not reach New Orleans for several months, or the community waited for Parker's return to the city before it acted. A committee,
seemingly self-appointed, with Caldwell elected as its chairman, held a preliminary meeting on December 10, 1834 at which it resolved to call a public meeting for December 13.\textsuperscript{58} Public feeling was running high and Parker felt compelled to publish a statement in which he denied slandering the citizens of New Orleans and in which he said, "I have never used the language of the . . . quotations."\textsuperscript{59} The public meeting at Bishop's Hotel was described by the Bee of December 15 as one of the largest which ever took place in the city--hundreds of people were outside in the streets, unable to get in to the coffee room where the meeting was held. Caldwell was called to the chair and despite the emotional ingredients present for a riot, the Reverend Mr. Parker was sent for. It was of some credit to the assemblage that no violence ensued. The meeting then proceeded to pass a series of resolutions, the sense of which was that Parker had not exculpated himself either at this meeting or in his published statements, that a committee from his church had not succeeded in so doing, that the minister had "incurred the just displeasure and indignation" of the community, and that both his attempt to resume his ministry and the attempt of the Elders of his church to force Mr. Parker upon the community "must be considered as a contempt of public opinion." The

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Louisiana Advertiser}, December 12, 1834.

\textsuperscript{59} \textit{Ibid.}, December 13, 1834.
meeting resolved that Parker's residence in the city was fraught with danger and he was requested to leave the city.

Perhaps it would be expecting too much of Caldwell to imagine him to be otherwise than a part of a cause which in retrospect seems reprehensible when at the time it seemed to have so few dissidents. His nature seems to have been such that he welcomed the warm sun of public approval. Certainly he must have felt keen satisfaction in sharing with such prominent financiers as Bernard Marigny, Paul Tulane and Paul Morphy, such well-known lawyers as H. B. Cenas, William Christy and Judge Canonge, and the Drs. Ker and Breedlove the honor of arranging a testimonial dinner for Thomas Hart Benton. 60 He may even have felt a glow of pride in the fact that his house was deemed of sufficient worth and prominence as to warrant the attentions of the burglar who entered his residence and took property in the amount of $500. 61

Caldwell's affiliation with the "better" element of New Orleans society even led him to forsake what had proven to be a source of comfortable revenue for some years. On January 4, 1835 a bill was introduced into the Louisiana Senate to suppress gambling. On a list of those who had obtained licenses to keep a gambling house was James

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60 New Orleans Bee, April 23, 1835.
61 Ibid., January 19, 1835.
H. Caldwell, whose license was not due to expire until December. Yet on another list of a committee composed for the purpose of giving a public dinner to Judge Samuel Moore—he of the Senate committee who had so enthusiastically plumped for the Gas Light and Banking Company—for "his energetic and effective efforts in effacing from our statutes the laws countenancing gambling, was James H. Caldwell. And three days later, on March 17, Caldwell found himself a member of a sub-committee charged with raising subscriptions for a service of plate to be presented to the honest Judge Moore.

It did Caldwell no harm to be on the side of virtue as far as his political aspirations went. He had no difficulty in being re-elected to the city council on April 6, 1835. But as the mayoralty campaign got underway in August, Caldwell's ambition very nearly got the better of his judgment. The Bee of August 1 posed the following provocative question:

Can it be true that James H. Caldwell proposed himself as a member of the Native American association; and that he was rejected because he was only a naturalized citizen?--'Upon my life, 'tis true; what will you lay it's a lie?'

The Native American Association was, of course, the chauvinistic, super-patriot group, anti-immigrant and particularly anti-Irish, which sought to bar all but native-

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62 Ibid., January 3, 1835.
63 Ibid., March 14, 1835.
born Americans from political activity. It was the direct forbear of the Know-Nothing Party of the 1850's. Caldwell's friend and legal advisor, William Christy was one of the prime movers in the organization, and was proposed by it for governor of Louisiana. Caldwell was the Association's candidate for mayor. The Bee was quick to point out the absurdity of Caldwell's candidature. In a blistering editorial on August 10 it claimed that the many young men who had joined the group out of "an honest hardihood of prejudice or yearning for exclusive privileges," had quickly become disabused when they learned "that the association was devised to subserve particular electioneering purposes; and that it absolutely struck at the freedom of suffrage, even among Americans themselves." In reporting the meeting at which this disillusionment had taken place the Bee said:

Among other resolutions was one relative to adjusting the preferences of native citizens—against whom naturalized citizens being candidates were to be unconditionally and unreservedly rejected: with the exception—now mark the object of the association—of the exception of James H. Caldwell, proprietor of the True American as candidate for the mayorship of New Orleans! No doubt naturalized citizens will feel grateful—very grateful—for this exemption in favor of their dearly beloved Caldwell; and will promptly and collectively join with the natives in rendering homage to this theatrical deity; and for the honor so condescendingly conferred on a naturalized citizen, will strenuously support him whose journal has always supported their constitutional privileges, to compass the whole object designed!

After such a display of tender generosity to Mr. Caldwell, and of condescension to naturalized citizens through him, it would be manifestly illiberal on
the part of every naturalized citizen not immed-
imately to subscribe to his True American! and avowedly
and efficiently support the nominees of the pseudo
American association!!

The next day the Bee published Caldwell's letter in which
he denied ownership of the True American:

MR. BAYON,
Sir--You will please to contradict a statement
in your paper of the 10th inst.
    I am not the proprietor of the True
American; I have not the smallest interest, nor
have I ever had, in that or any other newspaper,
except as an annual subscriber.
    JAMES H. CALDWELL.

The Bee explained its allegation of Caldwell's ownership
as follows:

We had merely given a 'local habitation and a
name' to the current belief--in consequence of
his having procured funds to establish it; his
having been known in the sheriff's court as
security for its editor; and his having written
many of its leading articles: at least such
is the popular or prevalent belief. If we are
wrong, we are glad of it: for though we are
determinedly opposed to Mr. Caldwell as mayor,
we are disposed to concede him individual merits
of no mean grade--but not such as either to
entitle him to public gratitude or favors.

Within the city council Caldwell's days were filled
with many things. He was appointed to the standing committee
on health and on paving.64 He undertook his responsibilities

64Ibid., April 14, 1835. On July 29 Caldwell was
appointed to a special committee whose function was to name
streets and number houses in newly incorporated portions of
the city. (See, New Orleans Bee, July 30, 1835.) Thus, it
may be true, as John Chase suggests in his book, Frenchmen,
Desire, Good Children (New Orleans: Robert L. Crager and
Co., 1960), p. 127, that Caldwell assigned the classical
names of mythology to the streets between Howard Avenue and
Felicity Street, e. g., Melpomene, Thalia, Calliope, etc.
on the latter committee with vigor. One of the tasks he undertook was to improve New Orleans streets with a system of paving more suited to the unique conditions of the spongy soil. On his motion the council resolved to authorize the mayor to advertise in New Orleans, New York, Boston and Philadelphia newspapers for proposals for paving 100,000 square yards of the city with "oblong square stones". Eventually a section of streets in the American section was paved in this manner, but the wrangle over the subject endured for some time.

Caldwell also devoted considerable time and effort to a scheme of civic improvement which would redound to his personal advantage. The Bee of April 27, 1835 called the attention of its readers to this action of the city council:

We beg leave to direct the attention of our citizens to privileges conceded to them of erecting posts, etc. for awnings through the city--which they will find in the report of the city council; and we are glad that we can attribute the success of this measure to the energies of Mr. CALDWELL.

But the privilege was quickly withdrawn by the council.

Caldwell's personal interest in the ordinance is seen in the following from the Bee of June 12:

A resolution has again been adopted in the City Council, conceding to householders the privilege of erecting awning posts before their residences. If the privilege is restricted to posts alone, there seems no sufficient reason

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65 Ibid., May 23, 1835.
why it should be denied: for its being withdrawn by a former council may prove that it was abused; or that it was not properly restricted when formerly granted—yet not prove the impropriety of renewing the privilege under proper restrictions.

But if balustrades, colonnades, facades, or other fannfarronades and gasconnades are allowed, we shall have a "pretty kettle of fish." If the proprietor of the New American theatre [the St. Charles then building] desires to have a portico for it in the street, let him ask for the special privilege; and no doubt it will be conceded—as so peculiar a claim could not establish a precedent.

On June 20 the mayor vetoed the resolution allowing the general erection of awnings in the city. The council voted to persist and moreover resolved specifically to allow Caldwell to erect a portico in front of the St. Charles to project to the curbstone. To this the mayor protested that the law did not allow him to alienate in favor of an individual. Caldwell was indignant that the mayor should consider his contemplated portico as an "obstruction." But the Bee of July 3 admonished Caldwell:

In every public work, we are solicitous to aid Mr. Caldwell; but it was unwise for him to present himself as his own advocate in this instance, as he has done in others. We believe that he may have acted from disinterested motives, in asking the privilege, although we may also believe that he could well have done without it, had he removed farther back the site of his theatre before he commenced its erection... His theatre would then be more ornamental than it now can; and could not have been liable to objections.

On July 9 the city council held a special session at which a resolution was passed annulling Caldwell's special privilege on the grounds that it had been "granted at a moment

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66 Ibid., June 23, 1835.
of dereliction or thoughtlessness." Now the Bee of July
11 sped to Caldwell's defense:

Justice, not sectional feelings, should
predominate in the consideration of a subject of
this nature. If Mr. Caldwell has wilfully or
unconsciously rendered himself obnoxious to a
portion of his fellow citizens, the members of
the city council should not therefore expose
themselves to the charge of irresolution and in-
justice originating from piquant and petty
feelings of retort or revenge. . . . It is
earnestly to be hoped that the resolution of
repeal will not be persisted in.

It is well known that we are not Caldwell's
panegyrists. But justice owns no prejudice nor
partiality. . . . Whatever may be his personal
errors, he is a public benefactor; and deserves the
privilege asked and granted.

And certainly the Bee could, on occasion, excoriate the
man whom it now defended. On the occasion of Caldwell's
attempt to establish a separate police force within his own
ward the paper's edition of July 7 said:

The Protean manoeuvres of Alderman
Caldwell to acquire mushroom popularity since
his election to the city council and his
shifts to secure his own private interest under
the semblance of public advantages, have often
forced a sarcastic smile from others as well as
ourselves; and many of them have we coned for
future reference.

Unfortunately for himself he overshoots
the mark in most of his popularity-seeking attempts;
and acts with more zeal than knowledge or discretion.

Doubtless we are among the admirers of
Alderman Caldwell; he should not therefore be cha-
gined at our occasional remonstrances—particularly
as they keep his name before the public—his
darling object. Heigho!

There were occasions when Caldwell preferred not to
have his name before the public, however. One such instance
was his purchase of the property on which he was to erect the St. Charles Theatre. The act of sale took place on March 7, 1833, even before he had negotiated the lease of his other theatrical properties to Russell and Rowe. The purchase was of two plots of ground, opposite the Frerets' building, on St. Charles Street, between Poydras and Gravier streets. The two lots together measured ninety-five feet on St. Charles by one hundred sixty feet in depth toward Camp Street, and were bounded by the property of Simon Millet and that of Winter and McCall. Jane Placide purchased the property from Daniel Treadwell Walden for $20,000 and gave eight promissory notes each for $2,500 payable in eight consecutive years with an interest rate of six per cent per annum. These notes were paid off by Caldwell, or his successors, as follows: Notes one and two on October 8, 1835, notes three, four and five on May 30, 1838, notes six and seven on May 25, 1841 and the last note on September 7, 1841. The property was under lease to F. C. Gillett at the time of the sale and Jane Placide agreed to the conditions of the lease which was to expire on January 1, 1834.

While the St. Charles property was purchased in Jane's name, to all intents and purposes Caldwell bought the lots. He was present at the act of sale and, in fact, took part in it by means of Jane Placide's power of

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attorney. Moreover, it was Caldwell, not she, who gave the eight promissory notes for the purchase. This transaction was only one of several in which the two were closely allied. For example, on April 11, 1833, Jane Placide acknowledged a debt to Caldwell of $30,000 which she secured with mortgages on property which she had purchased earlier this year on Poydras street, in the upper sections of the city near Magazine street, and on the two lots on St. Charles above described. 68 On May 22, 1834 Caldwell sold to her forty-four shares of some Union Bank of Louisiana stock which he owned. 69 And on March 12, 1833 they bound themselves with a William Henry Chase and Nathaniel Chamberlain against suits brought against them as purchasers of lots in the suburb of Lafayette, the title to which was under some cloud. 70

Between March of 1833 and October of 1835 Caldwell dealt extensively in real estate. During this period he bought roughly $60,000 in property, most of it located in the American section of the city, that is, above Canal Street. During this time, in addition to the mortgages he

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68Ibid., April 11, 1833.
negotiated on these purchases, he mortgaged property to which he already had title in the amount of about another $35,000. From sales of property and leases he had an income of about $60,000 during this time.

One addition to his assets was at the same time a source of personal loss. On May 18, 1835 Jane Placide died and named in her will James H. Caldwell her sole legatee. Jane Placide's last will and testament was dictated to the notary William Christy under the following circumstances:

On 14th May 1835 I, William Christy... . .did, at the request of Dr. Doctor [sic] Luzemberg, proceed to the dwelling house of Miss Jane Placide... Circus Street between Gravier and Common... where... I found the said Miss Jane Placide in her bedroom apparently quite ill, but of sound mind; ... she had sent for me for the purpose of making her last will and testament.

Then, in the presence of Robert Taylor, Edward H. Barton and Charles A. Luzemberg, Jane dictated the following:

My name is Jane Placide. I am of lawful age and have never been married, and as I am under many obligations to my friend James H. Caldwell, and have acquired most of the property I possess through his kind aid; I give and bequeath unto him all my estate of every kind or nature whatsoever of which I may die possessed, and constitute him my sole Executor and detainer of my Estate; and finally I revoke all former wills or codicils which I may heretofore have made.

To the above Christy added:

Dictated by her and written by me in presences of witnesses. I then read the said will to her and she answered distinctly that it
was her will... The said Testatrice, declaring herself too weak to sign her name, she makes her mark to these presents.\footnote{Notarial Acts of William Christy, \textit{op. cit.}, May 14, 1835.}

Four days later Jane Placide was dead. The \textit{Bee} of that date, May 18, in her brief obituary, merely recorded "with regret the death of Miss JANE PLACIDE, long an ornament of the theatrical profession... from a disease of the spine." The cause of death would seem to establish a link between her demise and the mysterious accidents which she had suffered in 1827 and 1829. The \textit{Bee}, in the same story, noted the death of another person whose life was closely associated with that of Caldwell, and this event, too, was to effect future events. Rosina Rowe, the wife of Caldwell's erstwhile treasurer James Rowe who now was one of the lessees of his theatrical properties, had died on the same day "from a debility, consequent \textit{sic/} on overexertion while in a delicate state."

On May 22 Caldwell petitioned the city court to inventory Jane Placide's estate and, the judgment rendered, he, William Christy, Judge Edward Rawle, who broke the seals, Philip Morris and C. Boudousquie, the appraisal experts appointed by the court, and the witnesses, C. W. Cammack and W. G. Latham, proceeded to the task.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, May 23, 1835.} They reported moveable effects such as wearing apparel, stage ornaments, books, bonnet, dresses and headdresses to the
value of $82, a mulatress slave named Letty, aged 28, valued at $500,73 and real estate with a total evaluation of $42,532. This last included the two lots on St. Charles where the theatre was building, the square on which the gas plant stood, and various other lots of less value. Caldwell deposed that a lot in her name in Cincinnati which had been purchased from Richard Russell on August 26, 1833, was, in fact, his own property, "he having used the name of the said deceased in purchasing merely for the purpose of facilitating his operations." By June 6 Caldwell had converted to cash about half this real property, i.e., other than the St. Charles Theatre and Gas Company property.74 He had already, on May 30, sold to the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company the property on which the works stood.75

73 In a codicil to his will made in New York shortly before he died in 1863, Caldwell provided a $100 a year annuity for this same servant who was still with him. At the time he acquired Letty in Jane Placide's estate, Caldwell owned at least two other Negro slaves. The act of sale by which he acquired the slave Belinda for $345 described her as 33 years old, "a good cook, washer and ironer, understands pleating, and house servant, warranted free from the maladies, but not the vices prescribed by law." (See Notarial Acts of William Boswell, op. cit., March 2, 1833.) On March 11, 1835 he had purchased the slave Jenny, she about 12 years, for $575. (See Notarial Acts of Felix Grima, March 11, 1835, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.


75 Supra, pp. 226-228.
As the autumn of 1835 approached, James Caldwell prepared to embark on his most ambitious theatrical enterprise, the mammoth St. Charles Theatre. The two years behind him had been a period of massive effort and solid achievement, for the most part, in the fields of commerce and politics. His retirement from the theatre, and now his return to it, might be described as a case of "taking the actor out of the theatre, but not being able to take the theatre out of the actor." In the eight years ahead, before his final and actual retirement from the theatre, Caldwell's contribution to his first profession would be a significant one. His theatre would become one of the leading establishments in the United States, admired as much for the magnificence of its productions as for the splendour of its construction. But at the end of this time Caldwell's absolute supremacy in New Orleans would be challenged and eventually his exclusive control of theatrical affairs would be ended.
CHAPTER VI
1835-1838

James H. Caldwell's decision to return to the theatre could not have been made injudiciously. He was far too astute both as a business man and as a theatrical entrepreneur to embark on any venture hastily or without the fore-knowledge that it would give him a solid return on his investment of time and money. The Camp Street Theatre was paying him a handsome annual rent,¹ and would be returned to him in a brief three years. In the meantime, Caldwell probably reasoned that the novelty of the St. Charles would successfully counter any competition which Russell might offer. Two things Caldwell did not foresee; the possibility that any other manager would challenge his supremacy in New Orleans, and the actuality of a severe economic depression which was beginning to manifest itself even as the walls of the St. Charles Theatre rose. These were the forces which were to bring about his final retirement from the theatre.

Certain evidence indicates that Caldwell's retirement from the stage was never anything but temporary in his own mind. The finality of his "final retirement from the stage" which he announced at the end of the 1832-1833

¹See supra, p. 198.
season must be regarded lightly. "Grand Farewell Tour" and "Last Appearance On Any Stage" are words which adorn the handbills of many of the stars throughout the nineteenth century. Caldwell was to take another such farewell at the St. Charles on February 21, 1837, and Ludlow, it will be recalled, retired from the stage "forever" at Louisville in November of 1832, only to return after a year's absence to resume a career that was to last another twenty years. With regard to the contract with Russell and Rowe, there was nothing in the document which guaranteed them exclusive rights of performance in the cities in which they had leased theatrical properties from Caldwell. It is likely that he regarded Russell and Rowe as caretakers of his empire during the hiatus in which he devoted his energies exclusively to the successful launching of the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company, although there is no evidence to show that Russell and Rowe were aware of this. Three things would seem to indicate that Caldwell planned an early return to his first profession. First, on his trip to England in the fall of 1833 he contracted for the services of several actors who later appeared for him at the St. Charles Theatre.\(^2\) Second, the Bee of March 23, 1835, in congratulating him on the laying of the foundations of the St. Charles Theatre, noted that he had had the building "in contemplation during the past three

\(^2\)See supra, pp. 204-205.
years." And, third, in his letter written to C. B. Smith while in London, Caldwell described his theatrical circuit in terms which demonstrated that he regarded it as his circuit and further demonstrated that he had every intention of returning to it. 3

Much has been made by modern historians of the surreptitious acquisition of the St. Charles Theatre property. 4 But Caldwell was openly present at the act of sale, he supplied the money for the purchase, and he allowed his name and signature to appear in the records of the transaction--hardly a deed of deep secrecy. While Russell may have felt there was a noblesse oblige implicit in his contract with Caldwell which required Caldwell to abstain from competition with him, it appears that Caldwell was looking forward to the time when he would resume his position as sovereign of the western theatre. The building of the St. Charles may be regarded as but a preliminary step in a master plan. It was a plan that included not only the resumption of the control of his New Orleans, Cincinnati and Nashville Theatres, but the building of a new theatre in Louisville as well. On April 1, 1835 Caldwell, Garrety Prendergast, Worthington G. Snethen and Samuel Drake leased a lot in Louisville on Market Street

3 Letter from Caldwell to C. B. Smith, op. cit.
4 See, e.g., Smither, op. cit., pp. 204-205 and Kendall, op. cit., p. 112.
between Sixth and Seventh Streets. This was no doubt the site of the new theatre which the True American of September 2, 1835 reported Caldwell was building. Thus, with the St. Charles, the relatively new Nashville Theatre, the three-year-old Cincinnati Theatre, and a new Louisville Theatre, Caldwell would have an attractive circuit to offer in making engagements with northern stars. Unfeeling fate, in the form of fire and depression, was greatly to hamper the realization of this ambition within the next two years, however.

Even during his temporary retirement from May of 1833 to November of 1835 Caldwell had not kept himself wholly aloof from his first profession. Not long after he and Jane Placide had returned from Europe Caldwell began a six-night starring engagement for Russell and Rowe at the Camp Street Theatre. Beginning February 17, 1834 he appeared in his most popular roles--Baron Willinghurst, Gossamer, Duke Aranza, etc.--and received the support of Jane Placide and Clara Fisher. His first appearance was greeted with "rapturous applause," according to the Louisiana Advertiser of the next day which said further:

Mr. Caldwell in the higher walks of genteel comedy, has always been justly admired; but in the part of Gossamer, last night, he was superior to any thing we had before witnessed. His

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6 New Orleans Bee, February 14, 1834 and Louisiana Advertiser, February 15, 17 and 18, 1834.
acting of last night, merits a more detailed praise, than we are enabled to give it in this slight notice.

On the 27th he returned with Clara Fisher to assist at a benefit for Jane Placide, and on March 8 performed at a second benefit for her.7

Caldwell did not again appear on the stage until he assisted at the "Grand Dramatic Festival" for the benefit of Thomas A. Cooper in mid-April of 1834. Cooper, declining in health and in popularity, had come upon hard times. The *Argus* of May 7, 1833 had reported that "this honest and honorable man is now reduced to poverty." The paper had further reported the willingness of Russell and Rowe to extend a free benefit to Cooper should he visit the city the next season. About the first of April, 1834 a sizeable group of some of New Orleans' most influential citizens, both American and Creole, organized themselves into a committee for the purpose of expediting the benefit, "after the manner of that in New York."8 Neither the names of Caldwell nor those of Russell and Rowe, who would certainly be needed for their theatre, appear among this group, but it will be remembered that in Caldwell's case he was at this time deeply immersed in the construction of the gas works, in securing a loan from the city council, and in removing himself from candidacy for

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7 *Louisiana Advertiser*, February 27 and March 8, 1834.
8 *New Orleans Bee*, April 2, 1834.
The Cooper Festival took place on April 14 at the American Theatre, and, in addition to the regular stock company, featured the talents of Mr. and Mrs. George Barrett, Edwin Forrest and Caldwell. Caldwell's contribution was his performance as Felix de Rosalvi in *The Hunter of the Alps*.\(^9\) Ticket prices were raised to one, two, and three dollars for the occasion, but the returns were small. The gross receipts were only $1,986 and, after deducting expenses--including $300 to Russell and Rowe for the use of the hall--the net to Cooper was $1,636.73.\(^1\)

Caldwell's final appearance of the season occurred at a benefit performance for him on April 28, 1834 when he played Belcour in *The West Indian*.\(^12\) In noting the excellence of the stock company at the American Theatre, the Argus of May 1 was moved to remark, "Caldwell in comedy is equal to Forrest in tragedy."

During the second season of his voluntary retirement Caldwell did not act at all at the Camp Street Theatre, indicating, perhaps, that relations between him and his tenants already were somewhat strained. The only

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\(^9\)See *supra*, pp. 218-219.

\(^10\) *New Orleans Bee*, April 14, 1834. See, also, *Argus*, April 14, 1834 and *Louisiana Advertiser*, April 16, 1834.

\(^11\) *Louisiana Advertiser*, April 19, 1834.

\(^12\) *Ibid.*, April 20, 1834 and *Mercantile Advertiser*, April 20, 1834.
theatrical activity in which Caldwell was engaged this year--other than his plans for the St. Charles Theatre--was in promoting another benefit. The proposed recipient was the playwright and actor John Howard Payne. Caldwell was appointed to the sub-committee on arrangements. Some antipathy to the benefit arose, engendered by those chauvinists who resented the fact that Payne's creative years as a writer had been spent in Europe. On March 4, about two weeks before the projected performance, the Bee editorialized against the affair on the more practical grounds that such a means of recognition was too costly to actors and managers. The Bee cited the Cooper benefit of the year before as a prime case in point and said that on that occasion the actors had lost about $400 and the managers about two thousand. As a substitute token of appreciation to Payne the Bee suggested a dinner or subscription.

The Payne benefit eventually took place on March 18. Payne's play *Therese; or, The Orphan of Geneva* was the principal piece performed, with Jane Placide in the title role--her last public appearance before her death. The proceeds were more disappointing than those at the Cooper benefit, but, even worse, the bad feelings engendered by the benefit continued to be expressed during the remainder of the season. Payne, who was in New Orleans during the benefit and afterward, accused Russell and Rowe of

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13 *New Orleans Bee*, March 4, 1835.
instigating unflattering comments about his writings. Payne claimed he had not sought the favor of a benefit, but had come to the city in search of support to a literary periodical he was promoting, and the offer of a benefit had been made by Caldwell "when he was in management." "I found that Mr. Caldwell had not forgotten his invitation," Payne later wrote, "although the managers to whom in the interim he had let his theatre, had forgotten the promise they made him, to give effect to the invitation by coming forward unsolicited whenever I might appear." When on the occasion of his own benefit, Russell was attacked for "interfering with the Payne benefit," the Bee of May 30 rushed to his defense. The paper reminded Russell's detractors that the manager had been sick in bed at the time of the Payne benefit, but had willingly agreed to Rowe's offer of the theatre for the specified evening. The Bee declared that the American Theatre had never benefited from Payne's plays, unless it was during Caldwell's management, since "only two of Mr. P.'s dramas had each been twice acted during the season." Said the Bee:

If Mr. Caldwell was so benefited, as he

14 Ibid., April 9, 1835.


16 The Bee conveniently forgot that Payne's plays had not benefited very much at the hands of Russell and Rowe. The Bee's review of Clari said that the piece had been "strangled." New Orleans Bee, March 4, 1835.
acknowledged by his letter, he should not have personally exonerated himself from a substantial acknowledgment, by a reference to Messrs. Russell and Rowe, who had received no proportion of that benefit. It was certainly somewhat singular to expect that those gentlemen should incur the debts with the duties of the establishment; and be obliged to pay the bills endorsed by another.

As the opening date for the St. Charles Theatre approached, Caldwell may have taken some ungenerous pleasure in these attacks on the Camp Street Theatre and its managers. The criticisms of the managers had been going on for some time. Despite a generally successful first season, Russell and Rowe had on several occasions received the censure of the press for the poor quality and incompetent leadership of their orchestra. One newspaper had disparaged the entire operation of the American Theatre and had provoked Russell and Rowe into publishing a card in several papers by which they offered a bet of $500 that their stock company was the equal to any in the nation, and a further bet of $1,000 that no theatre in the United States had ever produced such a congress of stars as was then appearing in New Orleans. No one seems to have accepted their challenge, but the attacks continued. In early February of 1834 some patron of the theatre offended the sensibilities of the rest of the audience by escorting into the parquette

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17 *Mercantile Advertiser*, January 20 and 22, 1834; *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 21, 1834.

18 *Mercantile Advertiser*, January 24, 1834; *Louisiana Advertiser*, January 24, 1834; and *New Orleans Bee*, January 25, 1834.
a "lewd and abandoned woman," for which the managers were blamed because of the laxity of the theatre's police. Yet when the city guard was called into the theatre a week later to quell a disturbance, the *Bee* of February 10 protested at "an armed body of men. . . with the evident design of dragooning the audience into good behavior." Russell and Rowe were made the villains in either case; even their manner of selling tickets was called into question.20

The criticisms continued during their second season of operation. The theatre had just opened on November 24, 1834 when the mediocre quality of the stock company and the sloppy stage management of the theatre were noted.21 From December 11, 1834 to February 28, 1835 the columns of the *Bee* contained a series of editorials and communications on the bad quality of the productions at the Camp Street Theatre.

It is impossible to assess the financial success of Russell and Rowe in their venture.22 Sol Smith maintained they "realized a profit of thirty thousand dollars in one season," and that a "decided reaction for the better

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21 *New Orleans Bee*, November 25 and December 3, 1834.

22 As in Caldwell's case, no comprehensive financial records survive, except a receipt book showing expenditures for rent, salaries, etc. in Louisville from October to December, 1833, *The Filson Club*, Louisville, Kentucky.
in the business of the Theatre" was what determined Caldwell to return to theatrical management in competition with them.\(^{23}\) The newspaper accounts of their two New Orleans seasons frequently mention large audiences, so it is quite likely they suffered no real financial hardship. There is the question of Rowe's mysterious suicide in Nashville on October 2, 1835. The event was reported briefly by the Nashville Union of October 5:

Mr. Rowe, one of the Managers of the Nashville Theatre, committed suicide, on Friday evening last, by shooting himself.\(^{24}\)

Rowe was probably managing a season with part of the company at Nashville while Russell was running a concurrent season in Louisville. Apparently Rowe lingered a day or two before he died, thus the news that reached Russell was that Rowe had shot himself but was still alive. Russell did not hear of the event until October 7, because of the slowness of the mails. He immediately wrote the following desperate note which he sent Rowe via J. M. Scott:

My dear Rowe,

In the name of God if you have the power assign to the bearer the cause of so rash an act—put into his possession all documents, Books &c relative to our affairs—remember the financial department I always trusted to you—the distribution of our funds you know that I am ignorant of—ever having placed my heart, thought & all in your keeping— I implore you for another reason—remember your children I am bound to protect— such was our understanding.

Your melancholy friend

Russell.

\(^{23}\)Smith, op. cit., p. 153.

\(^{24}\)As quoted in Hunt, op. cit., p. 53.
Dear Scott

Take the earliest opportunity of reading the enclosed to Rowe and get all the information you can--Russell--I have to be in Cincinnati Sunday.

But even before Russell had received the news Rowe was dead.

It would be easy to read into Russell's frantic letter implications of impending financial disaster and assign this as the reason for Rowe's suicide. It seems equally likely, however, that Russell's frantic plea is merely the result of his admitted ignorance of the financial side of their partnership. It should be remembered that Rowe's wife had died just five months before and his suicide may have been because of despondency over his loss. According to Ludlow they had been married in 1822, with his connivance, under highly romantic circumstances. Rowe had eloped with the then Miss Rosina Seymour while Ludlow distracted the notice of her young stepfather, Mr. Bloxton, whose unwelcome attentions Rosina sought to escape through her marriage to Rowe.26 The Bee of May 23, 1835 published some "Stanzas on the Death of Mrs. Rowe," supposedly written by her widower. The lines are filled with the author's grief and deep love, and some of them, perhaps, give a hint of the desperate extreme to which he was driven:

25Mississippi Department of Archives, Microfilm Roll No. 599.

Rosina, dear Rosina! art thou not in heav'n
That thought inspirits hope
And gives to reason scope
That I shall join thee once again;
Again renew our love
In happy realms above.

Whatever his motives were for ending his life,
Rowe seems not to have been the stronger half of the partner­
nership and his death had little effect on the feud which
was to arise between Russell and Caldwell when the St.
Charles was entered against the Camp in theatrical compe­
tition. Caldwell, well aware of James Rowe's financial
talents since he had been Caldwell's treasurer, may have
faced the coming struggle with more complacency, if any­
thing. Certainly he could convince himself that there was
a need for a new theatre in the light of the complaints
against the Camp which had been voiced the past two seasons.

The news of Caldwell's plan to build the St.
Charles Theatre was greeted by some widely divergent re­
actions, however. The Bee of March 23, 1835 said:

We congratulate the citizens of New
Orleans on the prospect of having one of the
finest Anglo-American theatres in this country.
The foundation of this theatre has already
been laid, under the auspices of JAMES H.
Caldwell, Esq. to whom the city of New Orleans
is indebted for the introduction of American
dramas here;--for gaslights;--and now for this
splendid theatre, which he has had in contempla­
tion during the past three years. Under the
superintendence of one so energetic and perserver­
ving, we do not fear its success.

But an earlier communicant to the Bee of March 9 had taken
a less sanguine view of the necessity for Caldwell's edifice:
MR. EDITOR,
I have heard much talk of a new American Theatre being about to be built in this city. If one is wanted, which I do not admit as I learn that Messrs. Russell and Rowe have to pay a yearly rent of $13,000 [sic] to Caldwell for the present Theatre, with nightly expenses averaging 350 dollars; and cannot consequently have a profitable concern--yet if one is to be built, what are Russell and Rowe about? If they believe that it is seriously desired and not merely kept as a rod over their shoulders to make them submissive to the powers that would be, why do they not issue a similar prospectus for a like purpose? I think they would gain as many subscribers to their design as any one person; and I do think that the spirit of liberty and liberality of our citizens would sooner aid them in order to prevent a monopoly of theatres as well as gas.

QUID PRO QUO.

"Quid Pro Quo" made no reference to support of a projected new French language theatre, The Theatre of Louisiana, nor a new circus amphitheatre which the expansionist spirit of the times was also precipitating.27

At 10:00 A. M. on Friday, May 8, 1835, with relatively little ceremony, Caldwell laid the cornerstone of the St. Charles Theatre. George Washington Harby, several of whose plays would be performed on the St. Charles stage, delivered himself of some impromptu remarks "on public buildings in all ages--their utility and importance; and on the edificial improvements made of late by Mr. Caldwell, [Thomas] Banks and others in the upper faubourg," according to the Bee of the following day in its brief notice of the event. Antonio Mondelli was the architect and superintendent of the work. Mondelli, the scenic artist at the Camp Street

27New Orleans Bee, April 13, 1835.
Theatre since its formal opening, had disengaged himself from that establishment in December of 1832--just before Caldwell's announcement of his own retirement--and had got into the decorating business with a Mr. Martelli. Now, along with Caldwell, he was returning to his first profession.

The combined forces of Mondelli's artistic talents and Caldwell's energy produced astounding results, both as to the size of the undertaking and the speed with which it was accomplished. Even the French side of the Bee was moved to expressions of delight at the beauty of the structure and of wonder at the rapidity of its construction:

La pompe et le magnificence de la salle, le grandeur et la régularité de l'édifice, le grand complet des artistes maintenant attachés à cet établissement, tout cela nous paraît un songe, une illusion, ou plutôt un phénomène extraordinaire, lorsque nous réfléchissons, qu'il a fallu à M. Caldwell moins de 5 mois, y compris environ trente ou quarante jours consécutifs de mauvais temps, pour bâtir et installer, comme il l'a fait le plus beau Théâtre des Etats-Unis.

The following lengthy description of the St. Charles Theatre appeared first in the Philadelphia Evening Post on May 14, 1836 and was reprinted in the True American of June 14, 1836. It is by far the most complete description of both the exterior and interior, including the stage:

28 Louisiana Advertiser, December 28, 1832.
29 New Orleans Bee, December 1, 1835.
THEATRE ST. CHARLES

NEW ORLEANS

Imagine yourself in this great city, standing with your feet fronting the south, on St. Charles, between Gravier and Poydras streets. Before you, rising in majesty, is the Theatre St. Charles, occupying a line of one hundred and thirty feet, running back one hundred and eighty. The whole elevation is seventy feet.--Along the front, extends a magnificent portico, of ten lofty columns, after the Corinthian order, supporting a massive entablature which is surmounted by ten colossal statues, representing the nine muses and the god of music. Above the entablature, a terraced area, the whole length and width of the colonnade, communicates with a saloon one hundred and thirty feet long, twenty-six wide, and twenty-two in height. The front of the building, superior to the portico, is done in the Roman order, supporting an imposing pediment in the same style.

Five spacious entrances lead into a large hall, interspersed with columns after the simple Doric order. On the right, as you enter, is the box office. Before you is a flight of eighteen steps, leading through three large doors to a semi-circular hall, twelve feet in width, communicating with the pit, parquette, and beignoirs or latticed boxes. The parquette consists of seven passages, parallel with the proscenium, containing each thirty cane bottom maple chairs. An aisle at each end of these passages, furnishes easy access to these seats.--The floor is nearly level, yet from all points of the parquette an uninterrupted view of the stage is enjoyed. On either side of the parquette are three large boxes concealed by lattice work. Dorsal to the parquette are the pit and pit lobby, capable of holding five hundred persons. The pit seats are cushioned, and provided with backs. It must be observed here, that two concentric walls rise from the foundation of the building above alluded to; the pit, lobby, the beignoirs and private boxes are all thrown in advance of this area.--The orchestra is fourteen feet in width, running the whole length of the proscenium. It will accommodate fifty musicians, and communicates with a music room on the ground floor, fifty feet long by twenty-two in width.

But to return by way of the semi-circular hall to the Doric vestibule. On either hand, an elliptical staircase of thirty-four steps, grace-
fully winds to a large hall decorated with a series of Ionic columns. In the centre of this vestibule is an octagonal balustrade, defending an opening that looks into the hall below. The height of this Ionic square is sixteen feet. An elegant chandelier lighted by gas hangs over the opening from a richly ornamented ceiling.

Mounting a flight of three steps, you are in the main hall of the first tier of boxes, extending semi-circularly around the auditorium. From this hall or lobby, solid mahogany doors after the Grecian style, and ornamented with rose wood mouldings, lead to the boudoirs or retiring rooms. The rooms are elegantly furnished, and covered with Brussel’s carpeting. From the boudoirs, by removing a crimson curtain, that slides on a burnished rod, you enter the boxes or lodges for the accommodation of the spectators. The floor of the boxes consists of three platforms of easy descent, and sufficiently wide to receive a chair. There are from eleven to twelve chairs in each box. The chairs throughout the house are of the same description as those in the parquette. Every box is carpeted—the proscenium boxes are larger than the rest, and more magnificently furnished. In the first tier are nineteen—each with its boudoir—on this floor is the ladies’ withdrawing room, amply and comfortably furnished. In the semi-circular passage, four stairways ascend to the second tier of boxes in a flight of twenty-four steps. A similar division of the boxes takes place with those of the first tier, with the exception of the seven centre lodges; which are thrown into an amphitheatre form, furnished with cushioned seats. This space will accommodate upwards of three hundred persons. It is only visited by gentlemen, and the price of admission is on a par with that of the pit.

It is from the floor of the second tier of boxes, that the entrance to the grand saloon is gained by four spacious doors. This room is richly furnished, and adorned with groups of statuery. It is the fashionable promenade, and may be regarded as the chef d’œuvre of architectural elegance. No theatre in the world can boast of a larger saloon.

From the semi-circular hall, is a continuation of the four stairways by twenty-one steps to the third tier. Here is an amphitheatre corresponding to the one in the tier below. On the right and left are boxes with boudoirs, similar to those in the first circle. Each boudoir in the Theatre is furnished with gas light.

The entrance to the gallery or fourth
tier is on the right side of the building, and rises by a flight of ninety-five steps. On this floor over the grand saloon is a large room for the accommodation of the visitors to this part of the house. Continuing along the gallery entrance, you gain access to the music room. A short stairway will lead you thence to the stage—the first object that attracts your attention is the scenery. From the curtain to the extremity of the stage are nine entrances. The wings have a lateral movement—so that the stage can be narrowed or widened at pleasure. The flies or artificial ceiling over the stage varies from twenty to forty feet in elevation. In the representation of Gustavus, or the Masked Ball, a room forty feet high, eighty-two feet wide and ninety-six feet long, is thrown open with a double line of Corinthian columns, extending up the stage. The whole is illuminated by gas chandeliers. Thus it will be seen, that the stage is capable of all the splendor required in the exhibition of Grand Spectacle and Historic Tragedy, wherein "the pomp, the pride, and circumstance of glorious war," pass across the scene, and when occasion demands, it can be reduced to the limits that comedy, farce, and domestic tragedy require.

On the same floor with the stage, are two green rooms, elegantly furnished. Ascending a winding stairway on either side of the stage, you come to the dressing rooms, wardrobe, paint rooms, scene rooms, &c. There are twenty-six dressing rooms, all being constructed and completed with a view to the accommodation and comfort of the performer. Leaving this immense wilderness of machinery, you will advance to the front of the stage.

The form of the auditorium is that of a slightly elongated semi-circle, with the diameter resting upon the convex segments of two great circles, so as to give a bell-shaped appearance to the boxes. Above the proscenium is a flat elliptic arch, supported in part by a centre of the most approved construction. This arch forms the reverberating base whence the voice is conveyed to all parts of the house. The intrados of the arch are towards the auditory, forming the /sic/ segment of a parabola, having for its transverse diameter the front of the building. This magnificent arch of fifty-four feet span rests upon immense abutments, which are prevented from spreading by strong connections at the beds.
of the first voussoirs.

On either side of the proscenium rise two fluted Corinthian columns, superbly gilded, and supporting an entablature of the same order, vicing /sic/ in whiteness and delicacy, with the purest Parian marble. They stand on lofty pedestals that to the eye seem like purple Breccia. From between the columns gracefully curve the fronts of the proscenium boxes, crimsoned, and surmounted by massive brass railings, on which play the richest damask curtains. The front of the boxes presents to the eye, the delicate color of the yellow jessamine flower. Tis even softer and more agreeable. Emblematic scrolls, figures, &c. a la Greque and a l'arabesque, are tastefully arranged along the whole area, displayed by the front of each tier. They are done in burnished gold. The first tier of boxes is supported by a series of fluted columns after the plain Grecian Doric, with nilded /sic/ capitals. The architrave is in imitation of variegated marble. Every tier above the first is supported by cast iron columns, perfectly plain. The damask silk drapery that surmounts each box, is beautifully arrayed, the crimson, blue and yellow being pleasantly intermingled. Nothing can exceed the splendor and richness of the coup d'oeil. The whole auditorium seems to repose in conscious grandeur, and the eye is never satisfied in gazing on such a fairy-like scene.

The ceiling of the house is a great segment of a circle, divided into spherical pannels /sic/ richly gilded. In the centre, is a sculptured grillage work in the shape of a dome. From this is suspended one of the most magnificent chandeliers in the world. It weighs two tons, and is fourteen feet in diameter. The light is dispersed through twenty-three thousand pieces of prismatic flint glass, and emanates from one hundred and seventy-five burners. The principal curtain with its never-ending folds, is of red moreen, and, raised by pulleys acting at equal distance along its whole length.

The following tabular view of the dimensions of this vast edifice, will give some idea of its magnitude.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elevation of the front</td>
<td>70 feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front line</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 The chandelier was not installed until October of 1836. See infra, p. 317.
Depth, 180
Distance of centre box from curtain, 78
Greatest width of box circle, 71
Height of pit boxes,
" of first tier of boxes, 11
" of second tier, 11
" of third tier, 11
" of fourth tier, 10
Whole height of ceiling from the centre of the auditorium, 56
Width of orchestra, 12
Width of curtain, 48
Width of stage from wall to wall, 96
Depth of stage from curtain to wall, 86
Width of proscenium, 53
Height of the centre of the arch from the proscenium, 44
Width and depth of boudoirs, 8 by 10
Depth of boxes, 9
Width of pit and parquette stair-way, 30
Parquette entrances from arcade, 15
Width of box stair-ways, 9
Height of colonnade, 33
Width of semi-circular halls, 12
Width and height of principal door-ways, 6 by 9

The architect and superintendent was M. Mondelli, a gentleman in every way at the head of his profession. He is now the principal artist of the establishment.

A correspondent for the New York Spirit of the Times finally got around to seeing the St. Charles three years later, but his report which appeared in the February 24, 1838 edition of this journal was somewhat less flattering than that which the Philadelphia Post had given:

Large as it really is, we think most people will be disappointed, who entertain such notions of its vastness as are prevalent at the North. We were unfortunate in not seeing it crowded, when it must present a most imposing appearance. The entrance to the pit is from the front,
through the lower tier, which is cut up into private boxes, and three tiers tower above this. The foreign manufacturer cheated (that's the word) CALDWELL in making him pay $10,000 for his chandelier,*--it resembles in shape an immense bee hive inverted, and though quite the most rich and massive affair of the kind that ever greeted our eyes, it is no more beautiful or tasteful, or splendid, than would be a plain bar of silver worth its cost. We are not singular in our taste in this matter; and if we were, it is certainly no evidence of one's lack of taste not to admire the cut of a coat because the wearer paid five hundred dollars for it. The house was not erected for what New Orleans is, but for what that queen of cities will be. The St. Charles will contain 4000 persons probably. The interior is yet unfinished, but still everything is comfortable and elegant. The decorations are in the style of the National, [in New York] but neither the private boxes nor the house generally compare with that theatre when originally opened by the Italian Opera Company.

* It may have cost more, but we think $10,000 was the sum; the import duties on it were nearly $2,000 which Congress were petitioned to remit, but the resolution was negatived.

A description in the Bee of April 7, 1835, while not so complete as that appearing in the True American, adds some information about the stage areas not included in the later article:

The stage department is the largest in America; and will rank probably with the largest in the world, 95 by 90--there will be a clear passage of 18 feet all round the stage--the wing will be occupied as scene rooms--for managers, library archives, properties, etc.; a double spacious staircase leads to the performers dressing rooms which will be commodious and convenient to the stage; a double row 21 in number 8 by 12--on the same story is a large paint room and its dependencies--tailors shop and wardrobe, property, magazine, armoury--supernumeraries dressing room &c--above this runs a spacious gallery, the whole circuit of the stage, for machinery, carpenters rooms, hardware, cordage, etc.
At the back of the stage is a large scene room 25 feet by 56; at each side is an avenue leading to the green rooms, the first being 25 by 30; the 2d 24 by 18—the committee room 25 feet square;—supernumeraries green room;—music room. Under the stage are workshops and on the south part the musicians green room and deposit rooms for instruments, books, etc.

There are two painting rooms, one running the whole length over the pit and boxes 94 feet by 82; the other scene room for painting on frames. The carpenters shop adjoins the paint room and is large enough for six benches.

The height of the main walls is 86 feet—there are five tier of boxes including the pit boxes and one tier for galleries, arranged as is usual and allowing 16 inches for each spectator this theatre would hold 5000 persons—the room taken off for the boudoirs, the great breadth of the lobbies and the large space allowed for each person, it will contain commodiously 3000 people.

The True American, ever Caldwell's chief publicist, provided its readers with a tabular comparison of the St. Charles Theatre with the dimensions of "the principal theatres in the world." On July 1, 1840 The Daily Picayune re-published these statistics which had appeared originally in 1835 in the former newspaper:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>St. Charles, Naples Opera, Milan</th>
<th>St. Charles, New Orleans Grand Opera, Paris</th>
<th>Drury Lane</th>
<th>Covent Garden</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From curtain to back of boxes.</td>
<td>90 94 78 78 70 70</td>
<td>From curtain to back of boxes.</td>
<td>76 78 71 52 66 62</td>
<td>15 17 12 14 12 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Width across the boxes.</td>
<td>49 44 44 440 40 40</td>
<td>Projection of stage from curtain.</td>
<td>80 75 60 52 60 54</td>
<td>Width of curtain.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Height from pit floor to ceiling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>St. Charles, Naples</td>
<td>Opera, Milan</td>
<td>St. Charles, New Orleans</td>
<td>Grand Opera, Paris</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Extension of stage from orchestra back.
Width of stage from wall to wall.
Height of scenery.
Width of do. in full.
Width of proscenium.
Height of stage from floor to roof.
No. of tiers including galleries.
Boudoirs, or retiring rooms.
Foyer or grand saloon.

But Caldwell was not content merely to have one of the largest theatres in the western hemisphere. The edifice he constructed was to be more than a theatre. The first hint of his plans appeared in the *Bee* of June 22, 1835 in the following facetious article:

Alderman CALDWELL has resolved to construct bath houses. He has long kept his fellow citizens in warm water; but lest fatalities should occur from drowning, he is to have a Roper [the name of the attendant] at hand, for properly executing his orders. Gas and gymnastics have thus united in warm accord.

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But in a more serious vein the Bee of July 30, 1835 remarked:

In a few cities in the world are public baths more required than New Orleans; yet in none are they so miserably deficient in accommodations. There are only two places for warm baths within many miles of the city; and their conveniences are wretched, although rated at 50 cents.

Every principal hotel should have bathing apartments attached for its visitors.

As though responding to a cue, James Caldwell that date signed a contract with James Gallier—later to be the architect of New Orleans famous municipal building, Gallier Hall, and other structures noted for their architectural beauty—to build the St. Charles Arcade and Bathing establishment. The specifications of the contract required that the building be of brick, granite and plaster and the structure was to contain a restaurant, the bathing apartments, a third floor of bedrooms and an unfinished attic. Gallier was to have the roof on and the bathrooms completed by December 1 and the whole building completed by April 1, 1836. Cost was to be $50,000. The Bee of September 18, 1835 reveals more details:

Caldwell's new theatre is likely to exceed our anticipations, on account of the buildings attached to it. He will not only have erected the most splendid, spacious and commodious theatre in this country; but he will have connected with it an arcade for dry-goods and other stores; also a hotel, a restaurant, a bath house, and (we believe) a

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cigar divan, similar to those of London and Paris....His baths will be about 40, of marble and tin--his restaurant will contain refreshments of all kinds at every hour till midnight--his hotel will contain about 100 separate rooms for single gentlemen--and his cigar divan will contain all the principal periodicals of the day, with chess and backgammon boards, liquers, coffee and cigars; and afford an excellent rendezvous for merchants, loungers and travelers.

Naturally Caldwell's preparations for the opening night of the St. Charles Theatre were elaborate. The Bee of September 18 announced that he had been "energetic and liberal in his theatrical engagements." In addition to Mademoiselle Celeste, the danseuse, engaged "at an enormous rate if her powers and popularity did not warrant the expenditure," Caldwell was reported to have hired an excellent orchestra and a stock company which included Finn, the comedian, as stage manager and agent to select performers. Those already engaged were the Mesdames Maeder (late Clara Fisher), Brown, Kinlock, Crooke, Bannister (late Stone); and the Misses Fanny Jarman, Philips, Lane, Pelham, Verity, Cushman, and "about a dozen others." Gentlemen engaged included the Messrs. Ternan, J. R. Scott, Barton, Forbes, Latham, De Camp, Webb, Larkin, Hunt, Williamson, Spencer, Lennos, Frimsley and Yankee Hill. The Bee correctly observed that "Caldwell seems resolved to spare no exertion nor expense to secure the patronage or support of the public."

A competition for a Prize Comedy had been advertised in the leading journals of the country in May. The
Bee was indignant about Caldwell's omission of New Orleans as a potential source for such literary efforts. On May 25 it queried:

PRIZE COMEDY.--In a New York journal of May 9th, Mr. J. H. Caldwell advertises to give $500 dollars for a good comedy; and one third of the receipts of the seventh night of its being represented, at his new theatre in this city.

Why was not this notice sent to the New Orleans papers? Does Mr. Caldwell believe that there are no good dramatists in this city? Or is he indisposed to accept a comedy from one of them?

Caldwell's Prize Comedy competition moved Russell and Rowe to offer six hundred dollars for the best tragedy given them, "in which Mrs. Drake, and Messrs. Pearson and Parsons are to have prominent parts," according to their announcement in the Bee of August 7, 1835.

Inevitably, also, there was a competition for a Prize Poetical Address to be delivered on the opening night at the St. Charles. The task of judging this contest was assigned to a committee of four prominent New Orleans businessmen, who announced their decision on November 18, 1835. The results in both contests were protested by a writer to the Bee of December 11 who signed himself "Justice":

Mr. Editor--Believing that you are desirous of securing the freedom of the press and of doing justice to all, I beg leave to state through your columns that Mr. Caldwell advertised to give a premium for the best address, and best comedy to be written for his new theatre. The address selected was that by Mrs. Eilett, lady of professor Eilett, now of S. C. college; authoress of some other prize
addresses, a translated tragedy, and some articles in the American Quarterly Review, published at Philadelphia. Mr. Bannister of the Camp street theatre wrote the best comedy, in Mr. Caldwell's opinion, yet it was not accepted. Whether his play was conformable to the advertisement, I cannot say; but I know that Mrs. Ellett's address was not; and that it was devoid of any application to Caldwell or this theatre, and would have been adapted to the opening of one theatre as well as another. But it is not well adapted to any which must be evident to any who have read it. See how it begins.

Like the rich beam that lights the ruin's crest
Poured from the bosom of the golden west,
O'er ancient tow'r and tomb-like dwelling shed,
Hallowing with life the precincts of the dead--
The muses ray o'er memory's realm is cast,
Startling the shadows of the slumbering past.

Now Mr. Editor, forgetting for a moment your gallentry to the sex of the writer, let me ask you is this poetry or nonsense? What is meant by the crest of a ruin? How can a beam lighting that same crest be poured from a bosom, and be shed o'er towers and tombs; and that too when it is but a shower of western gold? What have republics to do with the realms of memory startling the shadows of the dead--and how are they among the slumbering past--are the sleeping dead or the dead slumbering or sleepless?

But sir, if a prize was awarded to the best address delivered, is it not just to expect that the other should have been given to the best comedy? I have heard that Mr. Caldwell acknowledged Bannister's was the best; and that it had been so declared by others--why was then the prize refused to him? Was it because he is attached to the other theatre--or that he is young and friendless?

"Justice's" objections to Mrs. Ellett's verse seem well in order. There is no explanation for the failure to make an award for the prize comedy other than that which he offers.

In accepting the decision of the judges with regard to the prize address Caldwell thanked them in a
letter which was subsequently published in the Bee of November 25. With no more literary merit than the winning address it is nonetheless interesting as an expression of Caldwell's views with regard to the importance which he felt the drama could have in affecting the society in which it existed:

Gentlemen:--

NEW ORLEANS, Nov. 21, 1835.

I have the honor of receiving your note returning the addresses confided to your judgment, to select from the best, for the opening of the new theatre. I agree with you that there are several highly meritorious and deserving, and, I will add, that they do honor to the poetic talents of our country; but I must join with you in your selection, by superadding that you have chosen the one best entitled to the prize.

For your flattering allusion to the intention I had expressed of endeavoring to raise the drama, I thank you; it is by the favorable opinions of intelligent men that their merit is disseminated—admired and encouraged. The drama is an institution of great vital importance, in a political view, independent of its moral influence, its power is immense, and, properly directed by those who write for the stage, a republic could be made to last for ages, and, I ought to say, perpetuated. The tyrants of Europe know its power full well, hence we find dramatic censors appointed, either to condemn a drama entirely, and prohibit its representation, or if liberal opinions only here and there occur, to expunge them; holding authors, managers and actors accountable if afterwards reinstated. When age shall have ripened the growing poetic talent of our country, what glowing pictures of the real happiness we enjoy in our healthy form of government, may not be embodied in our native drama, which whilst lashing the vices and follies of the age, as the dramatists of old have done, may point out the road to virtue, to honor and to national greatness.

The temple I have built and consecrated to the drama, I shall endeavor, whilst I live, to present under the great dramatic rule, "To hold, as 'twere the mirror up to nature." Then, if to show vice in its greatest deformity, and to place virtue in its most lovely form, be an object of high importance in a well regulated community,
and if the fact that all civilized nations have established and encouraged the regular drama, may be adduced as a proof, the theatre cannot fail to be viewed the most powerful engine that can be resorted to for the purpose of advancing the best interests of society, and the great and permanent cause of morals.

With respect, gentlemen,
I remain, your friend and
Obliged serv't.
JAS. H. CALDWELL.

On November 30, 1835 the mighty establishment opened its doors and admitted a numerous audience, despite a last-minute report that the building was in danger of falling down. The advertisement of the opening bill listed a company and prospective stars much like those that had been announced earlier, with the exception that J. W. Forbes was listed as stage manager and not Finn. J. S. Maeder, Clara Fisher's new husband, was director of the orchestra and George Holland was announced as secretary to the enterprise. Tickets were sold according to the following schedule: Chairs in the private boxes and parquette, $1.50; amphitheatre boxes and pit, $1.00; free colored persons, $1.00; amphitheatre of the gallery, $.50. Slaves were to be admitted only upon exhibiting passes from their masters. Peanuts were proscribed.

The entertainment on opening night began with the recitation by Forbes of the prize address at 6:45 P. M. The orchestra then performed the overture to Masaniello,

32 New Orleans Bee, December 1, 1835.
33 Ibid., November 30, 1835.
which was followed by the chief attraction of the evening, *The School For Scandal*. For the first time in his career Caldwell was not a member of the cast of the play which launched one of his new theatres. His usual role of Charles Surface was performed by Barton. The play was followed by the traditional farce—in this instance *The Spoiled Child*—and between the play and the afterpiece the orchestra performed the overture to *Der Freischütz*.  

The specific chronicle of plays and players of this and subsequent seasons at the St. Charles Theatre has been detailed in another study, and will not be recounted here. The highlights of this first season, however, give a good picture of the general nature of the offerings of the theatre and its successes and failures. One of these highlights was the appearance of the dancer Celeste. Although she never attained the popularity achieved by Fanny Elssler, Caldwell must have felt that she would provide a strong attraction to the people of New Orleans; the *Bee* of September 23 reported that he had engaged her for four weeks for $5,000 cash and two clear half-benefits. On December 21 the *Bee* wryly guessed that she would that night "have for herself what she will not be to Caldwell—a benefit." Caldwell's speculations with regard to Celeste had been wrong for, although she had drawn houses of from $2,250

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35 *Smith, op. cit.*
to $2,500 according to the Bee of the 16th and 22nd, the price Caldwell had had to pay for her talent had resulted in a loss for him on her engagement.

Caldwell may have been smarting under this loss when he wrote the following letter to F. C. Wemyes, manager of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia.

Dr Sir,

Your esteemed favors I have duly received--I have determined as far as practicable not to engage performers to travel as stars under my auspices--The drama cannot become highly respectable till the starring system is at an end--there is only one excuse for such name as star and that is when in such talent as Talma, Kemble, Kean, Siddons, Catalani, Paganini--who appear only once in a century--all the rest is injurious and I will lend my feeble art to stop it--to make mediocre talent prominent by letters 5 or 6 inches long in a play bill is ridiculous--for tyros to claim precedence over superior talent merely because an uproarious few choose to designate them great is to leave the dramatis personae at [word obscured] Theatres the rulers and not the Proprietors.--

Caldwell had greatly extended himself to provide for the citizens of New Orleans a "temple of the drama," as he so often was to call it. By and large his efforts, this first season at least, met with their approval, if not with their wholehearted support. The orchestra at the St. Charles, in particular, was highly thought of; the Bee said it was, with the exception of the orchestra at the French Theatre, the "best in the United States." A correspondent

36 Department of Archives and Manuscripts, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

37 New Orleans Bee, December 4, 1835.
for the *Spirit of the Times*, in comparing the St. Charles and the new National Theatre, said, "Caldwell's orchestra is as far before this as a violin is before a *Jew's harp*." The good manners of the audience which the grandeur of the St. Charles seemed to demand also pleased the *Bee*, which contrasted the atmosphere there with that to be found in more typical theatres of the day:

The St. Charles street theatre has been highly commended by journalists, who have however very singularly confined their praises to the appearance of the house, and the respective performers. This is not dealing out justice to the proprietor and administration; and it therefore devolves on us as being impartially desirous of promoting all objects of public interest and amusements to advert to the discipline established at Caldwell's theatre.

This we do also because we are greatly pleased with the order preserved and decorum displayed in that theatre—which is of course attributable to Mr. Caldwell; in his laudable intention of maintaining the legitimacy of the regular drama; and rendering his establishment not only one of instruction and amusement, but one where virtue and delicacy can enter and remain without being offended.

In all other theatres in this country, with the exception of the Orleans street, the auditors are offended with graceless sights and grating sounds. The pits are usually devoted to persons of the meanest class, placed between the respectable auditors and the performers: so that immorality may have its full effect, and astonish or affright the audience. This is not indeed the case at the Camp street theatre; yet it like all others has its hen roost for 'ladies of a certain class' and its dramshop for drunkards and smokers, to excite loungers and others to licentiousness and disorders. Not so with the theatre of Caldwell. He has no abiding place for the libidinous and disorderly; no pigeon holes or dram asylums within his theatre—but a convenient place for every respectable citizen according to his rank and means. The utmost decorum is observed at all times: and a mother or daughter can as safely sit unmolested and

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38 *Spirit of the Times*, April 9, 1936.
unoffended in her box or boudoir at this theatre, as in her parlor or drawing room at home.

This must effectually render Caldwell's theatre fashionable, altho it may at first deny him the support of the lewd and uproarious--with which he can very well dispense. We may believe that in this respect, Caldwell is truly a public benefactor.39

But on December 9, 1835 the Bee felt it necessary to admonish Caldwell's lieutenants about starting the amusements at the hour announced since, said the Bee "our citizens do not like to be detained till midnight." And on December 17, as though unable longer to restrain itself in a vein of mild complaint and general good will, the Bee broke out with a lengthy list of corrections to both Caldwell and Russell. It did this, said the Bee, despite its resolve "not to criticize minutely or frequently our theatres during the present season, on account of the very ungenerous reception of the impartial remarks we hazarded last season."

The Bee noted that it was pleased that Caldwell had taken down the partitions between the boxes--the tout ensemble was improved and hearing and seeing advantaged. It was happy to note, also, that he planned to erect stoves shortly and thus end the "noxious evil, in the effects of colds and catarrhs." "But," chided the Bee, "he should have improved the entrance to his theatre--the pavement and the vestibule; and also erect immediately the balustrade to the first landing." As for the productions of the plays,

39New Orleans Bee, December 8, 1835.
the Bee suggested he should pay more attention to casting—"he has a few good performers; but they seem useless to him." And again Caldwell was reminded "he should fulfill the ordinances of the corporation... as regards the time elapsing between the acts and plays; and... he should never keep his audience later than 11 p.m." The Bee felt that "public opinion was against any instrumental performer exhibiting himself on stage," and it reminded Caldwell that "no play should be introduced which depends wholly on any one performer;" none of his performers were up to such a task, such favoritism would beget jealousy, and plays of this sort fatigued an audience. The paper confessed itself pleased to find ladies in attendance at Caldwell's establishment, but found that it had been mistaken "in anticipating that ladies of a certain class would not be permitted to display themselves and their gambols." On February 25 Caldwell was advised by the Bee to "have the scene-shifting better attended to... many of the scenes are not near wide enough for the stage." He was reminded again of the disgraceful state of the pavement before the doors of the theatre.

During the first three months of the season at the St. Charles opera was a fairly regular part of the bill of fare. Mostly these were the popular English operas such as Cinderella or Rob Roy MacGregor, but occasionally French and Italian opera were essayed. The excellent orchestra
notwithstanding, the results were not always pleasing. Caldwell's company was not up to such ambitious undertakings, and opera was not very favorably received until the engagement of the Italian Opera Company in March. One of the members of the regular stock company whom the press regularly castigated for her singing was Miss Charlotte Cushman, who was a singing protegee of the musical director of the establishment, James Maeder. Reviewing a performance of The Marriage of Figaro the Bee said "she made the worst countess we have had the honor of seeing for some time: she is scarcely a third rate songstress." And on April 12, after an excruciating performance of Cinderella, the same paper said of her, "Miss Cushman can sing nothing; therefore in justice to herself and in mercy to the audience she should confine herself to acting parts, in which she can perform with success." On February 8, 1836 the Bee devoted considerable space to detailing her faults:

However disposed we are to forward the meritorious aspirations of any in their profession, we do not consider it justice to supplant the deserving by those who possess temporary influence. Miss Cushman being the pupil of the musical director is thrust forward in and out of season, that she may 'make a hit' in some character, but her hits are all amiss. As an actress she has some qualifications, particularly in her recitations; but we would as soon hear a peacock attempt the carols of a nightingale as listen to her squalling caricatures of singing. Yet this lady must be placed before Mrs. Gibbs, altho she possesses neither taste nor skill; is seldom in tune; and that 'panting time toils after her in vain.'

At long last Charlotte seems to have taken the hint:

She consulted Mr. Caldwell, . . . who advised
her to give up the thought of singing and study to be an actress. She was then presented to Mr. Barton, the leading man of Mr. Caldwell's company, and after a short time, when Mr. Barton was to have a benefit, he arranged that she should act Lady Macbeth to his Macbeth. Of this we have an account in Miss Cushman's own words: "Upon this it was decided that I should give up singing and take to acting. My contract with Mr. Maeder was annulled, it being the end of the season. So enraptured was I with the idea of acting this part, and so fearful of anything preventing me, that I did not tell the manager I had no dresses, until it was too late for me to be prevented from acting it; and the day before the performance, after rehearsal, I told him. He immediately sat down and wrote a note of introduction for me to the tragedienne of the French Theatre. . . . This note was to ask her to help me to costume for the role of Lady Macbeth. I was a tall, thin, lanky girl at that time, about five feet six inches in height. The French woman, Madame Closel, was a short, fat person of not more than four feet ten inches, waist full twice the size of mine, with a very large bust; but her shape did not prevent her being a very great actress. The ludicrousness of her clothes being made to fit me struck her at once. She roared with laughter; but she was very good-natured, saw my distress, and set to work to see how she could help it. By dint of piecing out the skirt of one dress it was made to answer for an underskirt, and then another dress was taken in in every direction to do duty as an overdress, and so make up the costume. And thus I essayed for the first time the part of Lady Macbeth, fortunately to the satisfaction of the audience, the manager, and all the members of the company.  

We have only Charlotte Cushman's word for the satisfaction she afforded the manager, the audience and the company, but the Bee of April 25 expressed its cautious approval as follows:

Miss CUSHMAN appeared as Lady Macbeth

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on Saturday; and realized the hopes entertained of her. To such line of characters, she should confine her attention, if she means to excel on the stage; and then she may command approbation and applause: but as for her singing, it is pro-di-gi-ous.

Caldwell's engagement of a superior orchestra, his raising of the ticket prices, and his other efforts to make the St. Charles a place of le bon ton, may indicate that he had had plans for the introduction of grand opera even before the season started. However, he did not sign a contract with the Italian Opera Company, and its manager G. B. Montresor, until February 24, 1836. Prior to this he had advertised in the New Orleans Bee of February 3 for a number of ladies and gentlemen choristers and an additional twenty-five musicians to supplement the St. Charles orchestra. Caldwell's contract with Montresor and his company was for three months beginning March 4, 1836. The company was obligated to perform for only twenty-four nights, but was required to do at least four different principal operas. For the engagement they were to receive $10,000--$1,000 payable on arrival; $1,500 after the first performance; $2,500 after the first month; $2,500 after two months; and $2,500 at the conclusion of the engagement. Additionally, the company was to receive four half-benefits to be played over and beyond the twenty-four performances. The Bee of February 27 reported the price as $20,000, and

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this may have been true inasmuch as the contract described above was not signed.\textsuperscript{42} Also, the heavy losses Caldwell was reported to have suffered during this season may reflect the higher price for the opera.

At first the opera was immensely successful. The \textit{Bee} lauded the project even before the first performance:

\begin{quote}
It is evident that we are not of those disposed to flatter any person: it must consequently be considered merit intrinsically good which can extract our praise.--Caldwell has done more than we could have expected from any single individual in erecting a theatre which will be an ornament to the city; and which even now is an agreeable, favorite, fashionable and instructive resort for our citizens. His enterprise is unparalleled. He has done alone and unaided what was usually performed by monarchs, governments or companies: no single individual erected a theatre like his.

But he is determined to excel in another manner also. It requires the wealth of the French government to maintain an Italian Opera in Paris; and the wealth and influence of the English nobility to maintain one in London. It required a large subscription of the monetaries of New York to engage the Italian corps in that city. Yet one man among us has the energy to engage the whole company on his own responsibility at his own charge.\textsuperscript{43}

The company opened with Bellini's \textit{Il Pirata} to a "crowded and fashionable auditory," according to the \textit{Bee} of March 7. Performances followed three times a week--Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Caldwell had quietly instituted Sunday performances again on January 3, and no mention was made of the fact by public or press, although the \textit{Bee} of March 8 obliquely referred to the Sunday
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{42}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{New Orleans Bee}, March 4, 1836.
performance of the opera in noting that "many will attend
\[\text{Wednesday}\] who were prevented on Sunday by scrupulous delicacy, or feelings of doubt." Perhaps any strong protests were vitiated by the fact that Caldwell's Italian Opera Company had, in the words of the Bee, "taken the town by storm."

Caldwell's local success with opera stimulated him to attempt to promote it on a grander scale in New York. In March the New York Times reported that Caldwell had written to offer to take the Italian Opera House in that city for one year, but, the paper said, had imposed so many restrictions on the proposed terms of his occupancy that the owners declined to negotiate further. The New York Spirit of the Times, which repeated this story in its March 12 issue, further declared that Dick Russell was anxious to engage the Opera House and, according to the paper, stood a better chance of gaining his desire than did Caldwell. Why either of them wished to take over an establishment that had been a consistent money loser since its opening in the fall of 1833 is a mystery.\(^{44}\) A later item in the Spirit of the Times of April 30, 1836 indicated that Caldwell may have entertained further thoughts of entering the New York theatrical arena. Said the paper: "Caldwell is thinking of erecting a spacious theatre on the site of the Arcade Baths in Chamber street." Nothing further developed with

\(^{44}\) The Italian Opera is said to have lost $30,000 in its first New York season alone. See Coad and Mims, op. cit., p. 105.
respect to either proposal.

Despite the excellence and novelty of the Italian Opera in New Orleans, Caldwell did not attract the crowds he had hoped for to the St. Charles Theatre. In addition to the surprisingly strong appeal of Russell's theatre, Orleanians were spending their entertainment dollars at the excellent French Theatre in Orleans street and at the immense circus. The advent of the Lenten season in March further drastically reduced attendance at the opera, although the circus continued to attract huge crowds. Noting this, Caldwell added an equestrian troupe to the St. Charles company and played such horse spectacles as Timour the Tartar and El Hyder in alternation with the opera and standard stock plays. After Easter the opera began to be well attended again—some 2,000 people came to see Norma on April 6 according to the Bee of the 8th—but by the 23rd the Bee reported all the theatres "almost deserted . . . The Italian Opera no longer attracts at the St. Charles."

A final novelty of the season deserves mention since it is indicative of the poor quality which the St. Charles, despite its facilities and personnel, sometimes provided. On May 16 an original play entitled The Martyr

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45 *Spirit of the Times*, February 20, 1836.

46 *New Orleans Bee*, April 8, 1836.

47 Ibid., March 19, 1836. See, also, Smither, op. cit., pp. 426-47.
Patriots by a New Orleans attorney named Thomas Wharton Collens was performed. The True American of May 14 assured its readers that they would see the play "done better than it can be by any company in the country." This assertion was to be called seriously into question after the first of its two performances.

Collens had chosen for his plot an incident in Louisiana Colonial history of the period of the Spanish occupation in 1769, the uprising of a band of French residents against the Spanish governors Ulloa and O'Reilly. An incensed communicant to the Bee of May 19 described the St. Charles Theatre's production of the play as "literary murder," and supported his opinion with the following damaging criticisms:

The getting up of this was the most meagre thing imaginable, with the exception of the dream scene which would have succeeded had the scene shifter and the stage manager done justice to the beautiful paintings of Mondelli. The dresses were all out of time and place and so shabby that they would have been more fit for carnival masquerades than a decent theatre. To give an idea of the manner in which the play was got up we will give one fact among many. In the fifth act five men are to be shot by a detachment of soldiers--in order to make the illusion complete this detachment is made up, at the St. Charles theatre, of four men! So that we must suppose them to be even greater shots than Crockett himself, for, not only do they kill five men, but one of their stray balls puts to death the heroine of the piece. . . . Let the fault be laid at the proper door. We do not so much blame Mr. Caldwell, for he has so many pots in the fire he cannot attend to them all, he is obliged to leave things to others who do not feel sufficiently interested, and who have not Mr. C's taste or experience.
The "pots in the fire" alluded to above may have been in large part responsible for the disappointment which this first season must have afforded Caldwell. Although he had re-entered the theatrical world he had continued his activities in the worlds of commerce and politics. The St. Charles needed his firm hand to control its course oftener than he was able to provide it. But apart from the fact that Caldwell's lieutenants at the St. Charles did not always serve him well, three factors loom as being responsible for the failure of this first season: the first was the fact that in the public mind at least, Caldwell's entering into competition with Russell and Rowe was thought at best, ungentlemanly; the second was monetary—he had raised the prices of admission and, instead of profiting had thereby excluded people from the theatre, and third, his engagement of the Italian Opera had been a dead loss to him.

In the words of the *Spirit of the Times* of February 20, Russell's success against Caldwell's mammoth enterprise was "as unprecedented as unexpected." Early in the season the *Bee* had admonished Russell about the lack of care in selecting good plays, although it preferred his stock company to that of the St. Charles. It warned him that he "must bestir himself in the spirit of energetic emulation, if he would successfully contend."48 Seemingly Russell had accepted the advice and the competition he was

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able to offer Caldwell during the rest of the season made serious inroads into Caldwell's expected profits, particularly since Russell maintained the lower ticket prices. As Caldwell on one occasion had not, Russell was careful to maintain a favorable public opinion of himself and his theatre. For example, Russell had provided an unsolicited benefit for the widows and orphans of those fighting for Texas independence. The Bee of April 16 promptly asked why Messrs. Caldwell and Davis--the director of the French Theatre--had not acted as generously.

Yet, by and large, the press of New Orleans seemed to wish Caldwell's enterprise well. The Bee, in particular, frequently referred to the St. Charles as "the resort of the gay and fashionable," and often commended Caldwell's civic zeal in establishing his theatre and in providing within it such unexampled attractions, albeit the public was slow to give them concrete support. As the season drew to a close in the last week of May, The Bee commented rather extensively on its success, or lack thereof:

Caldwell's new theatre has not been so successful as expected, or as it deserved. Many causes contributed to this--probably the increased price of entry, and perhaps many of our conscientious citizens were reluctant to give him that support which they otherwise might, had they not supposed that he should not have built another theatre, so long as his lease of one to Russell continued. Yet Caldwell certainly has deserved well of his fellow citizens, for giving them the most splendid theatre in this country; for embarking almost his whole fortune and prospects in the undertaking, and for his earnest endeavor to elevate the dramatic and musical taste of the public. But though his theatre has not been
supported as we desired, we cannot say that his fellow citizens do not appreciate his merits, or are ungrateful: for he has seldom in vain sought any public favour. After a temporary success in establishing gasworks here, he procured a banking charter with a capital of 6 millions, and very extraordinary privileges to continue those works; and next session of the legislature he procured a banking and insurance charter for his theatre and arcade--thus securing him from any eventual loss. And the moment he consented to become an alderman of the city, he was almost unanimously elected: nay in the council of the corporation, he procured a privilege not granted to another citizen--that of erecting a portico entirely across the banquet or trottoir in front of his new theatre.--Our citizens cannot therefore be ignorant of his merits, or ungrateful for his public services; however he richly deserves all the public favors he has received; and our regret is that New Orleans has not 10 or 12 citizens possessed of his energy and enterprize.

He is some 20 or 30 years before the age of improvement or population in this city: for his theatre will be almost capable of holding the playgoers in that time herafter /sic/. Viewing the matter as at present, he committed a serious error, in not having constructed his theatre below Canal street: for then he would have concentrated all classes of our population in his favor--many of whom are unfortunately controlled by local prejudices.

Caldwell's main-stay during the season was his orchestra, which was the best in this country--the French perhaps excepted... We regret to hear that many of these will be lost to our community next season.

His dramatic company cannot be complimented en masse as effective and he seemed so well aware of this that he was obliged to rely on the starring system for support.--Many of these itinerants /sic/ he has enriched at his own risk and loss; although some of them deserved the support he gave them.

His Italian company will be re-engaged and reinforced next season. We cannot say that we were pleased with any of them except Pedrotti and Montressor...

The theatre of Russell did not succeed very well at the commencement of the season, because he relied on the stars for success... But when he thought proper to rely on the strength...
and capabilities of his own stock company, by exhibiting them in good dramas, he succeeded beyond his expectations. . . so that we trust he shall have realized about $1,000 when he terminates his campaign by his own benefit.\footnote{New Orleans Bee, May 23, 1836.}

Whereas Russell had made money, according to the \textit{Bee}, Caldwell had lost it—largely because of the heavy expenses he had incurred with the Italian Opera. On June 7 the \textit{Bee} had these opinions of the opera season:

\begin{quote}
The Italian opera has had its refuge in New Orleans: not that it has commanded success here, after having failed elsewhere; but that it has not so wholly failed here as in other places. The Italian opera cannot be sustained in any city out of Italy, so as to realize a profit by its representations,--as the expenses attending them are necessarily great; and as it is not suited to the taste of the many. It is therefore usually placed under the protection of the government, or some cognoscenti, who are willing to bear the expense for the sake of the gratification and fashion of the enjoyment. But it is a luxury not relished by all; and its expenditures must fall on some to sustain it.

In New Orleans, it has been Mr. Caldwell's fate to be almost the sole patron; but certainly the sole sufferer. Unaided he engaged the whole troupe at an expense of $20,000—the extravagant sum at which they rated their talents and attractions; but at the end of the season, he finds his coffers minus $10,750. This he had to pay to gratify his own taste in catering for the public.

It has however taught him very partially a lesson of precaution hereafter: for with the exception of Pedrotti and Montressor, who are gone to Havana, he has engaged all the troupe for Louisville—to tickle and elevate the taste of the Kentuckians. But he has been taught; for he refused to engage the company for New Orleans unless a certain number of boxes was purchased previously for the ensuing season. This has been nearly effected; altho it is not certain whether either Montressor or Pedrotti can be here next winter—as their engagement at Havana may preclude an
engagement with Mr. Caldwell. Yet if it is possible to have them, it is probable he will have them there.

He has sent an agent to England to engage as many chorus-singers as possible; and finding that the legitimate drama cannot succeed in New Orleans, he will next year concentrate his energy and attention on Italian and English opera, on melodramas and ballets, on spectacles and other attractions.

Clearly Caldwell was taking no chances with opera during the next season. Sometime before May 2 he had called for subscriptions to boxes for the next year, and by May 30 he called a meeting of "all persons who desire to secure the Italian opera next season," underscoring the importance of the meeting with the threat that upon it depended "the continuance of Grand Opera in this city." His efforts were not in vain; within two days every box in the first tier had been taken. According to the Spirit of the Times of June 25 the committee set a goal for itself of $21,000, the sum Caldwell must have to prevent his abandoning the opera. The money was raised as follows: the four stage boxes were taken for $1,500 each for a total of $6,000; eleven other boxes went for $1,000 apiece. This sale was accomplished the first day; the remaining four boxes were sold soon thereafter, in addition to a number of parquette seats at $100 apiece.

Caldwell's relations with Dick Russell had seriously deteriorated during this season. By February 20 the Spirit

50 True American, May 2, 1836.
51 New Orleans Bee, May 30, 1836.
52 True American, May 31 and June 1, 1836.
of the Times reported that Russell was setting out to "expose" the transactions between him, his late partner Rowe, and Caldwell, "with no very signal credit" upon Caldwell; and, further, that Russell intended himself to build a theatre that would "surpass 'the monster' in comfort, beauty, and convenience, on the expiration of his present lease." By early May Russell and Caldwell were in court. Caldwell, in building the St. Charles Arcade and Baths, which adjoined the Camp Street Theatre property, had infringed on the premises which he had under lease to Russell. Russell sued for damages and Caldwell countersued for non-payment of rent. As usual, the judgment for damages went against Caldwell. He was ordered to pay Russell $2,700, although Russell was ordered to pay his back rent. 53

In light of the good artistic taste and sound business judgment which he had demonstrated in his previous conduct of the little Camp Street Theatre, it seems very likely that this first season at the St. Charles might have ended with more success had Caldwell given his full time to the management of it. His many other "pots in-the fire" undoubtedly drew his attention too often away from things theatrical. Neither the aim nor the scope of this study permits a detailed account of these many non-theatrical activities of James H. Caldwell, but to indicate the

53New Orleans Bee, May 9, 1836.
influence they had on his theatrical fortunes, they will be recounted briefly.

From October 1835 to November 1836 one of the things which kept Caldwell busy was attention to his personal investments. Several times monthly he was involved in some transaction in which property was either bought, sold or mortgaged. Many of these were minor business affairs, such as the leasing of space in the new Arcade for barrooms, or the sale of some of the lots he had inherited from Jane Placide. The whole of these transactions did not involve more than $25,000. But other dealings involved rather sizeable sums. In October of 1835 Caldwell borrowed $60,000 from Samuel J. Peters' City Bank, for which he mortgaged the St. Charles Theatre and the Arcade properties for five years. In January of 1836 he borrowed $40,000 from the Gas Light and Banking Company for which he mortgaged the Camp Street Theatre and Arcade Baths for five years. And in May of the same year Caldwell borrowed $50,000 from the Gas Light Bank for which he gave an apparent second mortgage on two lots on Camp Street, already mortgaged to the Bank.

55 Ibid., January 13 and April 7, 1836.
56 Notarial Acts of H. B. Cenas, October 9, 1835, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.
of Louisiana. In April of 1836 Caldwell turned a quick profit of $5,000 by buying at auction a portion of the Jean Gravier plantation (the American section of New Orleans had been the Gravier holding) which he sold for $43,500 four days later.

In association with Levi Peirce on November 7 he purchased from George W. Pritchard the square of ground bounded by Gravier, Carondelet, Union and St. Charles streets, today one of the most costly pieces of real property in the New Orleans financial district.

The construction of the Arcade Baths has been previously described. The Baths were opened on April 18, 1836, according to the Bee of the 19th which described them as elegant and comfortable and with strict discipline prevailing in their confines. The Bee noted, also, that "ladies can now for the first time be accommodated with baths in this city."

With a theatre, a restaurant, a bathing establishment, a small hotel and various shops, barrooms, billiard rooms and cigar stores massed under one roof, Caldwell saw the necessity for incorporation of these varied undertakings. In consequence, he applied for and

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58 Ibid., May 17 and 23, 1836.
61 Supra, pp. 275-77.
received on March 11, 1836, from the Louisiana Legislature, articles of incorporation for the St. Charles Theatre, Arcade, and Arcade Baths Company. The act provided for the usual mechanics of incorporation: powers, seal, by-laws, directors, votes, capitalization, stock, etc. As a sort of after-thought these same privileges were granted to John Davis and the Orleans Street Theatre. Then on May 30 and subsequently the following advertisement appeared in the True American:

ST. CHARLES THEATRE, ARCADE & ARCADE BATHS CO.--27 Camp Street.--This institution is now ready to transact business as per act of incorporation. Bills of Exchange, notes of hand, gold, and uncurent money purchased. Insurance effected on marine and fire risks. Interest on deposite(sic), will be paid at the following rates:

All sums over $100, remaining one month, at the rate of 4 per cent per annum; Do. 3 months, 5 per cent per annum; Do. 6 months, 6 per cent per annum; Do. 12 months, 7 per cent per annum.

Stockholders who pay up the full amount of their stock, will be allowed an interest at the rate of 7 per cent per annum, until the whole amount shall be called in by the directors.

GEO. WENT
Cashier.

Anyone who had read the act of incorporation would have been at a loss to determine in what way the privilege was even implied therein, but clearly the St. Charles Theatre, Arcade and Arcade Baths Company was in the lucrative banking business.

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Reaction to this development was not long in appearing. A newspaper called The Post and Union questioned the legality of Caldwell's company issuing script, bonds, notes or obligations, and made some covert allusions to the ownership of the company being Caldwell's exclusively. The Bee of June 7 and 8, seconded by the True American of June 8, came quickly to the defense of the company with opinions that the company was, under its charter, "qualified to exercise all the privileges of a banking company."
The rationale for this view was that "citizens are not compelled to receive such notes as tenders of payment; nor are they bound to discount their own personal notes for the scrip or notes of the bank; but those who choose may transact banking business in its utmost extent and agreeably to law with said bankit [sic] company."

Having created the corporation, On June 20, 1836 Caldwell sold to that corporation the Camp Street Theatre, the St. Charles Theatre, and the Arcade, as well as two additional lots on Camp Street. In the act of sale provision was made for: the lease of the Camp Street Theatre to Russell for $9,000 a year; the lease of the St. Charles Theatre to Caldwell for $12,000 a year; the lease of the baths, barrooms and second story billiard room to Caldwell for $10,000 a year; and the lease of the barrooms in the St. Charles Theatre, the restaurant, the bedrooms, the kitchen

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and other spaces to sundry other persons for various fees. The whole was sold to the corporation by Caldwell for the sum of $500,000 to be given him in fifty $10,000 bonds at seven per cent payable semi-annually and due in five years. Caldwell was to leave fifteen of the bonds on deposit with attorney William Christy, one of the directors of the corporation, as surety for the many mortgages on the purchased properties. The bonds would be redeemed as Caldwell reduced the mortgages and the bonds themselves were secured by a mortgage of the property to Caldwell. Caldwell for his part agreed to finish the construction, but the corporation would pay for fitting the bedrooms and kitchens, and install the chandelier and gas fixtures in the St. Charles Theatre and the Arcade Baths.

Perhaps in reaction to the above criticism of the banking and insurance privileges which the corporation had assumed, at the next session of the legislature a supplementary act was passed which made provision for specific privileges of marine and fire insurance as per "all the rights and powers granted to the Merchants Insurance Company of New Orleans," and which further provided that the companies created by the original act of incorporation:

shall only be permitted to invest their capital and surplus funds in state bonds, or in the bonds or shares of the city corporation or banks of this state, or in such property as may be necessary to carry into effect the objects of their incorporation.

64Acts Passed at the First Session of the Thirteenth Legislature of the State of Louisiana, (New Orleans: Jerome Bayon, State Printer, 1837), pp. 81-83.
For this last privilege the companies of Caldwell and Davis were to pay seven hundred fifty dollars annually in support of the volunteer fire companies of the city. The act was passed in March of 1837, but by June 5 the company, no doubt like others of its sort which felt the economic pressures of the times, was compelled to retrocede the property to Caldwell and destroy the bonds with which he had been paid. The minutes of the corporation meeting of May 20, 1837 which were annexed to the act of retrocession stated that "it clearly appeared that the objects of the company in its general operation has [sic] not been fully realized."

The newly established Daily Picayune in its January 31, 1837 issue had anticipated the death of the St. Charles Company and also alluded to a project of civic improvement in which Caldwell had expressed an interest:

What has become of the "Theatre and Arcade Bath Company," for which Mr. Caldwell obtained a charter last year? Gone to the tomb of the Capulets. Had he consulted us, we could have prophesied the result. We of the Second Municipality are content with as much Theatre-stock as a box ticket contains. They do these things differently in the First Municipality [the Vieux Carre, or original French section of the city], which has appropriated $200,000 towards the erection of a new Theatre. We saw it hinted in some paper, that Caldwell had turned his attention to the subject of cleaning out some of the passes of the Mississippi. Let him merge his Theatre charter in a "Balize Navigation Company," and let the legislature give him a bonus in some shape, that will furnish him with a fair

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remuneration for the risk. The recent pledge for his success, lies in the fact, that he has never failed in his execution of any project he has undertaken to promote public utility: and the best excuse for entrusting to his energies, is found in the following extract—

"Ships Salem, Katherine Jackson, Orleans, and Elizabeth Bruce, still on the bar—reported by the Pilots to be in nine feet water."

The difficulty which ocean-going vessels had in crossing the silt barriers at the mouth of the Mississippi River at certain periods of low water, or when the currents of the river had changed in such a way as to make the normal passes un navigable was one of the most serious problems hindering the development of New Orleans as a major American seaport. It was a problem which was not to be solved for many more years, but it had engaged Caldwell's attention the previous year. On March 26, 1836 the Bee had noted Caldwell's enthusiastic, if somewhat unrealistic, proposal:

We have heard that several engineers would undertake to make a passage at the Balize or one of the passes—or if you will to 'make a canal in the river,' which would enable vessels drawing 30 feet of water to navigate at all periods of the year, at a cost not exceeding $500,000. Yesterday we were told by Mr. JAMES H. CALDWELL, that he could and would do so for $300,000; and would ensure its permanency and efficiency.

No one ever accepted Caldwell's offer.

James Caldwell shared his contemporaries' deep interest in the potentials for progress which lay in the development and improvement of transportation. Their enthusiasm was understandable; tremendous technical advances had been made in the practical employment of the steam engine for both land and water travel. As has been seen,
Caldwell was already deeply involved in the affairs of the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad, although the greed which he and his associates evidenced in choosing a route for the sole purposes of land speculation seems to have obscured their good judgment. The first report issued by the company on June 7, 1836 gave some clues as to the troubles which were beginning to beset the company, and which would ultimately cause its demise. For one thing, the State of Louisiana had limited the company's charter to run only until 1838, unless the sanction of the State of Mississippi for crossing its territory could be obtained. As yet the Mississippi legislature had failed even to grant articles of incorporation to the company. And even within the city of New Orleans the rail company was meeting with obstructions: the Canal and Banking Company, which had been digging a ship canal from Lake Pontchartrain to downtown New Orleans, had refused to let the railroad pass over its canal en route to the lake. Finally, the rail company was having great difficulty in employing laborers because the death rate on the construction of the canal had been so high.

During the fall of 1836 Caldwell was busy promoting another mode of transportation. This was a scheme to establish a line of ocean-going steam packets to sail between New Orleans and Liverpool. Though Caldwell had the initial

66True American, June 26, 1836.
idea, it seems, in the long run he found himself somewhat outside the pale of this particular venture. It proved to be of little loss to him, however, since the plan eventually died. At first Caldwell proposed to "engraft the steam packet on the charter of the Arcade Baths and Theatre company," according to the Bee of November 1, 1836, which announced itself emphatically opposed to this proposition. While the Bee extolled the merits of establishing such a line, it asked that a public meeting be called for the purpose of expediting the scheme. Such a meeting was called on November 21, but Caldwell's name did not appear among those issuing the call, although he was present at the meeting and was appointed a commissioner to seek incorporation from the legislature, which was done by a memorial submitted on January 3, 1837. When the company was finally formed in mid-February, however, Caldwell was not among those elected as one of its directors. 67

Gas lighting was another non-theatrical enterprise in which Caldwell maintained considerable interest despite his resignation from the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company. That body had honored him in January of 1836 with a presentation of a silver service inscribed:

Presented to James H. Caldwell by the president and directors of the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company, as a testimonial of

67 For more details of the Orleans Navigation Company see, e.g., New Orleans Bee, November 21 and December 2, 1836 and January 6 and February 17, 1837.
their high import for, and admiration of the enterprise, energy and talent by him displayed in singly carrying into successful operation the great work of lighting with gas the city of New Orleans. 68

But he was already embarked on another gas lighting venture. The Bee of November 2, 1835 had reported that the city council of Louisville had entered into a contract with James H. Caldwell and Company for lighting that city with gas. And on September 10, 1836 the True American announced that the city council of Mobile, Alabama had granted Caldwell an exclusive privilege for thirty years to light that city with gas. Some interesting provisions of this latter contract were that Mobilians were not to be charged rates any higher than those of the New Orleans Gas Light Company, and Caldwell was to furnish gas to the city for street lighting at the rate of thirty dollars per year per lamp, including the services of lamplighters and keeping the lamps in repair. The Mobile city fathers seemed to have profited from the unpleasant experiences of the New Orleans city council. By March of 1837 Caldwell had commenced supplying the city of Mobile with gas. 69 And in March, also, Caldwell was reported to be "in treaty with Gov. Tacon for lighting the city of Havanna with gas," according to the Spirit of the Times of March 25, 1837.

68 New Orleans Bee, January 29, 1836.
69 Spirit of the Times, March 11, 1837.
A major portion of Caldwell's interest and time, in addition to the foregoing activities, was engaged by the affairs of the city council. His actions there were often well-considered and sincerely motivated. On occasion, as is frequently the case with politicians, his remarks could be gratuitous. In Caldwell's case his speeches could suffer, also, from his uncertain use of language, as the Bee pointed out on September 2, 1835:

In the report of the City Council will be found some simply sublime resolutions of Mr. Caldwell, which our readers are requested to translate into English—if they can.

CITY COUNCIL--Extraordinary Sitting
August 31, 1835.

Mr. Caldwell presented the following resolutions which were ordered to be printed.

Whereas the excitement growing out of the ridiculous and fanatical movements of certain misguided and bad men of the north and east of our confederacy, are too weak to affect the children of the sunny regions of the south and west; and seeing as we do the indignation manifested against said fanatics and abolitionists by the great majority of the children of the strongholds of said fanatics, abolitionists and bad men, viz: New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Baltimore, be it

Resolved, That we have every reliance upon our northern brethren that they will prostrate these vile disturbers of our public peace,—these clogs upon our great national industry,—these disseminators of dreams in the face of our great rights and truth,—these distributors of vile and rash lies and visionary trash.

Resolved further, That the moral and physical power we have within ourselves can and will prevent any danger to the public peace from the attacks of fanaticism, abolition, or any other name that the rights of our constitution and laws may be invaded under.

The rhetorical style as well as the sentiments were to endure in the South a hundred years after Caldwell.

The disparate views held by the mayor and some of
the Creole councilmen on the one hand, and Caldwell and his progressive American associates on the other, finally led to a political partition of the city of New Orleans in 1836. By act of the state legislature New Orleans was divided into three separate and nearly autonomous municipalities. Each municipality was to have its own council, chosen on the basis of one alderman for each one hundred voters, plus a recorder—a sort of municipal judge and president of the council. Caldwell resided in the Second Municipality, the American section of the city bounded by the river, Canal Street, Felicity Street, and extending in a narrow finger to the lakefront. For the April elections to the new council, Caldwell was announced as a candidate from the first district. The Bee of April 26 reported him elected with 118 votes, but in its publications of the proceedings of the council of May 2, Caldwell was not among those verified as elected. However, either the ward in which he lived was entitled to an additional representative, or one of those elected failed to claim his seat, because at its sitting on May 10 the council's committee on elections declared Caldwell "had been duly elected one of the aldermen of the first ward."

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71New Orleans Bee, February 26, 1836.
72True American, May 11, 1836.
Caldwell's interests in the council were centered on promoting gas lighting of the city, paving streets, regulation of wharves and landings, draining the city's swamps, and controlling incendiaryists. He was a member of the Finance Committee and the Committee on Streets and Landings. In the latter capacity he offered to the council to pave gratuitously with square stone the length of Camp Street between Poydras and Girod Streets to demonstrate the superiority of this type of paving.73

At the August 16 meeting of the council the following resolution of interest was introduced:

Resolved, That whereas "The True American," under date of 13th instant contains an editorial article, anticipating a resolution before this Council, on the subject of the opening of the Theatre on the Sabbath; and whereas, no such resolution has been offered to this Council, we view said article slanderous and unjust, because it is an attempt to forestall public opinion, and by attributing other very dishonorable sentiments to those who are willing to present a memorial, signed by respectable citizens, against opening the Theatre on the Sabbath in the Second Municipality, and without permission of the Mayor.74

The resolution was referred to a special committee, which reported back to the Council on September 6 that in its opinion the council had no right to take cognizance of the matter.

The affairs of the St. Charles Theatre were neglected

73Weekly reports of the proceedings of the Council of the Second Municipality were published in the True American of this period.

74True American, August 16, 1836.
for numerous other activities in which Caldwell found himself engaged this first season. On January 12, 1836 he was appointed to a committee to receive subscriptions to aid the widows and orphans of the victims of the Florida Indian massacre. In April he was appointed to a committee of superintendence and assistance in raising companies of volunteers to go to the aid of the Texians. As Independence Day approached Caldwell found himself working with a committee of twelve appointed to adopt measures for properly celebrating the national holiday in the three municipalities. With R. O. Pritchard, Bernard Marigny, and Samuel J. Peters, Caldwell worked to promote the erection of a statue to Robert Fulton, the inventor of the steamboat, in the great room of the Merchants Exchange. And as the presidential elections approached in the fall Caldwell involved himself in working with "The Friends of Martin Van Buren." James Caldwell was also one of the group of prominent citizens who served as directors in the establishment and construction of the St. Charles Hotel.

75 New Orleans Bee, January 12, 1836.
76 Ibid., April 23, 1836.
77 Ibid., June 24, 1836.
78 True American, June 26, 1836.
79 New Orleans Bee, October 15, 1836.
80 Ibid., March 7, 1836.
Caldwell spent the summer of 1836 in the city devoting the major portion of his time to the affairs of the Second Municipality, the council of which met almost weekly through the summer months. The recruitment of stars and a stock company for the forthcoming season at the St. Charles was put in the hands of W. H. Latham, who had succeeded Forbes as the stage manager of the St. Charles during the previous season. By July 23, 1836 Latham was able to report from New York that he had "concluded some valuable aid for the St. Charles company and Italian opera." He was on the point of sailing for Europe and had in his pocket a letter from Caldwell authorizing him to offer to the celebrated opera singer Mme. Maria Malibran ten thousand pounds sterling for playing in English and Italian opera in the United States for one year. By late August this extravagant offer had produced a rash of rumors, as the following extract from the Spirit of the Times of August 20 shows:

Some of our papers state that Madame Malibran was to sail on the 18th of July from London to New Orleans. We doubt it. None of our English papers allude to such a circumstance, and at our last advices she was quite as attractive as ever in London. Without adverting to the fact, that in all probability she would first come to New York if she came at all, as the city that had the taste to discover, and the feeling to nurture to maturity that divine voice which has since enchanted all Europe, it is "enough said" to remark, that Latham, Caldwell's agent, only

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81 True American, July 23, 1836.
82 Ibid., July 9, 1836.
sailed from this port about a month since, so that it is utterly impossible that intelligence of any engagements made by him can be known here. Besides, to realize the same amount produced by her salary and concert singing, our managers would be obliged to give her their entire receipts during her engagements. It would require them, like Rathbun, to "do a great stroke of business" to make money in that way.

The engagement, as the New York paper predicted, was not made. Before the year was over the talented singer had died.

In anticipation of continuing to offer Italian opera at the St. Charles during the winter of 1837, Caldwell had retained an opera troupe of sorts and had sent them to commence a season of opera in Louisville in August. This company was the Antonio DeRosa group, and probably was not a strong aggregation. Caldwell's attempt to introduce Italian opera to the citizens of Louisville did not meet with total acceptance. The True American of July 23 took to task "an evening paper published in Louisville" which had assailed Caldwell for what the True American noted "trying to improve the taste of the day by introducing novelty of a high order in the fine arts" in that city. Said the True American:

Mr. Caldwell is deeply interested in the west--has a fine theatre in Cincinnati, which he built at his own risk and cost; also, one in Nashville, and he intends to do the like at Louisville, and when the lease expires which temporarily deprives him of his property at Cincinnati and Louisville [sic], Mr. Caldwell will be found with the same enterprise which built those temples, taking the field again to cater for them, thus rescuing the drama from the thrall of ignorance, folly and

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83 Ibid., August 16, 1836.
ingratitude.

Caldwell, at Ludlow's Melodramatic Theatre, was, of course, competing in Louisville with Russell, who was at Drake's Theatre. The *Spirit of the Times* of September 10 reported them both as doing "a tolerable business, and *only* tolerable." "The Italian Petit Opera at Caldwell's," said the paper, "was a dead failure as to profit." At least one Kentuckian was unhappy with both managers, and did not believe that either of them would ever build a new theatre. His irate letter appeared in the *Spirit of the Times* of March 11, 1837:

**CHANCE FOR A SPIRITED THEATRICAL MANAGER.**

LOUISVILLE, (Ky.) Febr. 20th, 1837*

DEAR SIR,—In casting a glance now and then over your paper, I see you are a great friend of the Drama; and as there is not a city in the Union, of the same number of population that patronizes the drama like Louisville, you will be astonished when you hear how ill they are repaid. . . . RUSSELL and CALDWELL have been promising the citizens of Louisville for three years to build a new theatre, and there is no more prospect of it now than there was three years ago. CALDWELL, after having gone so far as to make contracts to build this spring, has backed out, and we are left without the prospect of any place of amusement during the approaching season. RUSSELL takes his company to Orleans; but when it comes summer, and warm enough to roast eggs, he opens the theatre. Now, a good opportunity offers for one of your enterprising managers in New York, with a good company, to come to Louisville, where there is a population rising to nearly 30,000, and where they go strong for a theatre. So you may see, there is a great chance for an enterprising manager soon to realize a fortune.

Caldwell closed his Louisville season on October 22, 1836.\(^8^4\)

In New Orleans work on the incomplete St. Charles Theatre and the Arcade Buildings was completed during the

\(^8^4\)Rusk, *op. cit.*, p. 452.
summer. Caldwell had paid James Gallier $41,638 for the construction of the Arcade, and they terminated their agreement. During October the St. Charles Theatre received embellishment in the form of some statuary and the long-awaited chandelier. The True American of October 4 contained the following item:

THE MUSES.--On board the Rockingham, hourly expected, are part of the statues for the St. Charles Theatre, carved by Alderman Dodge, of New York, and said to be superior to any thing of the kind executed in this country, since the days of the celebrated Rush.

Apollo, Melpomene, and Polyhymnia, are copied from an antique engraving by Margens. Apollo is intended for the peak of the pediment, and is 7 feet 4 inches; Melpomene and Thalia are for the right and left of the building; --we may hope to see them in their places before the opening of the theatre, which is to take place as soon after the 1st of November as the company can get down from Louisville, where they are playing as our correspondent informs us, with unexampled success.

And on October 10 the same paper noted:

At the St. Charles Theatre the magnificent chandelier is about to be elevated to its exalted station over the splendid pit of that beautiful temple of the muses, and a number of efficient hands being now at work, both on the exterior and interior, it is fully expected that performances will commence in the first week of November.

But before the New Orleans season could be launched, disaster struck Caldwell in another city. On October 21, 1836, the New Cincinnati Theatre and the entire stock of

85 Notarial Acts of William Christy (H. B. Cenas acting for Christy) op. cit., October 21, 1836.

86 This date has been variously reported. Zuber, op. cit., has both October 23 and October 25 in his manuscript. The True American of October 31, 1836 reported it as "the
wardrobe, books, props, music and scenery was destroyed by fire. The stage carpenter, a Mr. Martin, perished in the flames. Whether Caldwell was covered by insurance or lost the $30,000 it had cost him to build the theatre is not known. Russell's loss was $5,000 according to the Spirit of the Times of November 19, and the members of Russell's company lost their wardrobes and other personal possessions. The fact that the citizens of Cincinnati proposed to subscribe $30,000 to build a new theatre for Russell, as the Spirit of the Times claimed, might be an indication of the relative popularities of Russell and Caldwell in that city. The True American of October 31 announced that it was Caldwell's intention "to rebuild on the same site, to be opened by the time the lease of his Theatre expires, which has but a short time to run." But by that time the Panic of 1837 was on and Caldwell never re-entered Cincinnati in the theatre.

There is every indication that Caldwell had decided to devote a considerable portion of his time to a closer personal supervision of the activities of the St. Charles Theatre this season of 1836-1837. It was fortunate that he did. After opening on November 14 "under the most flattering auspices," with a house "crowded to overflowing, night of the 29th," clearly an error since it could not have received the information in only two days time. I have chosen the date October 21 from Rusk, op. cit., p. 452, since he cites the Cincinnati Daily Gazette of the period as his source.

87 New Orleans Bee, November 15, 1836.
the St. Charles began to have box office problems. At the end of the first two weeks the Bee, on November 29, delineated the difficulty thus:

With deep mortification we have observed that this magnificent temple has not, so far this season, received the encouragement to which it is so justly entitled; and without which it is impossible that it should be continued, or that the drama should be established among us upon a proper footing. The enterprising and liberal proprietor has done what few individuals could do, supposing that they had the ability to carry a favorite design for public utility into execution. He has built and endowed his theatre in a style of unsurpassed splendor. It ranks, in size, the third in the world, and as to comfort, elegance and beauty, it may be truly said, it is without a rival. The resident population are more particularly interested in its success; but as yet they have shewn towards it a culpable negligence. The burthen of its support is thrown upon strangers who visit our city on business and on pleasure; and who have displayed a much more lively interest in its behalf. When it is remembered, that great value has been given to property in the neighborhood of this establishment, that many have realized thousands of dollars by its location, it is with some astonishment we note this apathy. We shall again allude to the subject; but we hope, in the meanwhile, these remarks will not fail of having a beneficial effect.

And on December 1 the Bee did allude to the subject again:

There is another argument which appeals forcibly to the lovers of the legitimate drama, and which should not, for the credit of the dramatic taste of our community, be disregarded. It is well known that Mr. Caldwell has done every thing in his power to elevate the stage, and make it that which it should be, the great public instructor. The present is but an experiment, which depends upon the public for its success. If it fails, it will at least procrastinate any similar attempt for years; and, indeed, it is more than probable, that no attempt upon the same liberal footing will ever again be made.

If the Bee was circumspect about Caldwell's dissatisfaction
with public support and what he might do if it were not improved, the *Spirit of the Times* got right to the heart of the matter. It claimed that Caldwell had told the Orleanois if they did not better support the St. Charles he would convert it, with the Arcade Bath and Bank, into an immense hotel.  

The ill will which during the past season had only simmered below the surface of public notice, this year reached a galloping boil early in December when the battle of the handbills was waged between Caldwell and Russell. Caldwell began the battle in response to some unnamed rumor which he believed Russell to have originated against him:

TO THE MASTERS, PILOTS, ENGINEERS, AND BOATMEN OF THE WEST.

A most malignant, injurious and at the same time improbable falsehood has been industriously circulated among you, evidently with the desire of inducing you to withhold your patronage from the ST. CHARLES THEATRE. Although it would not be difficult to trace this slander to its source, by which I might excite the honest indignation which, among moral people, will always break forth against intended malice, I believe it sufficient to assert the falsehood of the charge, and to prove its improbability. This course is due to you as well as to myself. I am told that it has been reported to you, that I have expressed a wish that "Steamboat Characters," as you are called, should not visit the St. Charles. The ingenuous inventor of the term Steamboat Characters, whilst designing an injury to my establishment, has given an insult, by the derisive epithet, to that respectable body of men

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88*Spirit of the Times*, December 3, 1836.
whom he has abused by the expression. The contemptuous epithet which he has attempted to persuade you that I used, is due to his invention alone.

Permit me to put a single question to you, and I appeal to your candor and justice for an answer.

Do you believe that any men would go to the expense of half a million dollars in building an edifice of general resort, and then would declare that the attendance of any particular portion of the public would be disagreeable to him; and that, of all others, THAT portion would be them to whom I owe so much, and have received heretofore so much encouragement from; and more, do you think that I would willfully wound the feelings of those who have known me for the last twenty years, (many of them personally,) with nothing in view but the certain injury to my interests?

No! if you examine the thing, you will see that some absorbing motive, in opposition to my success, is connected with this falsehood.

I now repeat that I never even thought, much less uttered, the foolish words imputed to me; so far from it, I declare to you that I built the St. Charles Theatre with the intention of giving greater effect to that amusement of which you are the most liberal patrons. It is worthy of your support, for 'tis the richest monument of the arts in your great valley. Support it, and the drama will rise to its eminence--neglect it, and her influence will be prostrated in the south.

I pledge myself that as long as I am guardian of the Drama, you shall receive the best entertainment that can be afforded, without regarding the cost, and my warmest thanks for your patronage.

JAMES H. CALDWELL,
Proprietor St. Charles Theatre.

New Orleans, December, 1836

Russell's answering handbill was not long in putting in its appearance. Without denying the imputation that he had been

89 Theatrical Handbill, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.
responsible for the original slander, Russell launched into an attack on Caldwell for building the St. Charles and then made a class-conscious appeal for support of the little Camp Street Theatre:

TO THE
MASTERS, PILOTS, ENGINEERS AND BOATMEN OF THE WEST.

I yesterday saw a handbill, signed, JAMES H. CALDWELL, in which HE makes a strong appeal for your support, and concludes the SAME with a THREAT. Thus speaking of the St. Charles THEATRE, he says, "SUPPORT IT, and the Drama will rise to its eminence--NEGLECT IT, and her influence will be prostrated in the South." Oh! VANITY! VANITY! Now can James H. Caldwell be vain enough to suppose that if both HIMSELF and MYSELF should cease to EXIST, that there are not hundreds as fully competent to cater for the public TASTE. Common sense says YES.

Your humble servant now appeals to YOU to support THE LITTLE CAMP STREET THEATRE, and for the FOLLOWING REASONS:

First, that James H. Caldwell violated all good faith in the erection of a new Theatre, prior to the expiration of the lease of the Camp-St. THEATRE.

Secondly, that it was built with an intention to crush and ruin the subscriber, because he chose to use his funds as he deemed proper.

The following is a copy of a letter, written by James H. Caldwell, December 16th, 1831, showing the opinion HE entertained of the subscriber's competency:--

New Orleans, Dec. 16th, 1831.

"DEAR RUSSELL:
I had long intended, as a king of legacy for long services, that you and Rowe should be my successors; since you left me I had fixed on Rowe, and told him so; and perhaps the most fortunate act of your life has been the writing of your last letter.

(Signed) J. H. CALDWELL."

EXTRACT FROM MR. CALDWELL'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

"I am about to withdraw from management, perhaps forever; and have to recommend to your notice my successors--not strangers, but gentlemen
long known to you—Messrs. Russell & Rowe. I have leased my Theatre to these gentlemen for five years; and if that may be called industry which for fourteen years has been used to render the American Theatre enviable in the eyes of the Dramatic world, and which, cheered by your smiles and encouraged by your munificence, has made it one of the first dramatic establishments in the land, I may venture to assert confidently, that it will lose nothing in the hands of my successors, whose talent and whose industry have GROWN WITH MY GROWTH, and who will NEVER swerve from the intended course of their predecessor."

The subscriber presumes the foregoing sufficient to prove that he has been badly treated, and by one from whom he so little expected it. James H. Caldwell and myself LANDED TOGETHER—we WALKED to reach New Orleans together—and for the first two nights the same BED contained us. James H. Caldwell has been fortunate, report says—MADE ONE MILLION DOLLARS—has appropriated a large portion of it in order to effect my DESTRUCTION; but I do not believe he can accomplish his PURPOSE. No! I now appeal to my friends for that good feeling that has ever characterized them, to enable me to pay my DEBTS and SUPPORT MY FAMILY.

I am not ambitious, nor do I wish to be GOVERNOR! The appeal of James H. Caldwell to my friends evidently carries with it insinuations calculated to injur the "LITTLE CAMP,"

Which may HEAVEN preserve, as I have no BANKING PRIVILEGES—no WEALTHY MEN to SUPPORT it.

I again ask your support; and all that can be done to merit your patronage shall be done by your OLD FRIEND

DICK RUSSELL.

NEW ORLEANS, DECEMBER 10, 1836.90

The first month of the season Caldwell presented spectacle, such as Peter Wilkins which was on the opening bill with the petit comedy of The Secret, Shakespeare, the popular melodramas, farces and standard comedies, and, beginning December 4 and on Sundays only, operas by DeRosa's

90Ibid.
small group aided by some members of the stock company. The stars were Charles Mason, Mrs. Shaw, from the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane and the Park, and the ever-popular Mrs. Drake. These efforts proving unrewarding, however, and Caldwell on December 14 advertised in the pages of the Bee that "the legitimate Comedy will now be presented at this house, with unexceptional casts." To be produced were:

Those beautiful plays of Wild Oats, Way To Get Married, Dramatist, All in the Wrong, Way to keep him, Much ado about Nothing, West Indian, &c. comedies written in the golden age of dramatic literature; plays that stand the test of time—plays that, . . . cannot fail to expose the ephemeral productions continually manufactured, and as often disappearing, unnoticed and despised.

It was an astute managerial move. A writer to the Bee of December 21 who signed himself "Garrick" praised Caldwell for "his constant aim to please and gratify the public of New Orleans" in his presentation of these comedies. And the Bee itself in its December 30 issue anticipated "the return of the golden days of the drama from the delighted audiences that have patronized the St. Charles this season."

By January 26 the Picayune was able to observe that the public had begun to "appreciate and acknowledge Mr. CALDWELL's exertions . . . by furnishing full and fashionable audiences."

Comedy continued to receive a strong emphasis with the engagement of the elegant light comedian J. S. Balls in
February,\textsuperscript{91} and Caldwell himself was encouraged to perform a brief stint in his favorite roles beginning February 16, 1836. On that night he appeared as Belcour in \textit{The West Indian} to a house "filled . . . to overflowing," according to the \textit{Daily Picayune} of the next day, which stated that Caldwell appeared "to have lost little of that force and power we were wont to see in him; and performed the generous gentlemanly West Indian to perfection." The following evening the St. Charles was moderately well filled to witness his Benedick to the Beatrice of Mrs. Shaw in \textit{Much Ado About Nothing} with support from a cast which the \textit{Picayune} said "could not have been better in the United States." On February 18 Caldwell played Charles Surface in \textit{The School For Scandal} and, after the Sunday night interruption of opera, returned on the 20th to play the Duke Aranza in \textit{The Honeymoon}. For his benefit on the 21st Caldwell elected to play Gossamer in \textit{Laugh When You Can} and enlisted a strong cast from the visiting stars and principal members of the company to support him, as the note which he wrote to Balls, hurriedly changing the bill, demonstrates:

\begin{quote}
My Dear Balls,

I have just perceived that all the principal people Finn, Miss Melton & Latham--are out of my bill--if you have no objection we will do
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Daily Picayune}, January 29, 1837.
"High Life below Stairs"—please say this evening.

Your truly

James H. Caldwell

Feb 19
1837

The evening was given extra significance beyond Caldwell's benefit in that it was announced that he was taking his farewell of the stage. The program was as follows:

ST. CHARLES.
MR. CALDWELL
Will this evening take his FAREWELL OF THE STAGE!
And, agreeably to usage, it is announced as his BENEFIT.
In addition to the whole strength of the establishment, the evening's performances will be assisted by the following distinguished Artists, who have politely proffered their services on the occasion:
MR. BALLS, MR. FINN, MR. BARNES,
MRS. BARNES, MISS C. BARNES,
MISS MELTON, MR. BARTON, MR. LATHAM.

On TUESDAY, February 21st, 1837,
Will be presented, Reynold's Comedy of LAUGH
WHEN YOU CAN!

GOSSAMER - - - Mr. CALDWELL,
BONUS, - - - BARNES,
MORTIMER, - - - BARTON,
DELVILLE, - - - De BAR,
SAMBO, - - - KEPELL,
GREGORY, - - - DENNISON,
Mrs. MORTIMER, - - - Miss C. BARNES
EMILY, - - - Mrs. HUNT,93

92 Letter from James H. Caldwell to J. S. Walls, February 19, 1837, Theatre Collection, Harvard University Library.

93 Mrs. Hunt was the former Louisa Lane and the future Mrs. George Mossop and Mrs. John Drew. With her third marriage she founded the famous Drew-Barrymore theatrical clan. For this family tree see John Parker, Who's Who in the Theatre, Eleventh ed., rev. (London: Pitman and Sons, 1952), p. 1617.

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Miss GLOOMY, - - - SAUNDERS,
DOROTHY, - - - BARKER.
At the close of the Comedy, Mrs. BARNES will recite
COLLINS' ODE ON THE PASSIONS!
With all the Original Music.
SONG, . . . . . . . by . . . . . . . Mr. HUNT.
BALLAD, . . . . . . . by . . . . . . . Mr. PAGE.
GRAND OVERTURE TO MASANIELLO!
LEADER OF THE ORCHESTRE, . . . MR. FALLON. 
The evening's entertainments to conclude with the
Farce called
HIGH LIFE
BELOW STAIRS!
LOVELL - - - - - Mr. FINN,
LORD DUKE - - - - - BALLS,
SIR HARRY - - - - - LATHAM,
PHILLIP - - - - - BARKER,
FREEMAN - - - - - KEPELL,
TOM, - - - - - DENNISON,
COACHMAN - - - - - RUTHVEN,
GROOM - - - - - FENNER,
BOB, (the Bishop) - - - CORRI,
MRS. KITTY, - - - Miss MELTON,
LADY BAB, - - - Mrs. KINLOCK,
LADY CHARLOTTE, - - - HUNT,
HOUSEMAID, - - - Mueller,
COOK, - - - MANLY.

In Act 2d,
A MOCK QUADRILLE,
By all the Characters. 

The efforts of this brilliant cast seemingly were well
appreciated and the size of the house was a tribute to
Caldwell. An additional tribute was paid by the Picayune
in reviewing the previous evenings performance:

MR. JAMES H. CALDWELL took his farewell
benefit and leave of the stage last evening, and
was greeted by one of the most brilliant,
fashionable and the fullest house we have ever

 Fallon had replaced J. LaFolle as orchestra leader
when the latter died in January. LaFolle was the third
leader of the St. Charles orchestra to die within a space
of a few months. (See Daily Picayune, January 31, 1837.)

 Playbill, Theatre Collection, Harvard University
Library.

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We doubt whether there ever was so numerous an audience collected together in any theatre in the United States.—There was something in the scene peculiarly grand—and something melancholy withal—to see the founder of the drama in the South-West—the man who has done so much, who has appropriated thousands for its support—and who, as an actor, has universally made his auditors gaze with admiration and delight at his personations—an actor who has been wont "To hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature."

There was something, we say, melancholy in witnessing the last appearance of Mr. Caldwell upon the stage; but while we regret his loss as an actor, we are pleased to reflect that he is still to continue among us, and will use his powerful influence in fostering—in placing the drama on a better and more stable footing than it can be found in any other city of the world.

Caldwell's farewell speech was quoted "entirely from memory" by the Picayune of February 23:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—As an actor, I appear before you for the last time! I come to say that painful word—farewell! Leave-taking is ever a task of sorrow, but to an actor, it is doubly so. Bred amidst the scenes he is about to quit forever, it seems to him a type of his quitting this living world. That I should have voluntarily inflicted this pain upon myself; may appear strange, but it is natural. I was brought up from my boyhood an actor; and have ever been taught that they who advanced in the ranks of the profession, were always honored with some token of a farewell, I could not forego a custom so early taught. By your kind indulgence, I have been raised in my profession to the topmost round of the ladder, and I never could content myself with a commonplace exit. I naturally wished to leave behind me, in the dramatic records of the country, some token—some remembrance—some slight memorial by which future generations, might learn something of the departure from the stage, of James H. Caldwell. But I shall not retire into inactivity—it is not consistent with my character—which is one of enterprise and industry, as I trust I have evinced by my past labors, independently of my vocation as an actor. I name not these things boastingly; but having been flattered by your opinion of my capacity, I
deem it due to you to state these things. Painful as it is to say farewell to those we value—by me, as an actor, it must be said, and though it may conjure up images of my departure from the stage of action for "that bourne from whence no traveller returns," yet it brings with it the conviction, to my mind that when I go there to seek my destiny, as a man, I shall at least have the mental reservation that in this world, "I have done my duty." Farewell!

Except for a charity appearance at the end of this season, and brief "command" appearances in 1839 and 1841, Caldwell had in fact retired from the stage as an actor.

Though generally commendatory in its notices of the season at the St. Charles, the press found considerable opportunity to complain of a number of things ranging from the performance of the orchestra to the deportment of the ticket sellers. On January 28 the Picayune asked:

Why don't the orchestra of the St. Charles learn some other tunes to play between the acts of the different pieces, and not perform the same old ding-dong concerns, yesterday, today and forever? On entering the theatre late last evening, just as the drop-scene was falling, we asked a friend what act it was. "Wait till the Orchestra commence playing, and then I'll inform you"—as though they had some particular piece of music to perform after every act of the play.

The Picayune was annoyed by the orchestra in another way as well. The orchestra, being located between the audience and the stage, created a distraction with their repeated comings and goings in the orchestra pit. This was further aggravated by their cavalier slamming of the pit doors. The Picayune of February 12 suggested the doors should be "relieved of their terrible friction by the application of
some oleagenous substance." On the 25th the paper was happy to observe that the doors had been greased, but now called on Manager Caldwell to "send a man to the entrance leading into the front of the Theatre, with a pot of grease for the hinges, and some list for the edges of the several doors there." There were several other minor complaints of a similar nature made against the theatre by the press during the season.

Almost inevitably the minor members of the stock company earned the censure of the press and the public. On one occasion several days of controversy occurred when four actors of the company were singled out by a writer to the *Picayune* as each being "an utter disgrace to the actor's art." This vitriolic attack prompted replies by two of the actors, a Mr. Ruthven and a Mr. Relyea, and this in turn resulted in additional attacks on them by other disenchanted theatre-goers. Ruthven, in particular, had written in his own defence a long and obsequious letter to the editor, which by its very manner probably only served to increase impatience with him, much in the manner of those who kick at a fawning cur for its servility. Hopefully not in retribution for his lack of histrionic talent, Ruthven came to an unfortunate end in Natchez four years later when he was shot in the back while standing at a bar. It then developed that his name was Edwin Ruthven Isler,

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96 See *Daily Picayune*, February 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8, 1837.
that he was the son of a pioneer of the press in Mississippi, and that he himself had "justifiably" shot a man in Natchez in February of 1840.97

Another complaint was directed at the poor stage management at the St. Charles. It reflects the difficulty of efficiently conducting a theatre of its size with an almost nightly change of bill, notwithstanding the scenery was taken from stock:

A communication will be found in another column, from our correspondent "Viti Viti" relative to the delays and bad management generally, among the carpenters, scene shifters, and other unseen individuals attached to the St. Charles. He blames the stage manager for these faults generally, and perhaps with some justice; but we ourselves do not believe that all the stage managers on this side of the Atlantic, could ever make some of the flats move with facility, or keep them from catching and rubbing along, like a sleigh on bare ground, to the infinite annoyance of the auditors.—Forbes, the first stage manager at the Theatre, was scurvily treated last season by some of the papers, attaching all the blame to him for the ill-management behind the scenes; but after he was gone, the same old flats rubbed and dragged along just the same as ever—and will continue to do so until they are fixed some way, or more and better hands employed to shift them. If there is so much trouble now, what will there be when the Jewess and some of Celeste's heavy pieces are brought out?

(COMMUNICATED)

I am sorry to make so many complaints through your valuable journal, Messrs. Editors, but the cause of truth must be advocated, and I don't know why I should not do it. Actors are before the public, and their faults are known. No one of them suffers wrong, if he does his duty. But those unseen scene shifters and stage carpenters, on whose shoulders rest the whole of the machinery of a play, do at times excite my spleen. As we don't know who they are, the

97Ibid., December 26, 1840 and February 2, 1841.
critic cannot use them up, when they do wrong.
I have thought sometimes that the stage manager
ought to be responsible. We know him, but it
is hard he should have to bear the sins of others.
On reflection, I am sure he ought to answer for
the delinquencies, for he gets praise for the
success. Then, Mr. Latham, prepare, I am going
up shortly to Lympus--I believe they call it,--
and shall direct old bloody Mars to get Vulcan
to make me a brass pop-gun that will shoot grains
of barley, and such sort of ammunition, and when
I come back, if I see any more carelessness in
the men under your command, I'll open a broad-
side on you. I never was behind in a Theatre,
but I can fancy you have a bad set of boys to
deal with. A friend who has been behind, though,
tells me, you do get in so great a passion
sometimes. I don't wonder at it, for he says,
that when you order a flat shoved on, the stage
carpenter cries out to one of the men, "Bill,
mind me--"I'll do it myself then," you reply--
"You durstnot shove that on." Pretty language
indeed to a commander.--Then the stage carpenter
will cry out, when it's too late, "Jem, is that
flat on?" "All done, sir," answers Jem. And
when you want any thing particularly done, it
is sure never to be done. However this may be,
I don't intend to spare you, Mr. stage manager.
You are the general, and if you do not succeed
in carrying your point in a genteel style, I'll
institute a court of inquiry into your conduct,
the causes &c, &c to be held at the City of
Astoria. So, look out all ye generals, and take
the hint.

VITI-VITI.98

Caldwell was exempted from the foregoing criticisms,
which were, for the most part, of a relatively mild sort.
However, he was called directly to account for the lack of
decorum in the auditorium in the following communication
to the Picayune of February 10:

The manager of the St. Charles theatre
has acquired (and until lately deservedly) great
praise for the manner in which that establishment
has been conducted. We say until lately, without

98 Ibid., February 7, 1837.
regard to the stage, but with reference to the order and decorum of the audience. Within the last two weeks we have several times seen the attention of the whole house withdrawn entirely from the most interesting points of the performance by disturbance in the galleries. Whenever an individual, whether he be "loafer" or gentlemen in disguise, is disposed to be uproarious in his deportment he should be immediately expelled; but lest the innocent should suffer in place of the guilty, the utmost delicacy and caution should be observed by the constables in attendance. The officers of the St. Charles are a rough, ferocious looking set, who apparently delight in dragging gentlemen above them to the prison: whether to display their zeal, or from malevolence and envy we are unable to discover, but we do know of instances of innocent and unoffending gentlemen being taken to the calaboose, without even an intimation of their offence. This has been done more than once, and Mr. Caldwell should be made answerable for it, for his constables, judging from their conduct and appearance, are erring through ignorance, and should not, of course, be held responsible, even were they men of responsibility.

MORE ANON.

Caldwell was also called to account for the rudeness of his ticket sellers by an anonymous writer to the columns of the Bee of April 27:

Mr. Editor.--I called this afternoon at the office of the St. Charles Theatre, so that I might before hand make sure of a seat in the parquette. As I had heretofore done, I called for a particular number in a given row, anticipating no difficulty whatever in obtaining it, were it not taken: but to my surprise, the person whose province it is to see tickets refused me the number I wished to have, and handing me the number 16 of the first row, insisted I should take the one it suited the convenience of that subordinate character to offer, or else go away, or I should have no ticket at all. My remonstrances were of no avail, and this departure from the courtesy heretofore granted is the more striking that the number asked for, was not taken, nor likely to be unless particularly asked for.

My motives in claiming the insertion of
this notice in your liberal paper, is to inform the enterprising owner of the St. Charles Opera House how those he abandons the management of the Theatre to, are likely to induce the people's coming, and also to what extent they are abusing the powers entrusted to them.

Two other events of moment transpired during this season: Caldwell's altercation with the Italian Opera Company and Russell's announcement of his intention to build another American Theatre in the Second Municipality.

The Italian Opera Company, which had been playing at Havana, had been engaged by Caldwell at "a great expense," according to the Bee of April 6, to play a season of Italian opera beginning April 4 and playing three nights a week—Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays—until the end of the season. Though well-received by the public and the press, the Italian Opera was to provide a series of crises throughout the next two months and the end of the season found both parties to the contract—Caldwell and Signor Francisco Brihta, the manager of the troupe—engaged in bitter recrimination. Trouble was not slow in manifesting itself. Before the second performance of the troupe, in their second representation of Montrechi e Capuletti, Bellini's operatic treatment of the Romeo and Juliet story, Signora Rossi, the second chanteuse of the company who sang Giulietta, decamped to Mexico in company with a Signor Valterlina. Patrons attending the theatre that night were given the option by Latham, the stage manager, of either

New Orleans Bee, April 7, 1837 and June 10, 1837.
witnessing the opera with the part deleted or having their money refunded. At the third performance of the opera on Sunday, April 9, Signora Papanti, an American-born singer, stepped into the role and was well-received for her acting ability, although she lacked the brilliant voice of the absent Rossi.

During the second week, agreeably to their contract, Signor Brichta presented a second opera, Rossini's _Semiramide_, but not in its entirety. For some reason only the first and second acts of the new piece were performed, followed by the third act of _Montrechi e Capuletti_. While the program seems to have been pleasantly received by most, it evoked from one opera lover a harsh denunciation of Caldwell:

_To the Editor of the Bee._

ITALIAN OPERA

Here we go--The old cut, slash, and patchwork come again.

I am a constant attendant, Mr. Editor, upon this most delicious and refined of all entertainments--and pictured to myself, my usual gratification at ending the performance last evening, but on reading the announcement in the papers, I was positively sickened with disappointment, and at once determined not to put my foot within the Theatre.--which resolution I, with many others have rigidly adhered to.

What does Mr. Caldwell take the public for, in presenting to them the last act of one opera, (by far the worst in it) and the 1st, 2d or 3d of another, with an introduction between them, in which his "Primo Tenore" makes his debut in some area, having no connection with either piece.

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100 _Daily Picayune_, April 7, 1837.

101 _Ibid._, April 11, 1837.
I know Mr. C. too well to make any appeal to him to change a course once determined upon, were he even certain of gaining by it—but in the name of a great number of ardent admirers of this said Italian Opera—I do appeal to, and beseech Mr. Brichta, and the whole Italian troupe for the sake of their own reputations and popularity to set their faces against a system, that must assuredly bring the Italian Opera into disrepute and insignificance, if persisted in.

Let us have one, or the other Opera, entire, and untouched. We wish nothing left out, nor anything added.

If Mr. C. was not ready with the Semiramis, the public could have witnessed Romeo and Juliet again with satisfaction and pleasure.

J.B.  

For the next six weeks affairs at the St. Charles moved smoothly. The operas Norma, Il Tancredi, Chiara di Rosenberg and Donna Caritea were added to the thrice-weekly repertoire of the company. But on May 21 an altercation arose which was to persist through the remaining three weeks of the season, and was to raise serious questions as to the ethical standards of James H. Caldwell.

Though lengthy, the Daily Picayune's account of the row, reported on May 23, provides a clear picture of what had transpired the previous Sunday:

On Sunday evening last we witnessed the most curious finale to Rossini's opera of Semiramis which has ever been performed in this or any other country. The last scene of the opera, from some unknown cause was suspended by the Italian troupe, and another scene was appended by the audience, which Rossini never intended, nor ever imagined could take place.

The house was a very good one. Every thing, what there was of it, went off to the satisfaction of the audience. Pantanelli gave

New Orleans Bee, April 13, 1837.
her music in first-rate style—so did Fornasari, so did all. At the conclusion of the scene where Assur fancies he encounters the ghost, down went the green curtain, before the last scene had been performed. The falling of the green curtain was the signal for raising a most tremendous racket, by those who had paid their $1.00 and $1.50 to witness Semiramis entire. The house commenced operations with the celebrated French tram march so well known in this city by frequenters of the theatres. Finding that the green curtain was not to be raised, nor any explanation given for the unwarrantable curtailment of the opera, the pit became uproarious. The backs of the seats received a succession of whacks from the canes of those who were provided with them, and those who had not, used feet and tongues to the utmost of their power. By this time one or two of the backs of the pit seats were torn down. Fornasari made his appearance, bowed, said nothing, and retired. Why didn't he inform the audience, even in Italian, what the reasons were for the suspension? No; he took the ground of the banks, and remained perfectly silent. The audience, finding they were to be kept in ignorance, now became tumultuous. Such a din we have rarely heard. Hissing, howling, whistling, kicking and screaming reigned in that temple where, but a few moments before, all was harmony.

Some of the quiet—those who knew not or cared not whether the opera was either commenced or finished, now left the theatre. Those who were acquainted with it, however, stood their ground and kept up a ceaseless noise. At this juncture, and while there were some thirty or forty ladies in the dress circle, one of the most injudicious, and we must say infamous tricks was resorted to in order to clear the theatre of those who had paid their money to see the whole of the opera, and were anxious to know the reason why they were thus cheated out of the last scene—the gas-lights were all extinguished, and left the house in utter darkness, save what little light was thrown in from the street. The audience could not stand all this—'twas the signal for the demolition of every thing they could lay their hands on. Chairs and

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103 The allusions to "failure," "suspension," and "banks" is, of course, a reference to the current bank failures and suspension of specie payment by banks during the Panic of 1837.
canes were thrown towards the splendid chandelier \textit{sic}-the pride of the St. Charles--and for some time its destruction appeared inevitable. Fortunately, however, the second, third, and fourth tiers were deserted, else this splendid ornament would have been entirely broken and scattered over the pit. The distance was too great for the missiles which were thrown at it--only one or two taking effect and they not occasioning any very serious injury.

The house, in the meantime, presented more the appearance of a brothel, in the midst of a row, than a respectable resort for amusement. The drapery around the boxes was torn, the cushions in the pit ripped open, the seats broken, and chairs were flying in all directions. A dim light was thrown into the interior from the lamps in front of the theatre. The chairs which were being thrown looked like birds of evil hovering about the devoted chandelier, but not able to reach it in consequence of some charm which it possessed. In the midst of this confusion a young man made his appearance on the stage with some half dozen frightened Italians to back him. Quiet was now restored, in order to give him a hearing. He stated that Signora Marozzi was taken suddenly ill, when the audience left the house without doing any further damage.

From the first we attributed none of the blame to Mr. Caldwell. He had left the theatre sometime before the close of the opera, and consequently knew nothing of the affair. As for Marozzi's being sick, that was all humbug. These sudden indispositions are of too common occurrence, and come at such convenient times that we place no confidence in them. Our own opinion is, that the troupe had become lazy or tired, and were anxious to get home, and thought they could leave at any part of the opera to suit their own convenience, thinking that the audience would never know the difference; and accordingly the director, whoever he may be, rang down the green curtain. This was equivalent to turning the audience out of doors, and they took it as such by sending in their demurrers. The longer they waited for an explanation of the cause the more exasperated they became, until finally the putting out the gas-light while there were many ladies in the dress circle, drove them to the commission of acts of violence.

But there the matter refused to rest. The audience which
came to the theatre on Monday night, May 22 to see *Semiramis* repeated, came also to demand an apology or explanation for the previous night's insult. The Picayune continued its account:

The prelude of last night was but a continuation of the finale of Sunday evening. The overture to Semiramis was listened to without any marks of disapprobation. At the conclusion a spirit of uneasiness manifested itself in different quarters of the house.--Latham came out to apologize--but it was of no use; he was not the man the discontented wanted. After talking to himself alone for some ten minutes, he withdrew. The house becoming comparatively silent, he again made his appearance, and met with the same reception. Caldwell was called for, and Caldwell came on, with a copy of the Courier, in which he had inserted an article exonerating himself from all blame as to the question at issue. The house gave him a hearing. After speaking some fifteen or twenty minutes he retired, leaving the audience as much in the dark as ever as to who was the author of extinguishing the lights, one of the most objectionable points in the slight committed on Sunday evening. Mr. Caldwell was evidently excited, and hardly knew what he said. While he was addressing the audience, a row was kicked up among the Italians themselves behind the scenes. What occasioned this disgraceful rumpus we know not, but angry, high words were bandied about behind the scenes.

Mr. Caldwell retired, and the curtain rose. The discontents endeavored to put a stop to the performances, but they were outnumbered, and the opera was finally permitted to go on without molestation.

Two-thirds of those who went to the theatre last evening went with the intention, if Semiramis was curtailed in the least, to raise a row. As it was, the last note that ever Rossini composed was played and sung to the full extent, and every thing passed off without further commotion.

An explanation for the debacle of Sunday night was finally advanced in the pages of the Bee of May 24 by "One who took no part in the affair":

Owing to some difficulty in lighting the
gas behind the stage, the first representation of this opera did not commence until eight o'clock, and the unusual length of the piece carried the representation to half past eleven. Several persons, particularly amongst the ladies present, complained to the writer of this letter of the length of the performance, and expressed a hope that it might be reduced on future occasions. These remarks were communicated to Mr. Brichta, the manager of the company, who was subsequently informed by various other persons, that such appeared to be the general wish.

It requires but little knowledge of music to understand how difficult it is to cut out pieces from any particular scene, the modulations from key to key are frequently effected by the recitative itself, and every musical tyro knows, that such a mode of curtailment is out of the question.

Mr. Brichta with the sole view of satisfying the public determined upon the omission of the last scene; which determination was communicated by Mr. Badiali to Mr. Latham, a plan which had been adopted in the Havana; in which city the overture, with the same view, was frequently omitted. He did so to this writer's knowledge without dreaming that the audience would have objected to the arrangement; and had he been in the theatre when the call was made for the continuance of the piece, it would have been performed to the end. Mr. Latham, Mr. Caldwell's stage manager was also absent, and the company was left under the control of Mr. Badiali, Mr. Brichta's stage manager, who did not come forward to explain because he could not speak one word of English.

The appearance of Fornasari on the stage after the curtain fell, in obedience as he supposed to a call for him, is a sufficient proof that the Italians were ignorant of the cause of the disturbance; and as they are, without any exception ignorant of the language in which the calls were made, it cannot be surprising that they did not respond to them.

I have been induced to say this much in order that the exact state of the case may be placed before the public. Had Mr. Caldwell instead of clumsily attempting to elude the real and just cause of the complaint, the extinction of the gas, whilst the audience inclusive of the ladies were still in the house, fairly apologized for the accident, if accident it were, and stated that the gas was extinguished by the officer appointed to that duty, at the accustomed time, all would have been well;
but his mean attempt to screen himself and his satellites at the expense of a set of people who had no means either of understanding or contradicting his gratuitous assertions, left a conviction upon the mind of every one present, that the extinction of the gas was not attributable to accident, but was an insolent and coarse attempt on the part of some officer in his establishment to take the law into his own hands, an attempt which met with the reception which ought to have been anticipated.

In the meantime, Signora Marozzi, whose indisposition had been advanced as the cause of the suspension, wrote a note to the Picayune which it published on May 24, in which she disclaimed any knowledge or responsibility for the affair.

During the next week the management was extremely cautious of its announcements to the public. Brichta, in making an appeal for his benefit on May 26, expressed his regret that he was unable "to offer a new opera to the public for this occasion." He asked their patronage to a reprise of the opera Norma explaining:

... that he has neither spared expense or exertion to remedy the unfortunate loss of the two performers who absconded, and that if he has not from this cause been able to furnish to the public so many operas as he would have wished, it has not been from any disposition to economize either his labor or his purse.

As will be seen below, the worry of providing additional operas was on Brichta's mind as a necessity of fulfilling the contract he had made with Caldwell.

A new opera was produced a few days later, however. The Barber of Seville was "got up in superior style," according to the Picayune of May 30. But the reviewer made it clear that he alluded to the vocal performances only.
He said:

The management have been extremely remiss in allowing a large portion of the orchestra to leave at a time when their services were most needed. . . A niggardly economy like this, if it has proceeded from economy, at a time, too, when, above all others, a full and effective musical accompaniment is required to assist the principals and give additional spirit to the choruses, shows that there is something radically wrong in the management. . . Mr. Caldwell should see to this, if he expects to keep up the credit he has gained by his efforts in giving us the operas of the first masters in the best style.

Still proceeding cautiously, the announcement for the historical spectacle, The Jewess, made clear to the public that the piece would not be seen in its entirety, but would present only the first and second scenes "for the purpose of showing what may be expected when the piece shall be produced entire on the reopening of the Theatre in October next." Caldwell had been unable to complete the necessary scene painting and was taking no chances with the public temper until the one remaining week of the season was safely past.

But he had reckoned without the volatile Italians in the opera company. The ill feeling engendered by the gas light episode had not been dispelled and apparently continued to fester in the minds of both Caldwell and the Italians. It seems to have been commonly accepted by New Orleanians that the True American was Caldwell's outlet for his expressions on current issues, political or theatrical. The editor of this paper had received from someone an "Italian English" communication which he had refused to
publish on the rather specious grounds that he was incapable of translating it, and on the more sinister grounds that it was "a three-edged sword that cuts Caldwell, himself, and the Italians themselves." A writer to the Bee of June 2 attacked this position as follows:

This exceedingly unskillful declaration is altogether a candid confession of the "True American" of his incapability to understand his own language, of his partiality towards Caldwell, of his little generosity towards injured foreigners, of his fear of the most merited reproaches, and of his illiberality in precluding from his paper all means of self defence in a country whose political and civil liberty is only supported by that of the press. If such be the character of a "True American," what should the world think of America?

THE ANGLO-ITALIAN

In this uneasy atmosphere the final row with the Italian Opera Company, and with Francisco Brichta in particular, was precipitated on June 7. That night patrons who appeared at the theatre box office were told that the opera had been suspended. Beyond this the community knew nothing for three days, although various rumors abounded to the effect that Signora Pantanelli had refused to go on stage until Caldwell had paid her for her benefit, which had occurred on June 5. Finally, in accordance with a promise he had given earlier, Brichta wrote a long

\[104\] Smither, op. cit., pp. 224, 441, indicates this season closed on June 4. However, as is seen below, there was at least one more performance on June 5 for the benefit of Signora Pantanelli, probably another on the 6th, and a third projected for the 7th—the one which was cancelled.

\[105\] Daily Picayune, June 8 and 9, 1837.
In accordance with my promise given in the Courier of the 8th, I now proceed to describe as clearly as the limit of a newspaper communication will admit, the history of my unfortunate connexion with James H. Caldwell.

My first proposition to Mr. Caldwell from Havana was to bring over to New Orleans my entire operatic corps, inclusive of my orchestre, with Montressor as tenor, and with 12 male and 6 female chorus singers, under which arrangement I should have been able to have given a new opera every other night, in the style which I had given them in the Havana, had such been the public wish. This offer was rejected as absurd on the score of expense. I then made a second proposition reducing the company to the strength which it possessed on my arrival here, a force absolutely necessary and without a single supernumerary of any kind, to supply casualties; having written to Mr. Caldwell, that I presumed as he asserted his orchestre to be efficient and complete, for this reduced company I asked $12,000, which was afterwards reduced to $10,700, because Montresor would not make an engagement in the Havana, for which amount, I was, in addition to the singers and instrumental performers, bound to furnish an entire wardrobe for all the operas intended to be given, and to bear all the expenses of bringing the company here.

My contract was for two months commencing from the period of my arrival; during which time, I stipulated to give as many as 30 representations should Mr. Caldwell so require it, to give eight operas at all events, with four additional ones if possible, which contract as far as force is concerned, I fulfilled to the letter.

The public are aware that my whole arrangements were disturbed by the sudden flight of Signora Rossi and Signor Valterlina, and in order to remedy the difficulty without delay, I engaged Papanti as the only Prima Donna who knew the opera then in representation.

The substitution of Marozzi or Papanti, until other assistance could be obtained, was accepted by letter on the part of Mr. Caldwell; and by a vessel which left for the Havana, the day after the flight of Rossi, I wrote to my agent to engage Siga. Ruiz or Pedrotti and Signor Fornasari without any delay, which letter I continually followed up by other opportunities.
Here began my troubles with Mr. Caldwell: the mildest applications on the subject of scenery, or with reference to any subject I considered under my control, was met by him and Mr. Holland, with a brutality and coarseness I believe to be peculiar to the purlieus of the St. Charles street theatre, and I am happy in having accidentally procured disinterested eyewitnesses to more than one scene such as I describe:--I was taxed with swindling, told that my d--d company had cost him more than it was worth, that he had lost $15,000 by this engagement, and that he wished to God the ship had sunk on her passage out, and this in the presence of persons, some of whom are not the most easily controlled, with all the influence a man can establish among them.

On the 5th night of the representations Caldwell insisted on the immediate performance of Norma, and advertised it for Sunday in the teeth of my representation that Signora Pantanelli, who as a favor had undertaken a part not in her cast of character, and which she never would have sung but as a favor to me--had to bear the whole of it, and that its representation was impossible, and the Italian representations were for the following night on which they ought to have been continued, suspended. Previous to the performance of Norma, having been notified by Mr. Caldwell that the subscribers preferred Signora Marozzi to Papanti, I immediately secured her, and as soon as practicable on the arrival of Signor Fornasari, I arranged with him likewise, at an aggregate expense far exceeding the salaries of Rossi and Valterlina, and towards that expense Mr. Caldwell has contributed nothing.

Whatever be the obligations of contracts in general, it is admitted in every part of the world which I have visited, that in theatrical engagements, what are termed fortuitous chances, (case fortuniti) form exceptions in favor of the suffering party, provided that due exertion be used to remedy the evil. I refer to sickness, death, &c, of which the unwarrantable flight of Rossi and Valterlina is an example, and I believe that the public will give me credit for having done all I could, and more than ought to have been expected considering that my very limited contract, even had all things gone well, but barely covered my expenses--Madame Ruiz and Pedrotti refused all overtures to engagement.

I pass over the miserable difficulties which occurred in the payment of my second and last
installments, merely asserting that in every instance and contrary to the strongly urged advice of my friends, but with the sole view of avoiding a collision with the public I acceded to the wishes of Mr. Caldwell.

Madame Pantanelli and my leader complained daily of defections in the orchestre, which before half the performances were completed, was reduced to two thirds of its original strength. We had no clarionets, no trumpet worthy of the name; the best of the violins had retired, there was but one horn, and no first flute. The orchestre was in fact totally inadequate to discharge its duties. My remonstrances on this subject were met by declarations, that the opera should be given without an orchestre, if Mr. Caldwell thought fit, with other observations of the kind, which I have no talent at imitating.

My contract as I before stated, was to last two months, during which time I was to perform 30 nights if desired by Mr. Caldwell, and in writing to him under date of the 29th May, my wish to announce that the benefit of Madame Pantanelli would take place on the 5th, he assented to the proposal--but asked me when I intended to give him the residue of the performances due; my reply was, that I had given him the 8 operas stipulated to be performed, and that if he did not choose to multiply the representations during its continuance, the fault was his not mine, but that also he could not call upon me to extend my contract beyond the period of two months, still as a favor I would perform from the 30th May to the 7th June, on condition that the benefit of Madame Pantanelli was announced on the 5th June as desired.

Under the arrangement the benefit in question was given and that it was in reality the property of Madame Pantanelli can be evidenced by letters written on and previous to the 18th May, in which I formally assigned my interest in it to her, against a balance which was due her on account.

On my application for the proceeds, as shown by a note given by Mr. Holland the treasurer of Mr. Caldwell, I was at first cavalierly informed that it was not convenient: on my asking for a satisfactory explanation of his motives for his retaining a paltry sum of $671, Mr. Caldwell commenced one of his dramatic scenes, in which I was told that he would not be humbugged, but would expose both of us, meaning I presume Madame Pantanelli and myself, together with other side scene.
trash, unworthy repetition. I consulted with my friends as to the course I should adopt, and at their instigation, wrote him communicating Madame Pantanelli's determination not to sing unless paid before 3 o'clock.

This letter I delivered at about half past two O'clock in company with Mr. Pantanelli to Mr. Holland, who declared Mr. Caldwell to be absent from the theatre; I requested him to read it, but he would not, as it was addressed to Caldwell. I told him that I was the writer, that it was I sealed it, and that I authorised him to open it, but he persevered in his refusal.

At about half past five I received a Jesuitical sort of a letter from Caldwell, in which, after a pretended eulogium on the talents of Madame Pantanelli, and a declaration of the very high admiration he entertained for her talents, he requested me to state whether I intended to perform or not, but carefully avoided any compromise as to the payment of the money claimed. To this letter I replied, that I would but refer him to the tenor of my last communication, the terms of which would be strictly adhered to.

In this state of things all went to the theatre, and when the performers were dressed for the stage, Mr. Holland on learning that Madame Pantanelli still stood her ground, ordered the doors to be closed. The gas was extinguished before the singers redressed themselves and left the theatre.

The assertion of Mr. Caldwell that the performers would not sing because I had not paid them, is false; every one of them is and was then paid 15 days in advance.

I have endeavored to state the foregoing facts with moderation and temper; had I known Mr. Caldwell even by reputation before I arrived, I need hardly say that I should never have formed an engagement with him, and can fairly promise that I shall never be so weak again.

I am, sir, your obedient servant,
F. BRICHTA.

Caldwell published an answer to Brichta's letter in the Louisiana Courier of June 12, an issue not now extant, unfortunately, but the gist of it is contained in the reply which Brichta then wrote in the Bee of June 17:
To the Editor of the Bee

Sir,

Mr. Caldwell has in the Courier of the 12th, published what I presume he calls an answer to the statement I addressed to the public thro' the medium of your paper of the 10th.

There are some few points in that answer which require explanation, and to these I shall confine my observations, and first with reference to the engagements of Madame Ruiz and Fornasari. I mentioned to Mr. Caldwell when I first wrote to the Havana, that these two singers were so superior to those which I had lost, that it was but just, that he should bear the same proportion of the extra charge to be incurred, inasmuch as the salary of either would doubtless exceed that of both the singers I had contracted to furnish him. When Mr. Fornasari arrived here, he demanded for one month's engagement one thousand dollars, and refused to sing for less. He was subsequently induced by another arrangement, to sing on the terms at which I originally engaged him at the Havana, a sum however, exceeding the joint salaries of Rossi and Valterlina. Mr. Caldwell refused as I before stated, to pay any part of this engagement, and I had to bear without participation this, together with every other extra charge.

In his letter of the 7th, which he has set forth at length, he says, "I have saved your character and your fortune, by liberally consenting to receive Fornasari and Ruiz for the loss of Rossi and Valterlina," which is about as absurd as the declaration of any theatrical manager, who in fusionian phrase should condescend to accept the services of Pagannini and Taglioni, as substitutes, when in fact both the one and the other were notoriously far superior to the originals they superceded. Rossi was engaged by me as the second prima donna: the illness of Ruiz alone gave her her present station.

My residence here has not left me in ignorance of the kind of company Mr. Caldwell attempted previous to my arrival, to foist upon the public for a subscription unsurpassed for liberality by that of any theatre in the richest capitals in Europe. But then the case was different; under that arrangement HE had to pay the singers himself, and all saved in their salaries went into his pocket, and had the public been

106 The DeRosa troupe. See, supra, p. 315.
inclined to have submitted to his dictation upon this subject, and believed that the broken-up fragment of an imperfect company was "The unrivalled opera." I am told he covenanted to produce, I should have been spared much mortification and loss.

In this latter engagement the payment of the wages devolved on me, and increase of salary in no respect influenced him, save as a benefit, and nothing could reconcile his conscience to his subscribers, save the performance of impossibilities. In further illustration of this Janus-faced mode of construing his duties towards his subscribers, I would refer to his orchestra, the only part of his establishment which in my acceptation of the term, he paid himself, and which, as in my statement, I asserted was so impoverished as to be quite unable to carry the singers through.

The repetition of Montecchi and Capuletti through five nights, I regret, if as Mr. Caldwell asserts, it cost him pecuniary injury; I would at the same time remind him, that capitals in Europe, whose audiences are somewhat fastidious, have borne the repetition of this opera for a much longer period. In the Havana I performed it 9 times in succession on its first appearance, and always to crowded houses. Mr. Caldwell will allow me to doubt that his loss proceeded from this cause—my arrival was unhappily contemporaneous with the explosion of the last commercial difficulties, and the public mind was too excited to attend his theatre; it is to this cause, rather than to the desertion of Rossi and Valterina, he should attribute his empty benches, and this he knows far better than me. \[Sic\]

Mr. Caldwell says he should perhaps have been induced to look over my non-performance of his contract but that on the day of his last representation fixed by me I called upon him for a final balance, the proceeds of the $300 night which was advertised as Pantanelli's benefit, "The Injustice of which was so apparent that he refused to pay it until he had finished his contract." He further asks me why I demanded the amount on the last representation, instead of waiting till the following morning and insinuates that he never understood the benefit to have been hers.

Does Mr. Caldwell affect to be so great a novice in theatrical matters as to be ignorant of the proceeds of a benefit are payable on the morning

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107 See, supra, p. 334.
after the representation? If he be so mad
Pantanelli was the reverse and very naturally
refused to sing when Mr. Caldwell refused to pay
her what was two days due.

Mr. Caldwell talks about stating accounts
and further asserts that I knew he had a right
to this amount or I should have demanded it (odd
logic I should think) and calls it a final
balance. He knows that it was not a final
balance. He knows that I had signed a receipt in
full of all the demands under the contract I had
made with him; clearly shewing thereby, that I
had no account to state. It is true that in
addition to the extra charges for the hire of
singers to which I was subjected by the flight
of Rossi and Valterlinna, I had been obliged to
pay towards the latter end of the engagement,
the flute, the horn, and the drum of his orchestra
without which instruments, which he refused to
supply, we could not have proceeded—and it is
perhaps true that this ought to have formed an
item of demand, but I am at a loss to know how
such a demand could militate against my right to
receive the amount in dispute. As Mr. Caldwell
settled the last installment and took from me the
receipt I have referred to, I was of course
induced to repair the deficiencies which had
occurred, and he had no account to state with me
at that period; and it is for him to show in what
I have since failed which was within the limits
of human possibility—my surprise was therefore
great when the proceeds of a benefit were without
excuse refused to be paid over, on the afternoon
of the 2d day after the evening it became due.

That this ignorance of the interest of
Mdme. Pantanelli in this benefit is mere pretence,
will be evident when I state that it was at his
suggestion that the latter of the two nights re­
served was appropriated to her:—my original
intention was to have given her the first, with
what motive he suggested this change—God knows—
at any rate he paid without scruple on demand the
few dollars due to me as the proceeds of my own.108

I have gone through all the portions of his
answer which require comment;—answer it is not, he

108 Supra, p. 341. The two dates Brichta refers to
are May 26 and June 5. At Caldwell's suggestion, apparent­
ly, he had chosen the earlier date for himself and given
the later one to Pantanelli, although traditionally the
manager had the last benefit.
does not--nor can he--deny the facts detailed in my statement.

Had Mr. Caldwell behaved with common decency under the circumstances in which I found this city I should have been happy to have made all concessions personal to him, which my situation and the charge I had upon my hands would have admitted--but I repeat that his conduct towards me has without provocation been of the most brutal, and insulting character, and that no consideration upon earth would induce me to make another contract with him.

With the very modest estimate he makes of his own importance, and with the parallel he draws between his value at that estimate as a citizen of New Orleans and that of myself, a nameless stranger--I have nothing to do, but I have a belief in the justice of the American public which assures me, it will not influence the decision of a jury of his countrymen--should he as he threatens submit the subject to the arbitrement of a tribunal.

From the commencement to the end, the desertion of Rossi and Valterlina has cost me an outlay of over Two Thousand Dollars--one fifth part of the consideration paid me for coming over here--and in this, as nearly every other undertaking of the like kind I have met as a reward for exertions the most unwearied, and for bodily and mental wear of the most distressing kind--had nothing but loss--disappointment, and ingratitude; and may safely say that I have not known the blessing of a quiet hour since my arrival in this city.

Assuring you that this will be the last communciation on my part relating to this unpleasant subject. I remain

Your obedient serv't,
FRANCISCO BRICHTA.

In the absence of other evidence to the contrary Caldwell's behavior in the matter must be regarded as reprehensible. Although Brichta may not have been involved--as he threatened he never would be again--Caldwell was to contract with the Havana Italian Opera again in 1842. His luck with them would not improve, however. It was just prior to the eleventh performance of that troupe.
during the 1832 season that the St. Charles caught fire and burned to the ground.

The competition between Caldwell and Russell and the open feud which had erupted between them in December, had served to divide the New Orleans theatre-going public into two camps. As one patron put it, "You know a great number who go to the Camp won't go to the St. Charles, and vice versa." Russell was enough encouraged by the patronage he had received this season to plan for the time when he would be independent of any association with Caldwell, that is, the end of the next season when his lease on the Camp Street Theatre ran out. He therefore issued a prospectus on February 3, 1837 for a theatre to be erected by public subscription and to be opened in the fall of 1838. Books of subscription were opened on February 8, 1837. On March 13 the subscribers were incorporated by the legislature under the name, "The American Theatre, Magazine Street." The group was authorized to capitalize itself to the extent of $350,000, but, significantly, was prohibited from engaging in the banking business. On March 21 Russell purchased a plot of ground on the southeast corner of Magazine and Delord (now

109 Daily Picayune, February 18, 1837.
110 Commercial Bulletin, February 3, 1837.
111 Daily Picayune, February 5, 1837.
112 Acts Passed at the First Session of the Thirteenth Legislature, op. cit., p. 83.
Howard) streets. Russell was never to set foot within the doors of the building, but the construction of a competing establishment must have given Caldwell some pause.

The last two weeks of the season at the St. Charles saw, in addition to opera, the performance of two charitable benefits. Caldwell offered his services at both. The first of these occurred on May 25 for the Orphan Boys Asylum—an annual event—and Caldwell performed "one of his best characters, Gossamer, in Reynolds comedy of 'Laugh When You Can,'" as the Picayune reported. The second benefit was a special affair for "indigent widows and orphans" at which Caldwell played Jeremy Diddler, supported by the talents of Mrs. Duff, Mrs. Shaw, and Miss Melton, with the other principal male roles sustained by amateur volunteers.113

It is difficult to assess Caldwell's success with the St. Charles Theatre during this second season of 1836-1837. If his heated remark to Bricha about losing $15,000 on the opera is true he probably did not come out very much in the black. On the other hand the Spirit of the Times said, though with what authority is not known, "Caldwell has made 'a heap' this season at the St. Charles."114 Considering the strength of the resident stock company, the attractions of such stars as Charles

113Daily Picayune, June 3, 1837.
114Spirit of the Times, June 17, 1837.
Mason, Mrs. Shaw, Mrs. Drake, Balls, Mrs. Pritchard, Mr. and Mrs. Keeley, the Barnes family, James Wallack, Celeste, and Master Burke, and the vast popularity of the Italian Opera—not to mention the fact that Caldwell himself had had a direct hand in guiding the affairs of the theatre this season—it is reasonable to assume that this season was, at least, more successful and financially rewarding than the previous one had been, and this in spite of the crush of economic depression which had descended on the city.

A brief chronicle of his extra-theatrical activities shows that Caldwell had devoted considerably less time to those activities this year than the year before. In April he was re-elected an alderman from the first district of the Second Municipality, and participated regularly in the affairs of the council. His private real estate and other financial transactions seem to have been greatly curtailed. In July of 1837 he purchased a lot with a three-story brick building on it for $13,270, but the act was retroceded three years later because he could not pay the notes due. Also in July he borrowed rather heavily again from the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company—$40,000—for which he again mortgaged the St. Charles

\[115^\text{New Orleans Bee, April 4, 1837.}\]
\[116^\text{Notarial Acts of Felix Grima, op. cit., July 19, 1837.}\]
Theatre and Arcade. These were the only transactions made within the city of New Orleans, but in March he entered into a partnership with Jacob Ephraim, late of Buffalo, to mine coal in Warren County in Indiana. Caldwell was a two-thirds partner, and he and Ephraim purchased forty acres of land on which was located a coal mine. In this month, also, he purchased two tracts of land in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama.

Caldwell seems to have been unswerving in his determination to make New Orleans the most fastidious city in the United States. Following is the advertisement which he placed in the Daily Picayune of January 25, 1837 and subsequently:

ARCADE BATHS, CAMP STREET

I'm for the Bath!—Last Days of Pompeii

This truly splendid establishment is now constantly open—where hot, cold, tepid or shower baths can be had accompanied by every luxury and comfort than can add to their enjoyment of their usefulness.—To the invalid seeking health, or to the traveller needing rest, a bath is at once the greatest luxury and the most certain restorative, while the mass of mankind have the testimony of the faculty for ages past, that there are no such certain means of preserving health as frequent and regular bathing.

This establishment is justly deemed unrivalled for cleanliness and space, where abundance of light and air add their natural enjoyments to those artificial luxuries which are here combined to render the baths complete.

118 Ibid., March 16, 1837.
119 Ibid., April 3, 1840.
The ARCADE BATHS are next door to the American Theatre, and adjoin the new "Bazaar Arcade," leading to the St. Charles Theatre—one square from the great Exchange Hotel, and have attached to them the first restaurant in the country.

N. B. During the fall and winter months the baths will be kept ready for visitors every day, from noon until 3 o'clock p.m. and from 6 to 9 in the evening; with the addition of being open on Sundays from sunrise until 3 o'clock p.m.

Bath tickets are to be had at the Saloon in Camp street, at the entrance of the baths.

Evidently the Arcade Baths was a success, for in April Caldwell, A. L. Plough, Richard O. Pritchard, James P. Freret and Thomas Slidell incorporated themselves into the Colonade Bath and Institute of New Orleans with the object of building yet another bathing establishment, "with which are to be connected apartments for the occupancy of various literary and scientific institutions or of individuals at the discretion of the directors." The company was authorized to be capitalized for one million dollars and could not go into operation until $400,000 had been subscribed. The scheme was originated by Plough. Caldwell was no doubt included because of his prior experience with public baths. Unfortunately the company was launched almost simultaneously with the commencement of the Panic of 1837, so sale of the stock went slowly and the books of subscription had to be kept open until November. There is no further record of its existence and it is

120 New Orleans Bee, April 1, 1837.
121 Daily Picayune, June 4, 1837.
likely that it was quietly abandoned.

Fortunately for the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad an act introduced into the legislature, and passed before the financial panic hit, considerably aided this project in which Caldwell had a deep interest. The legislative act in essence loaned to the company $500,000 to enable them to begin construction.\textsuperscript{122} Caldwell had been again elected a director of the company in January.\textsuperscript{123} With an eye to turning a profit on the increase in land values which would occur when the railroad was built in the vicinity, Caldwell in July purchased for $2,000 a plot of ground in the lakeshore area known as Bath.\textsuperscript{124} In a year or two this area was to become a popular recreation spot for those Orleanians who rode the steam cars to the lake for a day's outing.

Caldwell's lessened business activities permitted him the leisure to become involved in some other occupations which were neither pleasant nor profitable to him. The \textit{Spirit of the Times} of April 15 carried the following item which does not seem to have appeared in any of the New Orleans papers:

\begin{itemize}
\item[123] \textit{New Orleans Bee}, January 17, 1838.
\end{itemize}
The trial of Charles Mason in New Orleans, for an assault upon Mr. CANDY, Manager of the St. Charles Theatre, came off on the 14th ult., before Judge Canonge, in the Criminal Court, and resulted in the triumphant acquittal of Mason.

Mason had starred at the St. Charles in November and December. The circumstances of the alleged assault and the reasons provoking it have not been ascertained, but again Caldwell had lost another court contest.

Hopefully a less violent affair was that which produced Caldwell's first illegitimate son. Precisely when he began the liaisons with Margaret Abrams is not known, but sometime during the year 1837 a son, James H. Caldwell, Jr., was born to the pair. A second son, Edward Holland Caldwell, arrived in 1844. Caldwell was still married to Maria Carter Wemerley while maintaining this relationship in New Orleans. His wife resided in Virginia with her four children—the two sons by her first husband and the son and daughter, William Shakespeare and Sophie, born of her marriage to James Caldwell. This separation between Caldwell and his legal wife seems to have been an amicable one and they dwelt apart by mutual agreement. Perhaps equally amicable was

125 James, Jr.'s obituary in the Picayune of April 6, 1870 said "he was in the 33d year of his age," which would place his birthdate sometime in 1837.

126 Edward's obituary (Picayune, October 6, 1872) said he "was in the 28th year of his age."
the indenture made by Caldwell in favor of his stepsons on
November 7, 1837.  
This legal instrument reveals that
Mrs. Caldwell's first husband, Warner L. Wormeley had, on
April 15, 1813, placed his estate in the hands of trustees
to be administered for his wife Maria and his two minor
sons, John T. and Carter W. Wormeley. It further reveals
that the two sons on September 13, 1837 had brought an
action against their mother and Caldwell in the Circuit
Superior Court of Law and Chancery of Spotsylvania County,
Virginia. The nature of the complaint was not stated,
but the court had decreed that the surviving trustee of
the estate should pay to James H. and Maria C. Caldwell
the sum of $2,000 in consideration of which they would
then transfer and forever resign their interests in the
remainder of the Wormeley estate in favor of the two
Wormeley sons. One suspects that this was a friendly suit
designed to insure the Wormeleys' inheritance, and was not
instituted by Caldwell in any attempt to seize his step­
sons' patrimony.

One other incident relating to Caldwell's conjugal
life occurred during this year of 1836-1837. Joining the
stock company of the rival Camp Street Theatre was a
fourteen-year old actress by the name of Josephine Rowe,
the daughter of George and Louisa Rowe, also members of

127 Indenture by James H. and Maria C. Caldwell in
favor of John T. and Carter W. Wormeley, November 7, 1837,
Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.
Russell’s company. So far as can be determined, the family was unrelated to the deceased partner of Russell, James Rowe. Josephine Rowe was to be James Caldwell’s second wife.

As he prepared for the 1837-1838 season, Caldwell was faced with the necessity for considerable retrenchment. Although one of his pre-season announcements reported the engagement of several stars, few of them showed up during the season. Moreover, Caldwell may have himself undertaken the task of recruiting talent for the forthcoming season this summer instead of sending an agent to New York and Europe since he was out of the city during the months of August and September.

During Caldwell’s absence one of the worst epidemics of yellow fever in history ravaged the country. Reports reached New Orleans that Caldwell had succumbed to the disease, but the Picayune on September 11 and 12, 1837 reported his imminent return to the city and noted that it had learned that Caldwell "had only the fever and ague! . . . great difference between this and the black vomit," the paper declared.

By September 28 Caldwell had returned and promptly extended an invitation to the editor of the Bee to visit the St. Charles and note the improvements that had been effected during the summer. According to the Bee of that date, the intention of the alterations was to "relieve the massive gorgeousness" of the interior and "give it a degree
of lightness, airiness and elegance." The parquette had been entirely removed and the pit made into a vast semi-circle, which now was filled with covered and stuffed benches provided with backs. Four more boxes were added to the dress circle behind those which fronted the stage, thus adding to the capacity of the first tier. The draperies of this tier were replaced with new and more splendid ones and the entire tier was illuminated by gas lamps arranged in recesses so as to "throw a brilliant light upon the dress circle." The boxes on the sides of the pit were painted in imitation of the mosaic marble of the U. S. House of Representatives, as were the sides of the proscenium. "The whole has been accomplished," said the Bee, "with the skill and enterprise eminently characteristic of its proprietor."

Caldwell was reported to have engaged "a brilliant array of distinguished actors," including the Ravels, Booth, Forrest, Yankee Hill, Ellen Tree, and Josephine Clifton,\textsuperscript{128} with a company of "between thirty-five and forty male, and from fifteen to twenty female performers."\textsuperscript{129} The theatre was to open October 9 with most of the company in the city or momentarily expected. This event, however, almost immediately was announced as necessarily postponed for a week for two reasons. The overflow of the gas works

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Daily Picayune}, August 22, 1837.\textsuperscript{129}
\textsuperscript{129} \textit{New Orleans Bee}, October 12, 1837.
caused by heavy rains prevented the lighting up of the theatre, and the actors who had arrived in town were immediately stricken with illness. Despite the enforced delay, Caldwell was still able to open the St. Charles a full month before Russell returned from Louisville to begin his winter season at the Camp Street Theatre.

The St. Charles Theatre opened on October 17, 1837 with No Song, No Supper and the farce Perfection, between which was performed a comic ballet. The press was inclined to be charitable of the effort, "knowing the difficulty of familiarizing a corps of strange actors, and taking into consideration the haste of getting up a performance," as the Picayune remarked the next day. The Bee was "on the whole, gratified," and left-handedly complimented the ballet as "Not wretched... the whole affair was a thousand-fold superior to the miserable attempt of last year."

However, in the Picayune of the 19th a correspondent objected to the pantomime as "a miserable affair, and will not bear a repetition." This same correspondent alluded to a problem which was to plague Caldwell during much of the early part of the season. Said the writer:

> The house was well filled, tho' we seen no ladies present, and well it was so, for the hooping and hallowing was enough to deter

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130Daily Picayune, October 9, 1837 and New Orleans Bee, October 10, 1837.

131Daily Picayune, October 11, 1837 and New Orleans Bee, October 12, 1837.
persons from ever carrying respectable females there. Is there no way to prevent such dis-
turbances? An augmentation of the number of
officers is actually necessary. The St. Charles
has attained a high reputation for its orderly
audiences, and we sincerely hope never again to
witness such disorderly acts as were committed
on last evening.

The Picayune noted the presence of two ladies with opera
glasses in the dress circle on October 20, but was at the
same time forced to condemn the hissing of one of the
dancers by male members of the audience. And on October
23 the paper despaired of ever attracting ladies so long
as there was so much noise in the upper galleries. "There
is too much of the Seminole about the St. Charles Theatre,"
said the newspaper. Some such disturbance in this "hen's
roost" was created by a female not entitled to the
appellation of lady on November 1, which the Picayune
reported in its columns two days later:

High Times Above Stairs
Ann something--never mind the name--was as
pretty a looking girl as graced the third tier of
the St. Charles on Wednesday evening; but Ann was
noisy. She had been indulging rather freely in
some favorite beverage of hers, whether brandy,
gin, or whiskey, we know not, and as a matter of
course this same indulgence had led her to indulge
in talking too loud for the comfort and quiet of
those around her, and more especially of the
indulging preservers of the peace stationed in the
theatre, ycleped constables.
"When Ann is sober she is civil,
But when she's drunk, she's roaring mad."
And so it was on the evening in question.
The officer told Ann to hold her tongue--Ann wouldn't
hold it. The officer finding Ann wouldn't hold her
tongue, took the responsibility of holding her,
tongue and all, and accordingly laid hold of and
gallanted her down the stairs, accompanied by a
numerous escort, all anxious to see the result.
Alas! poor Ann! Her loco-foco, just-as-good-a-right-as-anybody principles, led her into a bad scrape. Why didn't she take heed to the advice given her, and pitch her conversational pipes on a milder key; but no, she believed in equal rights—said she had as good a right to talk as loud and as long as she d----d pleased, and when she pleased, and where she pleased, and didn't care who tried to stop her.

When once in the street, Ann grew more and more uproarious. On recognizing some friend of the frail sisterhood, she left off her coarse and crudely invective prose, and broke out with the song of

"We men, twas in a crowd &c."

And a motley crowd it was assembled around her; but in this instance there was no shunning. Ann's friend stuck to her, with her, and by her, to the very door of that building on Baronne street, known as being under the immediate jurisdiction of Capt. Harper of the night watch, where she was carefully placed away in a back room to cool down.

Much of the difficulty with audience behavior was no doubt due to the fact that the little Camp Street Theatre had not yet opened. On November 7 the Bee added its plea for more order:

A more abundant provision of peace officers in the St. Charles is absolutely needed. The loafers seem to consider that they can do as they please within its walls; one gentleman coolly taking off his coat, and sitting in his shirt sleeves in close proximity to the stage—another exquisite on being obstreperously noisy was threatened with forcible ejection, whereupon casting a look of defiance upon the executor of the law, he exclaimed—I don't care a d--n for the St. Charles—the Camp is my region, and until it opens, I am determined to come every night, and kick up a dust here. This was, however, rather too bad, and being seized by the Deputy Marshal, he bounded away, took leg bail, and made himself scarce.

There were additional editorials on the problem in the pages of both the Bee and the Picayune in the next few days, until Caldwell, seemingly in despair that his police would
ever be able to control the situation, came forth with a plan whereby the audience, rising en masse, would itself put down the disturbance by hissing the offenders into silence.\textsuperscript{132} There is no record of this device ever having been resorted to, but allusions to the riots cease from this time on. It should be noted, however, that by this time, also, Dick Russell had begun his season at the American Theatre, and perhaps the rowdies were drawn there.

Few of the stars that Caldwell had promised for this season appeared. The first light of the season was "Gentlemen George" Barrett, who arrived in mid-November to play his light comedy roles and then returned again in February at which time were also present Ellen Tree, Cramer Plumer, and Mrs. Watson. The most successful star engagements of the year were those of Miss Tree and the tragedienne Josephine Clifton. Shakespeare was presented several times during the season. James Barton, a principal member of the stock company, performed well in Lear in late October and Hamlet in November.\textsuperscript{133} Mr. and Mrs. Hield butchered Macbeth on November 9, but the same play was retrieved by J. R. Scott and Ellen Tree on January 23, according to the Picayune which reported on both productions. Pearson and Mrs. Cramer, two members of the resident company, played Merchant of Venice on November 7.

\textsuperscript{132}\textit{Daily Picayune}, November 22, 1837.

\textsuperscript{133}Ibid., October 27 and 28; November 4, 1837.
and were well received, and Scott and James Hackett gave excellent performances as Hotspur and Falstaff respectively in Henry IV on December 8. On March 8, 1838 Antony and Cleopatra was performed for the first time in the city of New Orleans and the Picayune was extravagant in its praise of the production and of Manager Caldwell:

Too much praise cannot be given to the manager and the theatrical corps of the St. Charles for the admirable manner in which this drama has been "got up," and the correctness which all the actors exhibited in the respective parts. It has seldom been our good fortune to witness the representation of a drama where the general effect was marred by fewer of the slight errors in the management of the stage or in the conduct of the actors which destroy the illusion so necessary to the success of scenic representations.

But the press found frequent occasion to criticize the theatre, particularly some of the minor members of the stock company and, in the early part of the season, the orchestra. One of the actresses upon whom the venom of the Picayune in particular was spent was Madame Vincent. On October 21 the paper bluntly said, "Madame Vincent . . . is an indifferent actress and an injury to every piece in which she appears. . . . The faults of Mrs. Vincent are not remediable--she does the best she can. . . . but, at best, she is but miserable." And in a harshly satiric vein, on November 26:

We admire Madame Vincent's style of dancing, there is something so independent

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13\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., November 8 and December 8, 1837.
about it. She cuts her pigeon-wings and
pirouettes altogether "on her own account,"
and monopolized the stage regardless of those
dancing around her. She fairly ran Miss Hanker
down last evening while cutting one of her
extras. We would recommend a box about three
feet square for this lady to practice her steps
in. On the extensive boards of the St. Charles
her feet too frequently find an altitude rather
higher than we think was ever intended for
them. Whirling about, too, makes her dizzy
and the audience laugh. This might be dispensed
with.

But Mrs. Vincent was not the sole recipient of the
Picayune's shafts. On December 6 the Picayune turned
to Mrs. Pemberton: "It is a pity Mr. Caldwell cannot
find sewing or something else for Mrs. Pemberton to do
more adapted to her genius than acting." Three days later
the paper queried:

By the way, when will Mr. Porter learn
to be perfect, and when will Mrs. Pemberton
make her final exit? Why are such men as
Dougherty permitted to render the best scenes
of a good tragedy ridiculous? Why promise the
strength of the company and then put up a
dozen sticks to fill out the piece? The direc-
tory of the St. Charles should answer these
questions.

These criticisms of the acting prompted one citizen to
venture his own discontent. He asked the Editor of the
Bee in the December 20 issue to "confer a favor by ad-
verting to the gross grammatical inaccuracies freqently
committed by some of the actors."

The New Orleans Bee adopted as its own critical
province the musical department of the St. Charles Theatre.
The orchestra, which in previous years had earned such
accolades as "the best orchestra in the Union," this season
was demeaned for its lack of strength and its limited repertoire. On November 13 the Bee claimed that the St. Charles orchestra knew only three pieces: a feeble overture of Rossini's, another, not as good as the first, and a third with an oboe solo. "With few exceptions," said the Bee, "the performers outrage time most unmercifully in their execution—next they play without spirit, grace or effort to please, and thirdly, they appear to be limited by the sovereign edict either of the leader or director to a few miserable, stale and antiquated compositions."

But the Bee's words were not in vain; the very next days it was able to report that the orchestra had "revived a beautiful Overture . . . of the Miller and his Men." By December 21 the Bee was happy to retract its former charges and accord the orchestra "in point of variety, of performance, skill in executing, and general good management, the pride of being the finest institution of the kind in the country."

Caldwell did not neglect vocal music this season, despite the absence of the gifted Italian Opera Company. He had sufficient talents within his stock company to move the Bee of January 11, 1838 to comment:

The indefatigable proprietor of the St. Charles nightly presents us with a profusion of histrionic treasures to dazzle and delight. . . . Mr. Caldwell may be enabled to boast perhaps the best Operatic company in the Union. We trust that he will avail himself of these advantages and display the musical talents of his troop in a series of sterling operas.
In mid-February Caldwell did attempt some of the Italian and English operas with mixed success. But the Bee of the 17th described *The Marriage of Figaro* as having been "vilely murdered," because of having been brought out in too much haste and with inadequate rehearsal. *La Sonnambula* two nights later was highly praised, however. On April 5, and for several nights thereafter, Caldwell undertook the ambitious production of Milner and Planche's *Gustavus; or, The Masked Ball*, which involved flooring over the pit of the St. Charles to form "in connection with the stage, one immense ball room."\(^{135}\) Ladies and gentlemen who provided themselves with extra tickets were privileged to mingle with the masks and "join in the Galop." The piece was so popular that the editor of the *Picayune* was unable to witness anything but "a dense mass of human flesh" between him and the stage, so great was the crowd.\(^{136}\)

Two events of this season serve to demonstrate the extremes of generosity and penuriousness between which James Caldwell ranged during his professional career. One is led to suspect that the following gesture was largely motivated by the knowledge that it was inherently attractive in luring people to the theatre:

*The Visit of the War Chiefs*

*The visit of the Seminole chiefs, Micanopy,*

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\(^{135}\) *New Orleans Bee*, April 4 and 5, 1838.

\(^{136}\) *Daily Picayune*, April 6, 1838.
Jumper &c. to the St. Charles theatre on Friday evening, attracted a large audience. The untutored savages manifested a high degree of interest in the entertainments, especially in the comicalities of Holland and Barrett. Sometimes their mirth was so uncontrollable, that, commencing in a low murmur, it broke forth in boisterous whoops and yells, as amusing to the pale faces as were the performances on the stage. To these warriors, the whole affair must have given an idea of magnificence which they never before entertained concerning the works of human art. The grandeur of the house, to say nothing of the mimic life on the stage, or the plaudits of the dense crowd, was of itself a novelty which could not have failed to please them.

After the performances were over, they were accommodated (as we understand,) in splendid style by Mr. Caldwell. A sumptuous repast was spread for them in the Green Room; after which they were provided with comfortable lodgings of their favorite kind (i.e., with blankets) on which we venture to say they slept with far more comfort than when among the alligators of the Florida hammocks. 137

In the case of Miss Clementine DeBar's benefit the evidence points to a piece of miserliness on Caldwell's part. On April 21, 1838 the following card appeared in the Bee:

MISS DEBAR returns to her friends her most grateful acknowledgments, for their presence at her Benefit Night on Wednesday, the 18th instant, but regrets to say she does not benefit by their intentions towards her. Previous to her departure for Vicksburg, she applied to Mr. Caldwell for a Benefit; this contrary to all precedent was denied her, which was greatly to her disadvantage. Copy of the returns from the Treasury sent to her $528.75; charges for the House, $500, (being $100 more than customary); other expenses not then included, $18; net proceeds, $10.

The public was understandably incensed at this highhandedness and many citizens approached the editor of the Picayune asking, "Why don't you say something about Miss

137 Ibid., March 18, 1838.
DeBar? Why don't you blow up Caldwell? Why don't you recommend her to take a benefit at Russell's theatre—she'll have all sorts of a house." The Picayune disavowed any interest in what it chose to regard as a private matter, but agreed to help "the deserving little actress" to achieve a benefit at the Camp. Miss DeBar finally managed to secure a benefit as a member of the company of Russell's brief post-season summer venture conducted just before the manager's death.

Caldwell ended his third season in the St. Charles at an early date—April 29. It had not been a highly lucrative year, although even with the absence of the Italian Opera the offerings had been good and the house often crowded. It may be that in closing the theatre early Caldwell reasoned, as the Bee of May 19 claimed, that "the times were dull, and all that he received would hardly satisfy the day's expense." Caldwell must have been frequently discouraged at the taste of his times. Only Josephine Clifton and Ellen Tree had drawn consistently good houses. The Picayune of January 17 claimed that the latter actress drew "better and more fashionable houses during both her engagements than any actor or actress who has ever visited us." Yet in November, when Russell was presenting dog acts, monkeys and tattooed men to full houses, Caldwell's St. Charles was performing good plays to meagre audiences. In

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138Daily Picayune, April 26, 1838.
subsequent seasons Caldwell, too, would be forced to resort
to non-dramatic spectacles in order to capture the public
fancy.

Hard times had not discouraged competitive enter­
prise in the theatre in New Orleans this year. On December
3, 1837 a new theatre named the Pantheon was announced to
be opened by its promoter, a Mr. Riley, who scheduled the
low comedian Sam Waters as his opening attraction.139
The theatre was announced as being located in a hotel at
the corner of Tchoupitoulas and Natchez streets, just a
block away from the Camp Street Theatre. Apparently the
theatre sought the same kind of clientele as supported the
Camp, since parquette seats were advertised at only
seventy-five cents and boxes fifty cents. Neither further
announcements of bills of attraction nor news of per­
formances appear in the press subsequent to this, and the
venture was either so short-lived that it escaped further
notice, or never operated at all. Meanwhile the French
section of the city was supporting three theatres: the
Theatre d'Orleans, the Theatre d'Eleves--a vaudeville
house--and the Theatre Marigny. This last had been opened
in February by E. V. Mathieu, a free man of color, for the
benefit of Negroes.140

Dick Russell, too, was proceeding firmly with
his plans for the opening of his New American Theatre in

139 Ibid., December 3, 1837.
140 Ibid., February 24, 1837.
Magazine Street. On January 9, 1838 the Picayune reported that the directors of the company had completed the purchase of the property measuring one hundred feet front by a depth of two hundred forty feet, between Magazine and Foucher Streets. On May 7 the cornerstone for the proposed edifice was laid with considerable ceremony. A procession led by a Marshall of the Day and containing a military escort, the president and directors of the theatre company, the Orator of the Day, and a variety of Odd Fellows, Masons, firemen and other fraternal, civic, and interested groups of citizens marched from Bank's Arcade to the building site. There they heard a speech by M. M. Cohen, attorney for the theatre company, and witnessed the ceremony of laying the cornerstone conducted by the Grand Lodge of the State of Louisiana of the Masonic Fraternity. Russell never witnessed any further advancement of his dream. Two weeks after the laying of the cornerstone of his New American Theatre the following notice appeared in the Picayune of May 20:

**Died**

Yesterday morning, the 19th instant, about three o'clock, RICHARD RUSSELL, Esquire, aged 50 years, manager and proprietor [sic] of the Camp street Theatre of this city. We regret that we have neither time nor materials to give a full biography of a man whom all knew only to respect. His remains were followed to the grave yesterday afternoon by the Odd Fellows association, of which he was a member, and a large concourse of friends.

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141 Daily Picayune, April 29, May 6 and 8, 1838; New Orleans Bee, April 30, 1838.
One wonders if James Caldwell was in the funeral cortege of his one-time friend. Were his feelings those of regret that death had taken Dick Russell before their quarrel had been mended? Or was he secretly relieved that an increasingly dangerous rival had been so fortuitously removed.

There was an irony in Russell's death that did not escape the editor of the Bee. In noting the end of the season at the Camp Street Theatre on May 31 he observed:

Tonight is the last of the season, and the last of the lease held by the late Richard Russell. For a number of years he had labored for our gratification, and by a mysterious coincidence his earthly lease and that of the theatre expired simultaneously.

Caldwell had had a brush with his own particular Nemesis this spring. While of only minor consequence, the fire which threatened the St. Charles Theatre was a foreboding of the calamity which would befall it just four years to the month later. The Picayune of April 1, 1838 reported:

Yesterday afternoon, the St. Charles Theatre was near being laid in ruins, by a fire which commenced in the kitchen chimney of the adjoining Arcade. Fortunately it was soon quenched, without doing any injury, except that it destroyed Mr. Caldwell's dinner which was in the process of cooking.

As he had the previous season, Caldwell this year had greatly restricted his outside interests. He remained a member of the board of directors of the Gas Light and Banking Company, being re-elected to that position on
February 5, 1838.\textsuperscript{142} As a director he came in for his share of suspicion when the activities of the company were investigated by the State Legislature in March.\textsuperscript{143} A senate committee discovered enormous abuses characterizing the administration of the bank. These abuses were chiefly in the form of loans which the directors had made to themselves, and which exceeded the capital paid in to the bank. Caldwell, for example, had notes outstanding in the amount of $163,182. Moreover, the committee called into question Caldwell's possession of five hundred shares of company stock, which he had been awarded on the basis of predicted, rather than actual, profits. It will be recalled that he was entitled to this stock, but only when the bank could provide the shares out of profits exceeding the first eight per cent. The grant of stock to Caldwell was in clear violation of the original charter. The man held chiefly responsible for these manipulations was Thomas Barrett, who had succeeded Caldwell to the presidency of the company. Like most other banks of the time, The Gas Bank had been speculating in monetary exchanges which were founded on no real transactions, but were merely devices attempting to raise money. From its original capitalization of six millions, the bank's capital had been reduced to a little over $1,600,000. It was not to be really

\textsuperscript{142}\textit{New Orleans Bee}, February 7, 1838.

\textsuperscript{143}\textit{Ibid.}, March 14, 1838.
solvent again until the crisis had passed in the 1840's.

This sort of experience had not deterred Caldwell from embarking on other corporate schemes. He was one of the subscribers and directors listed in the act incorporating the Bath Rail Road Company which the legislature passed on March 12, 1838. The purpose of this company seems to have been to provide some competition to the Pontchartrain Rail Road, whose high rates and poor service in providing transportation from the city to Lake Pontchartrain had disgusted the citizenry. The Bath Rail Road Company was required by its charter to build a hotel at the town of Bath, "equal to the one at Milneburg" and to construct bath houses in connection with it.

Caldwell was, for a time at least, in some contention for the mayoralty of New Orleans in the fall of 1837. The Picayune of October 14 announced: "The names of L. U. Gaiennie of the Third Municipality and James H. Caldwell, of the second, are before the people of New Orleans as candidates for Mayor of the city." However, on November 9 the same paper asked, "Who is to become the next mayor of New Orleans?" and concluded its article with a note that "an effort will be made to make Mr. Caldwell . . . contend for the station," thus suggesting that the earlier announcement was not a formal one. As it turned

\[144\text{Ibid., April 13, 1838.}\]

\[145\text{True American, July 31, 1838.}\]
out, Caldwell did not run for the post at election time. He did run for the council of the Second Municipality in April of 1838, however, and was again re-elected. Like many other prominent New Orleans businessmen his politics had switched in revulsion to the banking policies of the Jackson administration, and Caldwell later found himself serving as a member of the Whig Central Committee, according to the True American of July 2, 1838.

Caldwell's personal popularity, despite the bank scandal and certain distasteful episodes like that of Miss DeBar's benefit, seems to have remained high. The following story which appeared in the Picayune of May 6, 1838 gives some indication of his stature in the New Orleans community. At least it gives an idea of Caldwell's own conception of himself as a person of sufficient importance to require that he leave his likeness to an admiring posterity:

KING'S BUSTS.—A visit to the rooms of King the sculptor yesterday afforded us a high degree of pleasure. The busts of Jas. H. Caldwell, Samuel J. Peters and the Rev. Mr. Clapp were the most perfect representations of those gentlemen that we could have imagined. Not only was every feature true to the original in its proportions; but the peculiar expression, the bearing of the head as we have noticed in conversation, together with the very veins, wrinkles, and every other item of minor importance, have been attended to with the nicest fidelity. Mr. Clapp's is considered by his parishioners so true to the life, that they have order duplicate after duplicate, till,

146Daily Picayune, April 3, 1838.
if we may judge from the appearance of Mr. King's shelves, there must be some three or four dozen casts in different stages of finishing. There are several copies of Mr. Caldwell's also. 147

The summer of 1838 Caldwell spent in the city. As chairman of the municipality's committee on streets and landings, he vigorously opposed any further contracts for paving the city's streets by former methods of cobblestoning, and just as vigorously plumped for his own system of paving with blocks of stone. 148 Outside the council he busied himself with expediting the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad's construction along the shore of Lake Pontchartrain, and promoting the Prairie Cottage, the resort which the railroad company had erected at Bath. 149

In mid-summer the St. Charles Theatre underwent extensive painting and embellishment and the entire massive chandelier was taken apart for cleaning. 150 During July Caldwell may have journeyed to Nashville to try to sell the Nashville Theatre, although his actual presence in the northern city cannot be confirmed. It is true, however, that the following advertisement appeared in the Nashville Republican Banner during the early weeks of July:

147 One such copy currently resides in the Cabildo in New Orleans.

148 True American, August 3, 1838.

149 Ibid., August 4, 23 and 30, 1838; Daily Picayune, September 4, 1838.

150 True American, July 28, 1838; Daily Picayune, August 12, 1838.
NASHVILLE THEATRE AT AUCTION

On Saturday morning the 14th July, at 12 o'clock, I will sell at the upper end of the Market House, Nashville, at public auction (if not previously disposed of at private sale) the Nashville Theatre, with all scenery, &c.

The lot will be sold subject to a ground rent of $120 per annum, irredeemable, except by consent. Terms made known on day of sale.

Lewis E. Johnson, Auctioneer. ¹⁵¹

The auction was actually held on July 18, instead of the 14th as originally announced, as the following item from the same newspaper shows:

The Nashville Theatre which was advertised to be sold at auction on the 19th Inst. was bought in at $8,000. We understand that the lowest price is $10,000 cash. ¹⁵²

Caldwell had found the sale price too low and refused the offer; he was still owner of the Nashville Theatre in 1844 when he leased it to a man named Alexander Mackenzie. ¹⁵³

Caldwell's attempt to dispose of the Nashville Theatre would seem to indicate that any plan he may have had of restoring his theatrical circuit of New Orleans, Cincinnati, Louisville and Nashville had been abandoned by him. The first three years of his return to the theatre had not been attended with the successes he had perhaps anticipated. The economic distress of the times, the loss of his Cincinnati property by fire, his inability to construct the planned theatre in Louisville, and

¹⁵¹ As quoted in Hunt, op. cit., p. 62.
¹⁵² Ibid.
considerable disappointment with respect to the appeal which the St. Charles Theatre should have had for New Orleans had all contributed to an alteration in his theatrical plans. He himself had contributed heavily to his own misfortunes. He had taken too lightly the threat of competition offered by Dick Russell. He had made injudicious engagements--notably that of the Italian Opera Company--and had allowed himself to act intemperately when his profits were threatened or his judgments assailed, thus confirming a public impression of him as a monopolist, an imperialist, and a monomaniac. The diffusion of his energies over so many enterprises outside the theatre had compelled him to place the fortunes of the St. Charles in the hands of lieutenants who did not always serve his interests well.

Though his theatrical ambitions had had to be curtailed, as the season of 1838-1839 approached, James H. Caldwell could face the immediate future with some equanimity. He was once again in possession of his theatre properties. The competition of Russell and Rowe had been removed by their deaths. The New Orleans theatre, to which he was temporarily restricted, was, nevertheless exclusively his. Safely in control in New Orleans he could cast his eye toward Mobile, Alabama and make plans to add that city as an attraction to prospective stars. Without a circuit he still might have an axis. Even if he could have foreseen it, Caldwell's ego would
not have let him believe that in this scheme lay the seeds of the destruction of his theatrical career. Within the next two years those seeds would be sown.
CHAPTER VII
1838-1840

The autumn of 1838 found James Caldwell in direct control of both of his New Orleans theatres again. To manage both of them personally would have taken someone with energy and dexterity even beyond the considerable abilities of Caldwell. In April of 1838, before Richard Russell's lease on the Camp Street Theatre had expired, and before Russell's death, Caldwell had concluded an agreement for the managership of the Camp Street for the next season with the actor George Barrett. The contract was not exactly a lease, although the provisions of it demanded that Barrett pay Caldwell rent. Barrett contracted to manage the theatre for the next four seasons for which he would receive half the profits after deducting $15,000 from the gross as rent payable to Caldwell. All disbursements for running the theatre were to come out of the receipts and any materials purchased were to remain in the theatre as part of its inventory. In addition to any profit he might make, Barrett was to retain for himself a salary of $100 a week as actor-manager, and was to receive two benefits each season, one half of the gross receipts of

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which were to be his. Barrett was not liable for the loss in the event the theatre did not produce $15,000 during the season. This last provision, plus Barrett's salary, made the arrangement something less than the outright lease which Russell had enjoyed. Caldwell apparently wished to retain some control over policy.

The agreement had been drawn up on April 11, 1838 and three days later Barrett sailed north on the steamboat North America as Caldwell's agent for securing talent for the two New Orleans theatres for the fall season. An hour after his departure Barrett realized he had forgotten to sign the contract. At this point fate intervened in the form of a severe illness which beset Josephine Clifton, who was travelling in the same boat with Barrett. Barrett prevailed upon the captain to land Miss Clifton at the town of Carrollton, just above New Orleans, where, after a wrangle over the demand that she be charged a full half-fare for the short journey, Miss Clifton was landed and put in a quiet bed to recover. Barrett seized the opportunity to write a note to John Barton in New Orleans asking him to sign the agreement with Caldwell for him.2

Caldwell determined to open the St. Charles Theatre first this year, inasmuch as Barrett was unable to return to New Orleans until mid-October. The ladies and gentlemen of the company were requested to assemble in the St.

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2Ibid. Barrett's letter to Barton is included with the notarial act.
Charles green room on September 28, according to Caldwell's advertisement in the Picayune of September 4, 1838, which was reprinted by request in the Cincinnati Whig, the Louisville Journal, the Vicksburg Sentinel, and the Natchez Free Trader. On September 27 the True American truly predicted:

With both theatres entirely, and elegantly re-decorated: with an abundant supply of novelties, and a liberal supply of the best artists, our coming theatrical season is bound to be one of unexampled brilliancy.

The Bee of the same date was somewhat more cautious. It reported on the improved appearance of the interior of the St. Charles and then said:

Should the manager and proprietor devote as much attention to the merits and usefulness of the pieces to be brought forward, and to the skill and talents of his performers, as he has done to the theatrical edifice, the St. Charles will richly deserve all the patronage which a liberal public may feel disposed to bestow.

A reference to Caldwell's advertisement in the True American or the Picayune of the following day should have assured the Bee as to the attention which Caldwell had lavished on securing a good company:

ST. CHARLES THEATRE
This magnificent structure has undergone, during the recess, an entire new order of embellishment; the whole of the interior has been repaired: the Chandelier has been taken to pieces, and its 13 cwt of cut glass beads and drops cleaned and polished; nothing has been neglected, either in the building itself or in engagements, which have been made with the first dramatic talent in the country, to promote the high character which the St. Charles has obtained both at home and abroad, for its being one of the first dramatic Establishments in the World.
The Orchestra, heretofore acknowledged superior, has been considerably increased in number and talent, and former deficiencies in particular with members of the Prague Band. 

During the season the most successful dramas of the day will be produced, and in a style which it is presumed will give general satisfaction.

The following Ladies and Gentlemen are in treaty with, and engaged.

JOHN H. BARTON, Stage Manager,
EDWIN FORREST,
JUNIUS BRUTUS BOOTH,
J. R. SCOTT,
H. J. FINN,
JOHN BARNES,
S. T. BROWNE, and
GEORGE HOLLAND.

MESSRS. HARRISON,
PEARSON,
FARREN,
WILLIAMS,
COWEL [sic],
DEBAR,
And others in treaty.

CELESTE,
ELLEN TREE
MRS. BARNES,
MISS CHARLOTTE BARNES.

MESSMATES FARREN,
COWEL [sic],
DEBAR,
PLUMER,
HARRISON,
F. BROWN,
MADDEN,
SMITH.

S. M. LEE, Principal Artist.
N. LEWIS, Costumer,
WEIL, Tailor,
S. WALLIS, Properties Maker.

An orchestra of twenty-seven members was then listed by name, with H. W. Jonas indicated as leader. R. W. Elliot was named as Head of Police.

Promptly Caldwell opened the theatre on October 1.

The Bee, in relating the event on October 3, asked for "the indulgence of the public towards the enterprising manager,
who rather than disappoint the community for which he caters, has chosen to commence his theatrical season prior to the arrival of many of the most talented members of the company."

The Bee was pleased with the strength and talent of the orchestra. The opening bill included the comedy No Song, No Supper and the farce Dead Shot.

The opening of the American Theatre in Camp Street, which occurred three weeks later, received considerably more attention from the press than had that of the more splendid St. Charles. Understandably, the people of New Orleans seem to have had a stronger affection for the little Camp than they could ever be expected to acquire for the cold grandeur of the St. Charles. Barrett quickly proved himself to be as able a manager and publicist as his employer.

On October 19, two nights prior to the opening of the theatre, he invited members of the press to inspect the redecoration of the interior as it had been accomplished under the direction of Joe Cowell, Sr., as good a scenic artist as he was an actor. The True American of the next day described the results as follows:

The whole has undergone an entire change. Since the finish of last season the house has been as in a state of chrysalis: the dirty grub worm is now transformed into the bright, and beautiful, butterfly. Where all before was dark and dingy, now reign taste and elegance. The miserable brick dust hue, which so lately deformed the house, has been banished most effectually. The ceiling, while it retains the classic figures of the past has been lightened up by changing the ground work, a repainting of the panels, cleaning the borders, and throwing over the whole a novel aspect. The fronts of the boxes have been repainted in Greek...
scrolls of a truly elegant character, thrown up and relieved by shadows suited to the position of the lights. Each circle, though partaking the same style, differs essentially from the other; and the pure taste of the design, not less than the skill of its execution, reflects infinite credit on the judgment that suggested, and the hand that accomplished it. . . . The new drop scene is splendidly executed, and looks quite en suite with the other decorations, indeed one of the most agreeable pursuits in the whole, is, the perfect harmony of colours it displays.

In announcing his opening bill of The Lady of Lyons and Presumptive Evidence, Barrett included the following notice to the public:

The Manager fully aware of the necessity of strict order and decorum in a well regulated theatre, and being resolved to render this establishment every way worthy of the patronage and support of an enlightened public, has received the assistance of an efficient police, which will be under the direction of Mr. COTTAM.3

Barrett was able to keep this promise and the Camp was a more orderly place than it had ever been under Russell's management and perhaps even Caldwell's. Even the opening address, written especially for the occasion by Charles J. B. Fisher and spoken by Mrs. Barrett, was evidence of a decided change in managerial policy. The verses were more reminiscent of the prologues of eighteenth century England, than the more usual nineteenth century poetic genre. In part, the prologue was as follows:

Good friend, I'm glad to see you!—Gentle sirs, You are most welcome! Ladies, I am yours! 'Tis kind, indeed, in such a crowd to come, To see us on this night, our first "at home." Don't stand on forms, but make a frequent call,

3True American, October 21, 1838.
For we shall keep up, open house to all.
And as each night we give dull care "a rout,"
Call when you please, you'll never find us out.
If busy, still your kindness we'll regard,
If to the door you come, and "leave your card."

Welcome to all.--American or Creole,
Strangers, or cits.--we shall be glad to see all.
Our house is small, but yet 'tis not unpleasant,
Especially when such kind friends are present.
The furniture we'll show you bye and bye,
For YOU must judge its excellence, not I.
The articles are varied, new, and ample,
And I suspect they've sent me as a sample,
Not as the best, but readiest;--or in truth,
Just as a specimen of native growth.

From the far North we've come to show our arts,
In these warm climes, to win your warmer hearts.
To this charmed spot, where once a BOOTH appeared.
And where a FORREST, too, was reared!
Where tragedy with KEAN joys deckt each hour,
And where gay comedy has shown her POWER!
Where first CELESTE her rising fame enhanced,
Where SINCLAIR warbled, or the RAVELS danced,
We march our troupe, to show how strong our serve is,
And ask "the general hero" to accept our service:
That we're prepared for service, needs no stamp,
For here we are all muster'd in the Camp!
I'm here recruiting,--won't you list to me?
I'm the white Sergeant of the Company
And as the Captain bids I'm bound to write,
"YOU'RE ORDERED TO 'TEND DRILL "HERE," EVERY NIGHT
And I'd suggest this house the rule should form,
And every night the crowd be uniform.
Why have not women rank? our power's gem,
Men rule the world, and we you know rule them.
And oft when men could not raise one recruit,
Women have brought whole armies to their foot.
When Charles the Dauphin could no troops advance,
To drive the British from his native France,
Joan of Arc rose,--called on all true born Franks
And gallant thousands thronged to join her ranks.
I'd be this Joan of Orleans, and bid you tramp
Nightly in crowds to fill our little Camp!^4

Until mid-November both houses relied on the talents
of their respective stock companies and on a more or less

^4 Ibid., October 24, 1838.
standard repertory of popular plays and ballad operas. The parade of stars began at the St. Charles on November 15 with J. M. Field, followed by and in succession: Miss Meadows, the Barnes family, John R. Scott, James S. Browne, Josephine Clifton, H. J. Finn, Ellen Tree, the Ravel family, Junius Brutus Booth, Mademoiselle Augusta, the Bedouin Arabs, Celeste, and Edwin Forrest. Mrs. Mary Ann Duff came out of retirement to assist Forrest during his engagement. The Camp was not far behind, either in the date at which its stars appeared or their magnitude. Beginning November 19 with Miss Meadows, there followed: Dan Marble, Miss Nelson, Madame LeCompte, Edwin Forrest, the Ravel family, Josephine Clifton, J. R. Scott, Ellen Tree, Charles Eaton, and Junius Brutus Booth. Barrett also featured in early March the troupe of Bedouin Arabs and James Porter—the Kentucky Giant, Miss Sutor—the German Dwarf, and Major Stevens—the American Dwarf.

At first the Camp Theatre proved to be the stronger attraction. Caldwell had been operating with a reduced company during the first week or so, but even as late as October 27, when his full company had arrived, the Bee regretfully prodded Caldwell about the quality of his offerings:

We are sorry to see such poor houses at

5Both Scott and Browne remained for the rest of the season so should be regarded as members of the regular company, although both were frequently starred.
the Temple; but the manager can scarcely anticipate better ones, until he gives us something worth listening to. The orchestra, to be sure, contains immense talent and greater numerical superiority than any in the country, and Holland's phiz is an ever shining representation of all the grotesque and laugh-moving images in creation, but these do not suffice—we want to see something new, or something old, if it be good and well performed. . . . No director of a theatre should rely wholly upon stars for attraction—let him have a sterling company, and represent well approved pieces, and above all, for the distribution of character be appropriate, and he will be sure to see his house well filled. The public of New Orleans, is a play going one, and with a little tact in the choice of performers, and a tolerably fair company, a manager could not fail to succeed.

In its same issue the Bee noted that "the company and performances at the Camp more than merit a passing notice. The first is remarkably efficient and the second highly respectable." On October 31 the same paper reported: "The St. Charles and Camp are striving with generous rivalry to outvie each other . . . but as yet, the little Camp excels its huge competitor." The Bee recalled the days when Caldwell had "the direct superintendence" of the Camp and when "the parquette was wont to be filled with the beauty and respectability of the city." Russell, according to the Bee, had allowed this reputation to be tarnished by lax discipline both in the house and on the stage. But now, "since the opening of the present season a radical alteration has been effected," said the Bee, and the Camp had become "a respectable resort in which no lady will be ashamed to sit." This opinion was seconded by the Picayune on November 3 which observed that "all the private boxes
were occupied by beautiful women, while the parquette shone with their charms."

But by Christmas time, after the public had had a taste of Josephine Clifton, Scott, and Browne, business at the St. Charles picked up. This situation was not to endure, however, for the advent of Booth on February 5—normally a powerful attraction—was attended by poor houses. This was due, in part, to the fact that Caldwell had booked Booth opposite the engagement of Edwin Forrest at the Camp. Forrest was making his first appearance in the city in five years, and it had been ten years since Booth had visited New Orleans, but Forrest was nearing the peak of his popularity and proved to be the stronger card. Moreover, the public had become disenchanted with Booth's eccentricities. The True American of September 18, 1838, in commenting on the expected arrival of Booth during the forthcoming season, had cautioned him that he would "have to walk straight, for the New Orleans public will not put up with his humbuggery so quietly as a northern audience." Poor Booth's mental aberration, which to a modern mind would seem to have been unfeigned, was given short shrift by the True American of February 5:

The humbug of mental alienation, and eccentricity /sic/ has lost its charm—it will not go down in this city. Let Mr. Booth put a proper restraint upon his vagaries and play through his engagement like a man. He will gain by such a course—to pursue a different one, will be to earn the reward of his disregard of propriety and decorum, and it will as surely fall, and in a way
that will not be very pleasant, as any of his fantastic tricks are played.

Mr. Forrest is now fulfilling an engagement at the Camp street Theatre. Parallels have been drawn elsewhere, between him and Mr. Booth, and by not a few, he has been considered the superior of the two. The steadfastness of his conduct and character—his punctuality in all his engagements have justly entitled him to a consideration in the public mind, which the waywardness of Mr. Booth's career has frequently forfeited. Let not an additional stigma be attached to the latter's name during this engagement. He may rest assured that it will not be suffered to go "scot free"—nor can he, under any circumstances, ever find an audience here again.

It may be that Booth heeded the injunction—the True American of February 9 saw "no symptom of the mania"—but his first three performances were thought of as spiritless. His performances, in order, of Richard III, Sir Giles Overreach, and Shylock were described as tame. Not until he played Othello on the 8th was "the fire re-illumined."

The remainder of his engagement was highly successful.

The misfortune which Caldwell experienced in having to play Booth against Forrest was the lot of Manager Barrett when Booth was engaged at the Camp in late March and the rival attraction at the St. Charles was the dancer Celeste, who this season captured the hearts and fancies of Orleanians as she had never done in her several previous engagements in the city. She filled the house "to overflowing" on each successive night and the receipts on her first benefit amounted to $1,852, according to the

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*Ibid.,* February 7, 1839; *True American*, February 9, 1839.
True American of March 13. Booth began his engagement at the Camp on March 20 with his favorite role of Richard III, which he played "in a masterly manner," according to the Picayune of the next day, but there was a "thin attendance." The Picayune protested that Barrett deserved better houses for his managerial efforts and then observed, "If two theatres cannot be supported--for the reputation of the city, if for nothing else, the Camp ought to be the last to fall." Despite the fact that Booth was outdoing himself in decorum and strong acting, he could not compete with Celeste, who at the end of her engagement on March 30 played to "a house crowded from pit to dome" and, as the True American of April 1 reported, "had drawn to the St. Charles Theatre in twenty-four successive nights, the extraordinary sum of thirty thousand dollars, and the receipts of her four benefits must have amounted to eight thousand dollars."7

Caldwell capped the advantage by the engagement of Edwin Forrest as his last star of the St. Charles season beginning April 1. With the talented assistance of Scott, Mrs. Barrett and Mrs. Duff, Forrest ran his repertoire of Shakespearean roles (Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Richard III, Lear) and his heroic favorites of Damon and Pythias, Brutus, The Gladiator, Venice Preserved and Metamora.

7The Picayune of April 19, 1839 took issue with these figures. Said the Picayune, "We have heard from authority. . . that the lady realized seven thousand dollars, and that the management gained a loss of $900."
The company which supported him, with the exception of those above noted, was received with something less than enthusiasm. On the occasion of the representation of *Damon and Pythias* on April 5, the *Picayune* commented: "If some two or three of the company who appeared on the evening in question, would turn their attention to some other employment besides ACTING! they would benefit the public and themselves." And at Forrest's benefit performance of *William Tell* on April 12 the *True American* lined its sights on two erring members of the corps:

It must have been very annoying to him [Forrest], in that stirring scene with Melctal... to be compelled to speak the part of Mr. Burke as well as his own. It was plainly perceptible to the audience, who, although the illusion was greatly marred, were not a little surprised to see Mr. Forrest preserve the individuality of Tell's character, while he was putting words into the mouth of Melctal. Is Mr. Burke too young to be taught, or too old to learn a single length? Some patent instructor should be invented for his especial benefit. Mr. Paret had but a line to say, and he did not say that correctly. Where was your memory, Mr. P?

But both theatres were relatively free from adverse criticism this season. Very early in the year the French side of the *Bee* had some remarks to make on the habits of particular actors in making late entrances. The *True American* of October 10, 1838 found this criticism "so correct that we have taken the trouble of translating it for the benefit of certain actors and actresses." The criticism was as follows:

The entrances are generally failures. Mr.
Plumer causes himself to be particularly remarked by this fault; we have never yet seen him arrive at the proper time, and it would appear that he has established a rule to make himself waited for--Anyone who is acquainted with the severity of the French stage would be astonished at the patience with which the audience of the St. Charles pass over this most improper irregularity. The indulgence is badly understood, and can only lead to a general disorganization of the Theatricals.

Ben DeBar was similarly criticized in the Picayune of October 14.

Stage management at the Camp Theatre was the subject of early season criticism by the Picayune on November 2. The scene shifters during a presentation of The Lady of Lyons were accused by the paper of "the grossest inattention imaginable." As a hint to Barrett the Picayune cited these examples:

He knows as well as we do, the disagreeable feeling consequent on seeing a forest tree stuck into a nobleman's drawingroom, with its nodding branches half enveloped in crimson damask--he also knows that no vizored knight, full clad in armor, ever stood frowning in the gardener's cottage--this is all wrong--it can and doubtless will be remedied. We perceive that attention is now paid to a change of dress after the interval of two years and a half which occurs in the play; with the exception of Beauseant--he being a rich man and a favored lover, ought not to appear in the same breeches and boots in which he intrigues with the gardener for revenge. Our "property man" also seemed to contemn livery, and came on the stage in blue cottonades--though politicians don them for popularity, it is exactly the worst garb in which a humble actor can win the breath of praise.8

8The writer here has reference to the current convention of changing properties in full view of the audience by a liveried property man. The curtain was not lowered between scenes within a play.
Scenery at the St. Charles came in for considerable praise during this season. S. M. Lee, Caldwell's scenic artist, was on several occasions commended for new scenes which he had added to the stock of the theatre, as for example the new library and portrait gallery noticed by the *Picayune* of February 3. Both the *Picayune* of November 13 and the *True American* of the 14th commented favorably on the new scenery which Lee had executed for the play *The Burgomaster's Daughter*. On the occasion of Lee's benefit on April 15 the same two newspapers spoke again of his talents as "one of the finest artists in the country," and noted that "his scenery may challenge competition in any theatre."

The entire season was one noted for the amicable relations which existed both between the competing theatres and between the theatres and the public. The worst rebukes were mild in nature, such as that of "A Boatman" who wrote to the *Picayune* of April 5 to complain of the lights at the Camp being extinguished on the gallery stairs before the last act was concluded. This was a policy he had not met with at the St. Charles, he said. Caldwell was gently censured by "A Stranger" in the columns of the *True American* of January 29 for not providing sufficient small play bills at the door of the St. Charles. Several newspapers joined in a request that all the theatres provide a box or parquette seat for members of the press who frequently

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found themselves denied a seat on the evenings of popular attractions. 9 In a season noted for its lack of controversy, the only incident approaching that magnitude concerned the attempts of a Mr. Larkin, a singer and actor of no apparent talent who had been engaged during the first season of the St. Charles and once subsequently by Russell at the Camp, to secure a benefit performance. His action was scored by the True American as a humbug frequently practiced by vagabond actors who came to town, pretended they had been denied employment by the theatre manager, and then sought the aid of the citizenry in raising a benefit. 10

A near-disaster occurred on New Year's Day, 1839.

The account given by the Daily Picayune of January 2 gives a clear picture of the event:

Fire at the St. Charles

This splendid building came near being entirely destroyed by fire yesterday morning—in fact, it was almost a miracle that it was preserved. About 10 o'clock a smoke was discovered issuing from the top of the roof on the St. Charles street side, and the general cry that "the St. Charles was on fire," drew hundreds and thousands to the spot almost instantly. Never have we seen the firemen turn out with such an alacrity and get their engines in play in so short a time.

Thinking its entire destruction inevitable, the moving of its immense properties was the first impulse with all. Dresses, decorations, &c. &c. were showered from the windows and taken to the square opposite. The books and all the music and other valuables in the box office were removed to places

9New Orleans Bee, February 8, 1839.

10True American, December 28, 1838; January 18 and 21, 1839. Daily Picayune, November 1, 1838.
of security. In fact, the theatre would have been completely riddled by the thousands who were ready to assist had not the flames been got under and the building declared out of danger.

Had it occurred at night, or had the wind blown in any other direction than from the east, the surprising efforts of the firemen could not have saved the immense pile with all the buildings in the vicinity. As it is, the fire had consumed the gallery saloons, and the ceiling of the box saloon. The heavy brick wall which separates this part of the building from that appropriated to the audience, materially aided in stopping the progress of the flames towards the interior.

The total loss is estimated at $8,000. No other satisfactory clue had been given as to the origin of the fire than the fact that some of the workmen about the theatre were engaged on the evening previous in erecting a flag-staff which runs up through the roof at the immediate point where the flames were first discovered. Mr. Caldwell, with a promptness which does him much credit, immediately after the fire was subdued had a flag-staff put up, and the "stars and stripes" were soon waving over a scene which, but a few minutes before, was all wildness and confusion.

The interior of the theatre is uninjured and the performances went on last night as regular as though nothing had happened.

Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon our brave and indefatigable firemen for their exertions and uncommon skill in saving this noble edifice. The great height of the building prevented water being thrown from the street, but nothing daunted, they clambered to the very roof, and almost into the fire itself, dragging pipe and hose after them, and battled with the devouring element on its own ground. Nothing else saved the St. Charles but their untiring perseverance and recklessness of danger. Not only Mr. Caldwell and all those connected with the establishment, but our citizens generally, owe them a heavy debt of gratitude for their exertions in preserving a building so valuable to the proprietor, and one which is truly the pride and boast of New Orleans—the noblest and most magnificent in the world.

The Bee of January 3 described the event in similar fashion, but added some speculations as to the origin of the blaze:

Some were of the opinion that it arose from fire left the night before in the gallery saloon, or the
place where refreshments are sold to persons in the upper tier. Some account for it by the fact that workmen were engaged the previous evening in erecting a flagstaff on the top of the theatre; and others ascribe it to the act of an incendiary. If it arose from the negligence of the persons charged with the care of the gallery saloon, it is singular that the fire did not show itself at an earlier hour, as the theatre was closed the previous night at the usual time, and all lights extinguished; still more extraordinary is it if it originated with the workmen who fixed the flag staff, because the public were admitted into the theatre after these had finished their work and gone away, and it thus became almost impossible that the fire could have existed and made progress without being observed. There is a difficulty also in the satisfying one's mind that it was the work of an incendiary. The spot where it broke out is so remote, so nearly inaccessible, to all who are not familiar with every part of the vast edifice, that unless we suppose a want of fidelity in the persons employed by Mr. Caldwell, the idea that the fire was wilfully communicated is hardly tenable.

The True American of the same date added some notes of personal heroism and human reaction:

The upper saloon, in which the fire originated, stands between the outer and inner (or main) wall of the front, and has two doors leading on to the gallery lobby and, of course, communicating with all the wood work, and other combustible materials used in the building. The two Irish girls, Maria and Margaret, employed in the establishment as housekeepers, were sweeping the lobbies when the smoke and flames burst open these doors. With that presence of mind, which women frequently exhibit in moments of danger, they rushed to the doors, closing them, and with all their force held them against the crackling flames, the suffocating smoke, and the immense power of the rarified air within the burning saloon, and though their flesh was burnt and their breathing almost suffocated, they still held on to them although drenched with water, until relieved by stronger, though not more devoted hands.

The spot where the fire broke out being 76 feet high, it was with great labor and difficulty that water could be brought to bear upon it, and
when the first hose conveyed aloft was about to pour its "flood of safety" upon the flames, it burst in two midway from the ground. Dense volumes of smoke found their way into the roofing, and a cry was raised that the fire had communicated with the scenery, when the faithful porter Fred Stone, pushing in the midst of the smoke-filled roof fell suffocated and was dragged out nearly lifeless sustaining a fall that almost terminated fatally.

Mr. Caldwell looked on the flames as they rose from the apparently devoted roof with the calmness of an unconcerned spectator: and while the fire was not yet out, altho' its further destructiveness was not greatly to be apprehended, he quietly gave directions to reconnect the gas pipes, to clear the stage, proceed with the rehearsal, and announced that the play would go on at night as though nothing had occurred. This is the only instance we have heard of where a theatre deliberately burning has been saved from destruction: the first time, ever known, that the ----- has had a theatre once in his clutches, and yet let go his hold. In the evening, the proprietor threw open his doors to the Fire department," not as a courtesy, but as a right, as he expressed himself to many of them, reserving to a further and more formal opportunity the public manifestation of his grateful feelings to them.

The True American had its own idea as to how the fire originated:

The fire is pretty well ascertained to have been accidental, but caused by great and reprehensible carelessness. An order had been given on the eve of the New Year that our National Standard should be hoisted at day break, and as the "stripes and Stars" were seen to float from the point of the roof at 1 o'clock in the morning, it is conjectured that some of the hands engaged were "seeing the old year out" in the upper saloon, and so overheated the stove pipe, turning into the flue, that it charred one of the cross beams in its immediate vicinity and the flag staff which descends close along side.

Caldwell was understandably grateful to the fire companies for their superb efforts in preventing the total destruction of his theatre. In consequence, he immediately
inserted the following card in the newspapers:

A CARD
The Proprietor of the St. Charles Theatre to the Fire Department of New Orleans.

Your exertions yesterday saved from total destruction the Temple which I have erected to the Drama. Under the naturally exciting circumstances of the occasion, I have not the power to dilate upon the consequences that must have ensued by the destruction of an institution comprehending its consequent individual claims. My feelings, however, prompt me to say that since I had the honor to erect this Thespian Temple, I have never been so distinctly satisfied of the estimation in which my efforts have been regarded by the public, as by the very general sympathy evinced on this occasion. I will, however, take an opportunity of expressing myself more fully to the Fire Department, and hope to enlist, on an early day, their presence within the walls they have so honorably preserved.

JAMES H. CALDWELL.

He was quick to make good his promise. On January 5, 1839 the whole fire department visited the St. Charles to see The Poor Gentleman and The Adopted Child. During the course of that evening Caldwell was loudly called for, came forward, and expressed his gratitude to the firemen for their exertions. Also part of the festivities was Finn's song of "The Fireman," to which he had added the following new lyrics:

But words are too weak for the praises
Of those who the engines then hauled well
On that day when the firemen like blazes
Went to work for their friend James H. Caldwell.
No theatre but this I will say
Has been saved from a burning outright, sirs;
If the firemen hadn't played on that day
We shouldn't have been playing tonight, sirs.

11 True American, January 7, 1839.
12 Daily Picayune, January 6, 1839.
Another consequence of the fire was the return of Caldwell to the stage for a few nights of playing some of the roles at which he excelled. This came about as the result of Caldwell's benefit for the Fireman's Charitable Association which he gave on January 12 and at which he performed Gossamer in *Laugh When You Can*. According to the *Picayune* of the 13th it was "a brilliant affair," and the receipts were "variously estimated at from four to six thousand dollars." Of Caldwell's performance the *True American* said he sustained "the part of Gossamer with all the ease and elegance the vivacity and fidelity of his palmy days, when he was acknowledged the light comedian of the day, and when his name was 'a tower of strength' on the theatrical card." This one-night appearance then led to the following invitation:

New Orleans, Jan. 18, 1839.

JAS. H. CALDWELL, Esq.

SIR:—Your masterly personation of Gossamer on Saturday evening last on the occasion of the free benefit given by you to the Firemen's Charitable Association, has left upon a large number of your friends a strong desire to see you again in that and other characters of the same cast, which you had made your own previous to your retirement from the stage. Although several years have elapsed since that event, they have not forgotten the gratification they always derived from your performances, and the recollection of your Charles Surface, and your Doricourt, your Young Rapid, and your Belcour, your Glenroy and your Vapid, has ever been attended by the hope of witnessing them once more. At the instance of those friends, we have undertaken to be the medium of communication between yourself and them, and have

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13 *True American*, January 11 and 12, 1839; *New Orleans Bee*, January 10, 1839; and *Daily Picayune*, January 10, 1839.
only to add, that a compliance with their request at this time, would enhance the treat and be doubly acceptable should you be disposed to improve the opportunity now afforded of appearing on the same evenings with Ellen Tree.  

The letter was signed by eight prominent New Orleans business men. Caldwell responded immediately:

GENTLEMEN:

You very flattering and highly complimentary letter under the date of the 18th instnt, I have the honor to acknowledge.

If my appearance with the distinguished artiste who now graces the St. Charles Theatre can add interest to those plays its patrons are desirous of having represented, I shall be most happy to labor once more in my vocation for their gratification. My other public duties will prevent me necessarily, from going through a round of character but I will have the honor to act three or four nights during Miss Ellen Tree's engagement.

With sentiments of respect, gentlemen,

Your most ob't serv't.

JAMES H. CALDWELL.

N. Orleans, Jan'y 23d, 1839.

On the nights of January 29 and 31 and February 2, respectively, Caldwell played Benedick to Ellen Tree's Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, Charles Surface to her Lady Teazle in The School For Scandal, and Duke Aranza to her Juliana in The Honeymoon. Of his Benedick the Picayune of the 31st said he was "excellent . . . and evinced a thorough knowledge of his author and his art." Following the final performance the True American said on February 4 "Caldwell played as well as he did when playing was his profession, instead of as now, his amusement. Full of

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14 New Orleans Bee, January 24, 1839; True American, January 24, 1839.

15 Ibid.
life and vivacity, correct and elegant."

Caldwell would seem to have been correct when he claimed that the fire at the St. Charles served to prove that the public held him in high regard. The True American of January 23, 1839 even published a letter from New York in which "great good feeling for him personally and respect for his enterprise are manifest." The unknown writer said:

We are glad to hear the St. Charles suffered less than might have been expected, from the fire on the 1st. Intelligence reached us, that that splendid temple of the Drama and monument of your own enterprise and spirit, was in ashes; and you may imagine the gratification afforded by a subsequent express mail, which brought us the facts. I do not know when a greater degree of feeling has been manifested here, on the first report of the calamity.

The loss of $8,000 Caldwell was reported to have suffered in the fire was a small price to pay for all these expressions of friendliness and good will.

With a benefit for H. G. Pearson, the stage manager at the St. Charles, the season at that institution came to an end on April 28, 1839. 16 Barrett had closed the Camp three weeks earlier, although it was opened for one night on April 29 to enable a Mrs. Green to take a benefit. 17 The success of this season can be conjectured at. There is some evidence that Celeste, Forrest, Josephine Clifton and even Booth drew good audiences for at least a part of their

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16 True American, April 27, 1839.
17 Ibid.
engagements, but whether in sufficient proportion to counterbalance their expense to Caldwell is not known. In reviewing the just-past season on May 1, the Bee characterized it as "long, arduous, and unprofitable." The net effect of the whole was, said the Bee, that "the audiences have been amused, and the management impoverished by a series of stars." The Bee complained that while a variety of talent--some of it of dubious quality--had been offered to the public, and had carried away with it all the community's spare change, "yet the management is minus some score thousand dollars." The Bee argued that the starring system was "harmful to the drama in every respect," but particularly in the demoralization of the minor stock actor, who "gets no credit for good playing," and has as his sole objective the achievement of star billing of his own name. This vicious system extended even to playwrights, said the Bee, who had come to write only plays for particular persons, a reference to Forrest and the starring vehicles which had been constructed for him by Stone and Bird. The Bee's sentiments were supported and elaborated on by the Picayune three days later, and on May 16 a writer to the Bee who signed himself "Dramatic," suggested the following:

We predict, therefore, for Mr. Caldwell, a brilliant season at the opening of the St. Charles, with a good stock company. We predict for him a small fortune, if he puts up a sign upon which the public can read,--"No stars permitted to twinkle here."
Caldwell professed himself in sympathy with these views, at least his announcements at the beginning of the next season so stated. And he was to try to do something about the viciousness of the star system during the 1839-1840 season, but at the same time he had been in the theatre too long not to know that there was a direct relationship between the size of a star's name on the bills and the size of the take at the box office.

The considerable talents of Barrett and Pearson applied to the details of management of his two theatres had allowed Caldwell more opportunity to pursue his manifold business and political interests during the 1838-1839 season. With the enthusiastic support of the True American, and perhaps of that body of the citizenry which had wearied of the noise, expense, and necessity for constant repair to both streets and vehicles, Caldwell continued his fight within the Second Municipality Council for square stone paving. His colleagues on the Committee on Streets and Landings, S. J. Peters and Edward Sewell, objected to his plan for paving on the grounds that at the rate stone could be brought from Scotland or Maine as ship's ballast, it would take from twenty to thirty years just to pave Magazine Street. Caldwell next suggested the idea of paving with the more readily available hexagonal blocks of wood, but again his ideas were confounded.

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18 True American, September 6, 1838.
by the majority of the committee and Caldwell resigned as
its chairman. One of the more serious objections to
this last scheme was that the wooden blocks exuded evil
exhalations which might cause yellow fever or other perils.
Caldwell remained off his favorite committee until after
his re-election to the council in April of 1839, when he
again accepted the chairmanship. Perhaps he felt that the
very sizeable majority he polled in retaining his council
seat was a vindication of his position with regard to
paving, and so returned to make the good fight. His
victory was rather impressive. The contest for the council
produced two general tickets of candidates, although there
was some overlapping of names. One group--a majority of
the incumbents--stood on their record. Another group of
aspirants sought to unseat the present council, calling
them "a supple and pliant conclave," a "dictatorial and
interested clique." Caldwell's name appeared on the
ticket of this latter group and not with the incumbent
group of which he was a member in fact, if not in spirit.
Playing it safe, however, he inserted the following card
in the *True American* of April 1, the day before the election:

> We are authorized to state, on behalf of
> Mr. Caldwell, that he has had no hand or share
> in the formation of any ticket whatever. He is
> a candidate, without concert of action with any
> one, and expects no support except from the
> unbiased opinions of his fellow citizens.

The original council was re-elected, for the most part.

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19 *Daily Picayune*, March 31, 1839.
The ticket on which Caldwell's name had appeared was, with him as the sole exception, defeated. His position was further vindicated by the fact that he polled more votes than any other candidate in his district.  

Caldwell continued to interest himself in large corporate endeavors. On November 11, 1838 the True American reported the following:

The Mobile Gas Works are increasing with great rapidity. Within so brief a period as they have been in operation they have in supply 850 private lights, exclusive of the street lamps, and illuminating the Theatre. A new gasometer has just been imported, but the gas fitters are too busy to attempt its erection.

And on July 27 the same newspaper reported:

Mr. Caldwell is pushing on rapidly with his Gas Works in Mobile. A Second Gasometer has been erected. It is upon the last principle in operation in England, being suspended without weights but regular in its perpendicular motions by guide rods. A friend writing from Mobile informs us that the Municipal authorities were present on the occasion of "Launching" this noble piece of machinery, and that the Chairman of the Gas Light Committee of the Corporation christened it the "James H. Caldwell." So completely put together is it; that it has returned already every foot of Gas entrusted to its keeping. The Lighting up of new houses for the ensuing campaign has already commenced in Mobile, and the prospect is that the business will nearly equal that of the Works here.

Caldwell found himself more and more occupied with affairs of the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad, but its condition was not nearly so fortunate as that of his Mobile Gas Company. By November the construction of the road

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20 True American, April 2, 1839.
21 This was the theatre in St. Emanuel Street managed by Ludlow and Smith.
had been pushed some three to five miles along the shores of Lake Pontchartrain beyond the company's Prairie Cottage at Bath. This rapid pace had been maintained by the expedient of laying the roadbed directly on the prairie without embankment or the driving of piles. Caldwell, as President of the company, frequently conducted excursions on the completed portion of the railroad for members of the press and the legislature. He was most anxious to please this latter group, since the corporation was in dire financial straits and again needed legislative assistance to prosecute its construction. As the True American of February 1, 1839 phrased it:

What does the Legislature intend to do for its advancement? Anything? or will the road be permitted to go to pot.

One million has been already expended; the road is now constructed eighteen miles; there are twenty-four miles of the finest rails on hand, besides the materials for a very large amount, and the judicious aid of the stage would carry the road in a few months, far into the interior of the state, by which it would be made to produce a revenue. Once completed to the state line, the road would almost make itself. Will the Legislature then stop in the good work, while other states are striving to snatch from us our commerce and trade? nous verrons.

But the True American, among others, was not to like what it eventually saw. On February 20, 1839 an act for the relief of the Nashville Railroad was introduced into the legislature. This proposal had the support of the New

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22 True American, November 28, 1839.
23 Ibid., January 29, February 16 and 18, 1839.
Orleans newspapers. The Bee of February 19 argued that the paltry sum of $500,000 which the Legislature previously had supplied the company, while trifling, had enabled the company to prove what could be done in continuing the road for the eighteen miles of its current construction, but that the subscribers were now inadequate to the task of continuing it. The Bee paid considerable tribute to the efforts of Caldwell in the work:

It would be unjust not to notice (however briefly) the extraordinary exertions made by Mr. CALDWELL, the present president of the company, who without being paid a single dollar for his services, has energetically continued to construct the road despite opposition and almost despair, and has made various admirable improvements in the modus operandi.

Opposition to the bill quickly developed in the House of Representatives, but on March 8 the lower house passed it. A few days later the Senate had adopted the measure and sent it to Governor Roman. The Governor kept it on his desk until the eve of the Legislature’s adjournment and then vetoed it. On March 21 the Legislature adjourned sine die, and the absence of legislators on that day prevented an overriding of the Governor’s veto.

Reaction in New Orleans was immediate and violent. It was suggested that the Governor be petitioned to convene an extra session of the Legislature. The True American of

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24 Ibid., March 2, 1839.
25 Ibid., March 8, 1839.
26 Ibid., March 21, 1839.
March 22 sarcastically reported that the new locomotive which the company had received the previous day "we understand is to be christened 'The Veto.'" Ironically, the only locomotive the company had ready to run, a week later broke its axle, and trips to the Metairie Race Course were suspended entirely until the new locomotive could be put into operation.27

The company was moved to desperate measures. At a special meeting of its directors the owners of more than one hundred shares authorized Caldwell, as President, to transfer their stock over and above one hundred shares to a pool to be sold to the general public in an effort to raise capital.28 In the city council Caldwell succeeded in having a resolution passed requesting a special committee to meet with similar committees from the other municipalities to seek to interpose the power of the city against the state in an effort to save the railroad. His argument was that, since the city owned nearly nine-tenths of the paid-up stock—some 50,500 shares, it was in its interests to come to the aid of the company.29 But despite this flurry of activity, the matter rested there. The company limped along for the remainder of the year, waiting for the next meeting of the Legislature. At that session

27 Daily Picayune, March 28, 1839.
28 True American, March 28, 1839.
29 New Orleans Bee, March 29, 1839; True American, March 29, 1839.
another attempt was made to gain state aid, but it was as
d profitless as the first had been. The death blow to the
company had essentially been dealt. Construction continued
through the summer of 1839, as the following item from the
True American of June 10 shows:

There is an opinion abroad that the works
on this road have been suspended in consequence
of the Governor's refusal to sign the bill of last
winter. This is an error. At the time when the
bill was vetoed, the company had in hand $115,000.
Of this amount they resolved to devote $30,000 to
the payment of the interest accruing until the next
meeting of the Legislature, upon bonds already
issued and sold, and to apply the balance to the
continued prosecution of the works, &c &c.--Mr.
Caldwell, with his usual zeal, has gone on to carry
out these intentions of the Company. The road
has now reached the upper end of the Great Prairie
bordering on the Lake, and is within a mile of the
western extremity of Pontchartrain.--Before the
first of January next, there will be completed 24
miles of road, for with the 45 negro slaves owned
by the Company, the rate or progress is now three-
quarters of a mile per month.

On June 18 the company was again forced to suspend opera-
tions when the repaired locomotive struck a plank while
outbound to the Prairie Cottage. The locomotive was de-
-railed and the passengers were forced to push the cars
back to the city, during which process a man fell, hit his
head and was killed. Reluctantly, Caldwell announced that
since no reliance could be placed in the engine the cars
would cease to run until the new locomotive could be put
into operation. 30 This mishap led Caldwell to institute a
system of watchmen on the route who signaled to one another

30 Daily Picayune, June 18, 1839.
that their particular section of track was clear. By July 18 the True American was able to announce that the trips on the line had been resumed. By then, too, Caldwell may have been looking forward to the less rigorous routine of theatre management.

The relative success which had attended the early opening of the St. Charles Theatre the previous season encouraged Caldwell to attempt an even earlier opening of the 1839-1840 season. During the summer he had announced to the public that the Camp Street Theatre would be opened in September, and his notice to the actors engaged with him which appeared in late August firmly stated that "the Theatre will open for the season in all September next." But "Yellow Jack" was to decree otherwise. Another violent epidemic of the dread disease had raged through the summer. Actors who were not immune to its peril were cautious about arriving in New Orleans before cold weather had dispelled the danger. The consequence was that Caldwell could not begin his fall campaign until October 7, 1839.

In September Caldwell was out of the city of New Orleans and again a rumor was afloat that he was seriously ill. The True American of September 17 reprinted the

31 True American, June 29, 1839.
32 Ibid., July 18, 1839.
33 Ibid., August 22, 1839.
following item from a recent issue of the Bee:

We have understood that our esteemed fellow citizen, JAMES H. CALDWELL, Esq. lies ill with a malignant disorder contracted during a recent visit to Mobile. We trust it is but a rumor.

The True American indignantly asked the Bee why it had not verified the rumor before it "dragged the name of a citizen into your columns in a manner to alarm his absent friends?" Caldwell, said the irate paper, had been "indisposed for two days, from a severe cold . . . and was confined to his room but two days." The True American then described the means of his recovery:

WONDERFUL CURE.--James H. Caldwell, Esq. as is well known from the Saturday's health report of the Bee, was grievously attacked with a malignant malady. Fortunately for the life of this most enterprising and esteemed citizen, a non-licentiate friend of his called to see him, and fully impressed with the danger of the case, prescribed oysters and old sherry wine. The first of these medicaments were soon procured, fresh, salt and fat, from apothecary Brady's in St. Charles street; the other found in one of the garret rooms of the moribund, and after taking a dozen of the pills and two of these dozes of the potion, the skill of the physician and the efficacy of the medicine was satisfactorily demonstrated; for the patient arose from his bed strengthened and cheered; and entertained his friends in his usual hospitable and handsome manner; and then went about his work as usual.

The Courier says Mr. Caldwell is acclimated, and walks the street without fear, &c. How much you know about it—he visits Mobile and walks the streets without fear, as every man should, but he is not acclimated, if thereby you mean he has had the yellow fever. He has never had it, and swears he never will.

Robust and fearless, Caldwell inaugurated the theatrical season at the Camp Street Theatre. The opening bill
on October 7, 1839 received scant notice in the press and the titles of the plays presented have not been preserved. According to the Bee of the following day the players "were few in number," although there was "a tolerably numerous audience." On the second night the Picayune reported the plays performed were The Swiss Cottage and Perfection, or "Kate Obrien" as the paper called the farce in honor of its leading character. The highlight of this evening was an unschedule performance by one of the property men, according to the Picayune.

One of those livery coated customers, vulgarly called sauspans, whose duty it is to remove chairs, tables, &c performed some of the tallest kind of walking we ever did see. His arms swung back and forward like a steam sawmill cutting pine wood, and his legs loomed out as if he endeavored to make every step measure an arpent.

Attendance at the Camp was poor through October. Orleanians either did not have or were unwilling to spend what little money they might possess on theatre tickets. There was no lack of activity in the city streets, though, and the Picayune of October 27 vividly described the scene before the Camp Street Theatre doors on a typical evening:

Between loafing boys looking for checks from those who come out of the theatre; coach drivers cracking their whips, and their jokes after having let down their fair fares at the door of the little Camp; flower girls, apple sellers and coffee vendors, and the eternal rolling of the neighboring tenpins, we know not a more noisy location than 72 Camp street, within the city and its faubourgs.

34 Daily Picayune, October 12 and 26, 1839.
But Orleanians made their way through the theatre doors on at least one occasion during the first month of the season. They came in a spirit of charity to aid the sufferers of the Mobile fire. On October 7 a tremendous fire had destroyed nearly a third of the Alabama city. James Caldwell served as chairman of a committee organized to send assistance to the Mobilians and he and his group managed, in spite of the difficult times, to raise nearly $7,000.35 The benefit at the Camp on October 14 netted the fund $636.80.36

Caldwell was a sufferer as a result of the Mobile fire, losing "upwards of ten thousand dollars" in stock and materials of his Mobile gas works, according to the True American of October 12. And, as will be seen, the theatrical firm of Ludlow and Smith was for a second time burned out in Mobile. 37

By November 2, when the stock company at the Camp had been strengthened by the late arrivals, the Picayune was able to report a full house for Barton's appearance in Bulwer's The Lady of Lyons.38 During the rest of the month, the press reported not only good attendance, but some improvement in the quality of the productions offered.

35 True American, November 19, 1839.
36 Ibid., October 17, 1839.
37 Infra, p. 442.
38 Daily Picayune, November 3, 1839.
The company was a good one—essentially the same as had performed so brilliantly the season before. The Picayune's assessment of the season up to November 27 seems to indicate that the company had not been performing up to their ability, but merely marking time until the more spacious St. Charles was opened:

So far, there has been little worthy of special notice. The performers . . . are persons with whose histrionic merits or demerits the public were already conversant, or they were below mediocrity and therefore not fair subjects for criticism. The pieces brought forward, too, have been old and oft-repeated—as familiar to our play-goers as household words.

With his full company finally assembled, Caldwell prepared to shift them to the St. Charles. On November 30 the activities of the Camp Street Theatre came to an end with the performances of The Duchess of Vaubaliere and Frightened To Death. The last night was made the occasion for a benefit for Caldwell's treasurer, the popular comedian George Holland. It was a gay and spirited evening and those in attendance had no knowledge that it marked the end of an era. Within two weeks of its closing, Caldwell had leased the theatre to "a gentleman" who intended opening it for a succession of fancy dress balls, and an advertisement to lease the restaurant and bar on the premises was placed in the newspapers. The project was viewed favorably by the press, inasmuch as

39 True American, December 2, 1839.
40 Daily Picayune, December 13, 1839.
there was no such similar activity in the American section of the city, while John Davis had conducted balls at the Orleans Street Theatre for years. The True American of December 12 was of the opinion that there was "no reason why a Ball Room . . . properly conducted, would not succeed." But the qualification "properly conducted" was not applied to the operation of his establishment by the lessee of the Camp. The Ball Room had only been open a month when the following resolution was introduced into the Second Municipality Council:

Whereas, it has been represented to the council that the Camp Street Theatre Ball Room is the resort of improper and disorderly persons, and that the conduct of its visitors is an outrage upon decency and good morals,

Resolved, That the Police Committee inquire into the truth of the allegations stated in the preamble to this resolution, and, if they be found to be true, report at the next meeting of this council the measures necessary to be taken to abate this nuisance. 41

At its next weekly meeting the Council received two petitions. 42 The first was signed by about forty individuals and requested the continuation of the balls. But a counter petition, signed by about one hundred and seventy citizens, declared the Camp Street Theatre Ball Room a nuisance and asked its suppression. The Police Committee reported the matter unfavorably, proscribed the ball room as a public nuisance, and recommended its abolition. In

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41 Ibid., January 15, 1840.
42 Ibid., January 22 and 23, 1840.

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three resolutions which the committee proposed to the
council it developed that the chief complaint against the
ball room was that it was "the resort of lewd and abandoned
women." The report and resolutions were put to a vote
after several speeches on the subject, including some re-
marks by Caldwell, and the report and resolutions were
adopted with only one dissenting vote, that of Mr. Caldwell.
Except for a loss of revenue and his loyalty to James
Forster, the lessee of the Camp, it is not easy to believe
that Caldwell was very strong in his support of a scheme
which had brought the honorable little Camp to a condition
in which it could be denominated a public nuisance.

The Camp sat empty and idle throughout the rest of
the winter. On May 2, 1840 Caldwell, "with his usual liber-
ality," granted a benefit performance at the Camp for James
Forster, to indemnify him for the loss he had sustained
by the closing of the establishment.\textsuperscript{43} From May 17
through June 1\textsuperscript{4} a brief summer season was held at the Camp
after the close of the regular season at the St. Charles.
One of these performances, that of May 22, was held as a
benefit for the citizens of Natchez who had also experi-
enced a serious fire.\textsuperscript{44}

If any of the older theatre-goers of New Orleans
who held the little Camp Street Theatre in nostalgic esteem

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., May 1, 1840.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., May 22, 1840.
were under any illusion that this brief return of performances to the stage of the Camp meant that its career had only been interrupted, they were quickly disabused by the following story which appeared in the Picayune on June 7, 1840:

CAMP STREET EXCHANGE.--We yesterday examined a plan of the meditated alteration of the Camp street theatre into a Merchants' Exchange, and we think if Mr. Caldwell carries out the design in his usual prompt and energetic manner he will secure a new improvement to the municipality and a handsome reward to himself. The lobby and front boxes are to be cut away for the purpose of opening a spacious entrance from the street. The broad flight of stairs in front will be removed and the floor of the whole building brought down to the level of the stone steps in front. The audience part of the house will then form a rotunda, the stage an auction mart, the green room a refectory, and the scene room a reading room. The boxes will remain, and these will be immensely useful in cases of large public meetings; in fact in this respect the Camp street Exchange will possess advantages superior to any public hall in the city... . . .

Farewell to the old Camp! Although we rejoice in a change which we conceive will be a benefit to the neighborhood, to the proprietor and to the municipality, yet it seems like parting with an old friend to say to the old Camp, farewell... . . .

It must take a grand farewell benefit, however, and doff the buskin with some eclat; give us a chance to call it out, throw it a wreath, &c., as is usual. Those muses on the drop curtain ought to have a few salt tears painted rolling down their cheeks on the occasion--the effect would be delightfully pathetic.

During the summer the work of conversion was commenced. The exterior of the building was made to conform closely to that of the neighboring St. Charles

\footnote{Ibid., June 23, 1840.}
Arcade Baths. The statue niches in the front were appropriately filled with figures of Mercury and Ceres, in place of the Muses they had held. The rotunda, the former auditorium of the theatre, was said to be able to accommodate 6,000 persons for a large meeting, when the benches had been removed. Caldwell financed the conversion in the following manner: In exchange for $100,000 in stock and cash he conveyed to a joint stock company the theatre building and lot. Caldwell was to act for the company in accomplishing the renovation and was to deliver the finished building December 1.

Thus ended the illustrious history of New Orleans first permanent English language theatre, the stage of which had felt the firm tread of young Edwin Forrest, whose walls had heard the nasal twang of Yankee Hill, and the very foundations of which had stirred to the passions of Thomas Abthorpe Cooper. And, said the Picayune of June 6:

There the enterprising promoter of the building wore the sock and the buskin with honor, and bravely struggled to give a proud profession its proper elevation. There throned the citizens of New Orleans, when a few odd planks formed the side-walk, and the second municipality was nowhere. There sprang the first gas light into existence, almost like an ignis factuus in the swamp. . . . The little derided flame has spread about through the vast city, and innumerable silver lights, imitating the sky, drive darkness from the earth, and lend comfort and security to our steps.

On the date of the final performance, June 14, the Picayune

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46 Ibid., October 11, 1840.
47 Daily Picayune, July 21, 1840. See, also, Daily Picayune, July 19, August 4 and 9, 1840.
published the following poetic tribute; it was at the same time a resignation to change:

The Little Camp.
As Crockett said, or if not, should have said,
Life is brimful of changes and exchanges,
The living and the dying and the dead
Still suffer change as providence arranges;
Therefore, though we may wonder, 'tis not strange
A theatre should change to an exchange.

Men sigh for change and change while they are sighing,
And men are changing while they have no change;
Plenty of change, there's likewise no denying,
Still leads to changes of a wider range;
Nothing is constant, stranger, it is strange,
Except the very constancy of change!

Tonight forever on the little Camp
The curtain falls. Farewell, each mimic scene.
Kings, queens and heroes strutting 'bove the lamp,
Will seem like airy visions that have been;
And speculating brokers soon shall throng
The temple built for sentiment and song.

They too will strut and fret their little hour,
Each one a star supported by the stock;
All actors still of less or greater power,
Each studying some character to mock;
No man himself; while death plays auctioneer,
Knocking them off as buying fates appear.

And perhaps it was better that the little Camp had become an exchange rather than a disreputable ball room.

After the burning of the St. Charles Theatre in 1842 there was a rumor that Caldwell would again transform the Camp into a Theatre, but such did not turn out to be the case. On September 23, 1842 the Camp itself was virtually destroyed by fire. By that time it had degenerated into an auction mart, without the lofty pretensions of an American Exchange, and at this last task the building proved

48 Ibid., August 24, 1842.
itself fairly successful. The building was finally razed in 1881 to make way for the construction of a hardware store.

But as Caldwell closed the Camp Street Theatre on November 30, 1839 and moved his actors into the St. Charles, his most immediate problem was that of making a successful theatrical season in an economic situation in which every day money was becoming scarcer. For the second time since the Panic of 1837 began, banks had suspended specie payments and this suspension was to continue through the next three years. Hard money with which to purchase a theatre ticket was not to be had. With the expectation that his returns on any investment might be small, Caldwell was forced to retrench in the matter of star engagements. His new policy with respect to theatrical stars was reported by the Bee of November 28, 1839:

To keep up a strong company, the engagements with stars have been put upon an entirely new footing. It has been the practice, latterly, to give to stars an exorbitant nightly salary, without any reference to the receipts of the house. Very frequently the star did not prove an attraction, and the whole amount of revenue for the period of his or her engagement was insufficient to pay his or her salary alone. The custom of starring has grown into such general practice, that every actor whose talents are above mediocrity, deems himself entitled to a larger share of the receipts than the balance of the company together. It was often the case that some

49 Ibid., September 24, 1842.
50 Ibid., December 30, 1881.
performer, who had been puffed into consequence elsewhere, would make an engagement at one of our theatres, and pocket a hundred or more dollars per night, when there were better actors belonging to the company who received a small weekly stipend for their services. This unfair distribution of the proceeds of the house operated disadvantageously in two ways. It made the stock player of some promise restive, and impatient of permanent employment, and forth he started upon a starring excursion; whilst at the same time it affected the rest of the corps with an indifference and carelessness in the playing of the minor parts which is the general complaint of all theatre goers.

The system adopted by the St. Charles management, in employing stars, is this: the proprietor enters into a kind of copartnership with the star during his engagement, and they divide the profits in agreed proportions. By this arrangement the proprietor puts into the common fund the theatre and fixtures, worth several hundred thousand dollars, and the star gives his talents, and they reap the profits arising out of the joint stock. This arrangement is perfectly fair, for let the abilities of the star be what they may, they will not exceed in value the cost of that magnificent structure. Should the proceeds during the engagement be insufficient to defray the current expenses of the establishment, the star gets nothing; nor should he. If he cannot draw houses, he has no business to be starring, but should content himself with stock engagements. It would be hard indeed to make the manager pay for his deficiency. Yet such has been frequently the case. During the last winter, thousands upon thousands were paid to those wandering lights, whilst the proprietor lost money from the beginning to the end of the season.

We have been informed that engagements have been made with several prominent performers, upon the terms above mentioned, and they will be here during the winter.

This arrangement cannot be attributed to niggardliness or parsimony upon the part of the manager. The construction of the Camp and St. Charles theatres, sufficiently testifies to his professional liberality. No individual in America has done as much for the theatre, and we hope that the citizens of New Orleans will encourage him in this attempt to place theatricals upon the footing of respectability, from which they have been reduced by the prevalence of the starring system.
The opening bill at the St. Charles on December 1, 1839 was the comedy *Englishmen in India* and the farce *Peter Wilkins*. The first week's entertainments were provided by the stock company. The first star was not long in appearing, however. Whether the light comedian Balls, who began an engagement on December 8, contracted with Caldwell along the lines of the policy described above is not known. And whether the policy was a facesaving device to obscure the fact that this season Caldwell could not afford the talent he had presented the year before, or whether the stars simply refused to accept his terms, also is not known. It is a fact, however, that this was a season of few stellar performers. In the order in which they appeared were: Dan Marble, Mrs. Lewis and her daughter La Petite Bertha, the vocalist John Sinclair, Mr. and Mrs. John Sloman returning after an eleven year absence, the Lecomptes and their *corps de ballet*, the Barnes family, and Charles Mason, against whom Caldwell seems to have borne no grudge as a result of Mason's assault upon him.

Balls' engagement, as the first starring venture of the season, again brought to public attention Caldwell's new policy of "copartnership" with his stars. The *Bee* of December 16, while reiterating its approval of the plan, still had some words of advice to Caldwell, if he were to succeed with it:
The engagement of Mr. Balls at the St. Charles Theatre, has so far, scarcely proved profitable. . . . The nightly attendance has not been such as to reward this genuine comedian for his labors, or to put money in the pockets of the manager. . . . The fault must be ascribed to the uninviting materials that compose, for the most part, the stock company of the establishment. The proprietor of the St. Charles makes a warm appeal to the resident families, to rally to his support; and complains that hitherio he has derived his principal patronage from the floating population. . . . But does the theatre offer sufficient attraction to merit the attendance of the resident families? It does not.

The manager has taken a bold step in attempting to put down and do away with the ruinous engagements with stars. This is all very well. But . . . his stock company should shed a mild and constant radiance over the drama. . . . The present company is deficient. . . . When have the managers engaged to personate two of the most important characters in light comedy—the old men and old women? There are others who . . . have disappointed the public. . . . Mr. Field, for instance. . . . His acting during the present season has been cold and constrained. . . .

The proprietor of the St. Charles cannot justly murmur at the slender audiences that greet the representation of the legitimate drama, until his claims to patronage are more strongly fortified.

Caldwell's friend, The True American, on the following day took issue with the extremity of this criticism:

The Bee, we think, is injudiciously severe on the Temple. . . . The present stock company of the St. Charles is superior to any before engaged in New Orleans, and with two exceptions, equal to any in the United States.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

We agree with the Bee that the two to whom are assigned the characters of old men and old women are bad...We certainly expected more of [Field] than he has given us.—Let us wait, however, before we condemn him altogether.

All in all the press found as little to criticize, in either the management or the company, this season as in the past one. Two actors were several times singled out for their
inattention to costume, or, more appropriately, their habits of personal cleanliness. On November 4, 1839 the *True American*, in reviewing the performance of *The Lady of Lyons* at the Camp, said:

Mr. Keppell was imperfect; both in costume, and in a knowledge of the author; frequently his manner bordered on vulgarity.

Mr. Debar *[sic]*—we are sorry so often to be compelled to say disagreeable things to this actor; but he appears reckless to all advice or criticism, and unless he reforms, he will become a fair subject for the correction of the audience, who, by the way, are frequently too indulgent.

Mr. Debar *[sic]* was, as is too often the case with him, imperfect in his part and as is almost always the case with him very inappropriately & shabbily dressed.

On December 5 the same journal was reporting on another performance of the same play, this time as offered at the St. Charles Theatre:

We are again compelled to censure the Messrs. De Bar and Keppell; can they not dress a little better? their caps, frock coats, and dirty pantaloons are shocking; and in the last act Mr. De Bar was really dirty, and his old, dirt colored plush vest is tiresome. Mr. Keppell has dressed better, and can do it. De Bar is always too slovenly and careless.

Another actor who received brief attention for his sins of commission was Mr. Paret, who was admonished by the *Picayune* on May 10, 1840 as follows:

"L-A-W--LAW."—We must differ with Mr. Paret of the St. Charles, in the pronunciation of the word law. We generally look to the stage for correct pronunciation, but we'll go to law before we shall give up that l-a-w spells lor! It may be the "lor of Florence," but it's not "the law of Webster."

The few stars who appeared this year were generally well
received, with the exception of La Petite Bertha who arrived just after Christmas. The Picayune took a dim view of child prodigies and believed they should neither be seen nor heard on a stage. Of her first appearance as Young Norval in Home's Douglas the paper said on December 27:

The days when children, ourselves among the rest, had their suppers at sundown and were immediately packed off to bed, are past. If they are to be brought out in public at unseasonable hours, give them some business which we can better reconcile than that of such characters as belong to their fathers and mothers. The idea of a Norval of some twenty inches stature, crossing swords with a six foot Glenalvon, is too ridiculous a caricature for us to sanction.

And on the occasion of the child's benefit on January 7, 1840, the Picayune suggested, "if the 'phenomenon' is to be sent to school with the proceeds, we would be glad to see it have a bumper."

On the positive side of criticism of the acting, however, the True American on December 21, 1839 urged attendance at the theatre on those who had absented themselves from the St. Charles for "want of amusement." "The Theatre has never been better managed, than it now is by Mr. Barrett," said the True American. "Pieces in various lines, have been produced this season, more particularly in comedy, with more ensemble than we have been accustomed to." Even the stock company seems to have improved as the season advanced. The Bee, which had been critical of some of the company, on February 28 could point to improvements:
St. Charles.--The performances at this establishment for the last week or two have been very creditable. . . Taking into consideration the hard times and the absence of the usual allowance of visitors from abroad, the proprietor has been tolerable \textit{sic} patronized. The pieces which have been lately got up were such as permitted the manager to dispense with the services of some of the stock company, whose habitual obliviousness and inattention marred every performance in which they took part.

The local press made no mention of the orchestra, being apparently content with its quality, although the correspondent for the New York \textit{Spirit of the Times} of April 11, 1840 described it as "by no means the thing it is cracked up to be."

Just what the heating arrangements for the St. Charles were is unknown, but they proved inadequate on at least one occasion. The \textit{Picayune} of December 14 called Caldwell's attention to the problem as follows:

The theatre particularly the first tier of boxes, is uncomfortably cold; and however good may be the acting, the audience in a state of frigidity is but in an ill mood to admire or appreciate it. . . . May not the comparative absence of ladies from the dress circle be attributed to the absence of attention to their comfort? . . . The proprietor, who has ever evinced a desire to accommodate the public, will, we know, take this hint. . . and have stoves erected that will diffuse a proper degree of heat at least through the boxes.

Caldwell took the hint. Three days later the \textit{Picayune} announced that two large stoves had been placed in the corridor of the dress circle, with pipes which reached around its whole extent.

On at least one occasion Caldwell and his lieutenants
were powerless to protect the clientele from the elements. The Picayune of December 21 reported "an overflowing house" at the St. Charles on the previous evening. During a violent wind and rain storm the skylight over the stage blew off and admitted water which flooded the stage, "poured in among the footlights like a mill race," and caused a cancellation of the performances.

With the public avidity for spectacle, actors at the St. Charles, like those in other American theatres of the day, literally risked life and limb in the pursuit of their chosen profession. The comedian J. M. Brown was the victim of a fall, either from a scaffold or through a trap door, while appearing in the melodramatic spectacle The Flying Dutchman, according to the Picayune of December 25. Brown sustained injuries to his ribs and back of a sufficiently serious nature to cause his quiet withdrawal from the company in April to retire to his farm in West Point, New York, according to the Picayune of April 21.

A happier occasion, and one which marked the social high point of this season, was the reception accorded the hero of the Battle of New Orleans, General Andrew Jackson, when he visited the theatre on the night of the holiday celebrating the victory to which he was the major contributor. The Picayune of January 9, 1840 reported the General's visit to the theatre:

In the evening, agreeable to the invitation of the management, the General and his suite attended
the St. Charles. At the close of the act of the comedy then performing, the curtain was dropped, and the anthem played according to announcement. The curtain then rose, and Mr. J. M. Field delivered a poetical address from his own pen to the Defender of New Orleans.

The house was crammed from the pit to the dome, and the General twice arose to acknowledge the enthusiastic cheering of the multitude. Hail Columbia was then sung by the full company of the St. Charles, and the white-headed warrior left the theatre amid the prolonged cheers of an admiring audience of some two thousand souls.

With George Barrett's benefit performance of Made-
moiselle de Belle Isle on May 10, 1840, Caldwell closed the theatrical season at the St. Charles. Without being distinguished for an array of stars or other expensive attractions it had been a successful season. The Picayune of May 10 called it both "brilliant and profitable," and in its July 24 issue had the following item:

LOW STATE OF THEATRICALS.--Theatricals are exceeding depressed in every section of the Union. The principal theatres of most of the chief cities are closed, while most of the managers have lost thousands during the last season. We believe that almost the only manager of any theatre of note in the country, that made money during the past winter, was Mr. Caldwell. The St. Charles did a good business all winter.

Caldwell's policy with respect to stars seems to have worked out favorably for him. The New Orleans correspondent to the Spirit of the Times wrote of his impressions of Caldwell's plan in the April 11 issue of the paper:

Twice I have intended to write you of the new principles upon which Mr. Caldwell is managing his theatres; they are novel in the land, and may work a general change in the theatrical system. I have not now time or room to go into
details; but this at least know, that of all men in the profession, Caldwell is best able to carry into effect his plans. He is one of the most remarkable men of his time; he would be thought visionary for the vastness of his reforms and projects. I must add, in justice to my own feelings, that in his social conduct he displays the most admirable traits of kindness and generosity. May all success attend him.

The artistic success of Caldwell's theatre during this season was due, in large part, to the able management of George Barrett. Relieved of the necessities of personally directing the theatre and meeting the threat of competition, Caldwell could turn his attention to some of his other interests. One of the chief of these this year was the Louisiana Grand Real Estate and Stock Lotteries. In the summer of 1839 Caldwell formed a partnership with S. W. Oakey and R. O. Pritchard to constitute a lottery company. In their contract they agreed, among the many other provisions of it, to continue the partnership until December 31, 1840. The plan was to pool their various vast real estate and stock holdings to be offered to the public in a lottery scheme. Whatever profits might be made were to be divided into equal thirds, although their contributions to the pool were unequal: Caldwell, for example, offered stocks and property in the amount of $845,000, Oakey $755,000 and Pritchard $607,000; the total value of their holdings amounted to $2,201,000. While

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\[52\] Notarial Acts of Adolphe Mazeureau, \textit{op. cit.}, July 22 and August 6, 1839.

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these properties were transferred to the partnership by act of sale, each of the partners was to continue to enjoy whatever revenues might accrue to his property during the contract.

The proprietors announced their scheme to the public in mid-September.\textsuperscript{53} There were actually to be two lotteries. The first, called the American Camp Street Theatre Lottery, was capitalized at $540,000 in 1,291 prizes which included as the chief attraction the Camp Street Theatre and ground. This lottery was announced to be drawn, at one drawing, "in December next." The Grand Lottery of two million dollars offered the Verandah Hotel, the St. Charles Theatre and ground, and the St. Charles Arcade Building, Baths and ground, plus over a hundred less attractive prizes. The proprietors constantly in their advertising pointed to the legality of their enterprise as provided by an act of the legislature of March 6, 1839.\textsuperscript{54} However, here seems to have been some sentiment in opposition to lotteries as being nothing but legal frauds. The \textit{True American}, of November 20, 1839 coming to the defense of "that one in which Mr. Caldwell is deeply interested," alluded to a new paper called the \textit{Anti-Humbug}, which was apparently created to expose the lotteries. Caldwell, Oakey and Pritchard assured the public

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{True American}, September 14, 1839, \textit{et. seq.}

\textsuperscript{54} \textit{New Orleans Bee}, November 16, 1839.
that the Camp Street Theatre would positively draw on New Year's Eve. The drawing was held, but there was no transfer of title to the Camp theatre, as the proprietors undoubtedly knew there would not be. Tickets to this scheme had sold at ten dollars apiece, and the drawing was conducted on the combination system—first, second, and third numbers drawn would win the Camp Theatre, fourth, fifth and sixth the Armstrong Hotel, etc. The odds in favor of the proprietors of the lottery were, of course, sizeable, and the tickets sold represented clear profit, although there is some evidence that a wary public did not exactly rush to buy up the chances.

The Grand Lottery, which offered the St. Charles properties of Caldwell, was drawn at various drawings throughout the remainder of the winter and spring. This lottery was conducted by the prizes and blanks systems, in which there were two wheels, the first of which contained numbers of from one to 100,000 and the second an equal number of blanks and prizes. A number drawn from the first wheel had a ticket drawn from the prize wheel. While all the numbers were drawn, the chances of the ticket holder receiving a worthwhile prize from the prize wheel were extremely slim. Despite the legality of the enterprise the grand jury in early February undertook an

55 Ibid., November 27, 1839.
56 True American, December 31, 1839.
investigation of lotteries. The Bee of February 6, 1840 commented extensively on this "most detestable and abominable system of gambling" in connection with reporting the grand jury's activities. The Bee pointed out that there were two or more blanks to each prize and that "of the prizes at least ninety-nine hundredths consist of sums that do not exceed the price of the ticket." The Bee further objected that those who bought tickets were those who could least afford them, "the ignorant, laboring classes," and that the system of charging a fifteen per cent fee on prizes reduced the value of a prize already inflated some thirty to forty per cent over its value. The paper closed with a demand for legislative action:

But there is no further necessity of exposing the treachery and delusion of the lottery system. Every man of common sense understands its character, and its dupes are found only among the ignorant and unwary. The attention of the legislature to the subject is not, however, less imperatively called for, because its evil influence is confined to a particular part of the community, and accordingly the Grand Jury suggests the propriety of enquiring into the nature of the grants upon which this mischievous system is based, and of extinguishing by purchase, or other means in their power, all legislative permits. We hope this subject will be specially set apart from thorough investigation and prompt, energetic and effectual action, before the close of the present session.

As had been the case in the Camp Street Theatre Lottery, no valuable property changed hands, although there were some winners of lots which were located on the outskirts of the city. Public reaction to lotteries had set in by
late spring, as the following item in the Picayune of May 22 attests:

It appears that yesterday the last fifteen days' drawing was entered on of the large lottery of Caldwell, Oakey & Pritchard. We understand that a very small portion of tickets in the lottery were sold, yet they have continued the drawing at great expense, while nothing could be gained by them and much might be lost. The small sale of tickets may be attributed to the interference in the late legislative session relative to the still existing vested right to draw lotteries, though these rights were granted by laws without condition and form, and having no limit as to time.

On July 30, 1840 Caldwell, Oakey and Pritchard dissolved their partnership and the individual ownership of their properties was restored. During the partnership R. O. Pritchard had died and his property was awarded his heirs. How the partners fared in the scheme is not known, but Caldwell may have suffered politically as a result of the unfavorable publicity attendant on the grand jury and legislative investigations. On April 7, 1840 the Picayune reported that he had failed to win re-election to the Council of the Second Municipality.

Caldwell's rejection by the electorate may have been the result of other influences as well as the lottery scandal, however. Within the council prior to his defeat, he was more often than not voting with a minority which was opposing most of the council's actions. A case in
point was the dismissal of Caldwell's friend and supporter, John Gibson, the publisher of the True American, who had been serving as secretary to the council. Gibson's dismissal was the result of a furious altercation with the council's sergeant-at-arms. Caldwell voted against his dismissal on the grounds that Gibson had had no chance to face his accusers, although Caldwell in his arguments made no attempt to refute the charges against Gibson. In a later action the council also voted to take away from Gibson the remunerative position as Municipality Printer.

Caldwell's own forced retirement from municipal government did not entirely remove him from the political field. He was listed among other prominent Whigs who met to arrange for participation in the Whig National Convention, and in April he became a member of the Whig Central Committee for New Orleans. After the theatrical season had closed he volunteered the use of the St. Charles Theatre for a Whig meeting to promote the candidacy of William Henry Harrison. In September of this national

59 True American, October 24, 1839.
60 Ibid., November 20, 1839.
61 Ibid., December 30, 1839.
62 New Orleans Bee, April 22, 1840.
63 Daily Picayune, June 24 and 25, 1840.
election year he was made a delegate to the Whig State
Convention held in Baton Rouge. 64

Under the dedicated presidency of James Caldwell
the New Orleans and Nashville Rail Road by December of
1839 had progressed twenty-two miles and had arrived at
Pass Manchac on the west end of Lake Pontchartrain where
it would cross between that lake and Lake Maurepas to
begin its swing eastward along the north shore towards the
Mississippi state line. 65 At this point, however, con­
struction was suspended until the meeting of the Louisiana
Legislature in the winter. In the interim, the railroad
served as a sort of commuter train for passengers who
desired to go to the lake or, in the winter months, to
visit the Metairie Race Course. Perhaps as an attempt to
help the company's finances, Caldwell had raised the ticket
prices for this last excursion to fifty cents, but public
reaction forced him to reduce the fare to the original
quarter. 66 A political fight developed within the rail­
road corporation this year. An "anti-Caldwell" party had
arisen within the board of directors, and, while the
"Caldwellites" succeeded in electing their slate of ten
directors it was only after their opponents had withdrawn
from the meeting prior to the election. 67 The opposition

64 New Orleans Bee, September 15, 1840.
65 True American, December 5, 1839.
66 Ibid., December 12, 1839.
67 Ibid., February 27 and 28, March 10 and 20, 1840.

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had attempted to defer the election until the meeting had heard a report of a committee appointed to investigate statements which President Caldwell had made to a general meeting of the stockholders. Upon the defeat of this manoeuvre the "anti-Caldwellites" withdrew, the election was held, and Caldwell's resolution to secure the services of accountants to balance the company's books and present a report of the same to the stockholders was then unanimously passed. Apparently it was this latter resolution to which the dissenting group was opposed.

Again this year the New Orleans and Nashville Rail Road failed to secure financial support for its undertakings in the state legislature. The lack of any aid from the State of Mississippi had created a spirit of pessimism among the Louisiana legislators, and a bill to aid the railroad was defeated by the device of tying onto it a general improvement bill so loaded down with appropriations that the economy-minded legislature defeated it. If the action of the previous legislature had been a fatal blow to the company, that of this session proved to be the coup de grace. During the next few years, beset by legal and financial troubles, it struggled along as an excursion train between the city and the Prairie Cottage at the lake but never achieved its initial aim of linking

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68 Ibid., February 27 and 28, March 10 and 20, 1840.

69 The Daily Picayune of April 28, May 19 and 31, 1840 has interesting feature stories describing the trip
the cities of New Orleans and Nashville.

Confronted with severe financial reverses in the business activities in which he had a deep interest, and seeing his personal and political popularity at a low ebb, James Caldwell may have taken comfort in the thought that at least in the theatre his position was secure. Although mortgaged to the rafters, the St. Charles Theatre belonged to him alone and in it he had just concluded a brilliant and profitable theatrical season. If Caldwell took such comfort during this year he was shortly to be jolted out of his complacency. The entry of Noah Ludlow and Sol Smith into competition against him in the New Orleans theatre, which they initiated in the summer of 1840, was the beginning of the end of James Henry Caldwell's career as a theatre manager.

In a very real sense Caldwell contributed to his own destruction. To make this point clear it is necessary to recount some of the major events in the respective and joint careers of Messrs. Ludlow and Smith since they had left Caldwell's employment. Ludlow, it will be recalled, after managing the Louisville Theatre for Caldwell in the summer and fall of 1832, had retired from the theatre briefly to enter business, but after less than a year had returned to his first profession. He had resumed

on the railroad to the Prairie Cottage and of some of the activities held at the resort.

70 Supra, p. 184.
management in the fall of 1834 by acquiring the lease on the St. Louis theatre which Caldwell had let expire. Sol Smith had parted company with Caldwell in July of 1831. At that time he had been a member of Caldwell's summer company in St. Louis under Ludlow's management, and had remained with a small group in St. Louis following Ludlow's departure from there to open the theatre for Caldwell at Louisville. Since that time Smith had been an itinerant manager and had conducted theatrical campaigns chiefly in the area of northern Georgia and Alabama, with some forays into the Carolinas and Tennessee. On June 2, 1835 the two men began a partnership which was to endure eighteen stormy years.

Their agreement almost did not take place. Smith proposed the merger while Ludlow was in St. Louis in the fall of 1834. According to Smith, he made the offer to Ludlow that they lease the Mobile theatre together, although, he said, "I have but little doubt that I could have secured a lease of the house against all competitors." Smith claims that he made the offer out of feelings of extreme altruism. "I entertained a foolish idea," he said, "that the person who had established the drama in Mobile, Ludlow, op. cit., p. 419.

72 Supra, p. 164. Cf., also, Smith, op. cit., p. 72.

73 Smith, op. cit., pp. 72-110.

74 Ibid., p. 116.

75 Ludlow had managed the Mobile theatre from 1824 to 1829.
and who had been driven from the field by fire and bad
season, had a sort of pre-emption right to the city." Ludlow, in his memoirs, expresses great surprise at this
offer, inasmuch as, according to him, "I had secured the
St. Louis theatre for the following summer, and had rea­
sonable expectations of getting the Mobile theatre."76
In their exchange of correspondence this summer, however,
they agreed to meet in Mobile on October 1, 1834 and try
to come to terms for a partnership. Ludlow claims he was
in Mobile on the appointed date, waited two weeks for
Smith, wrote him a letter, and finally leased the theatre
in his own name for the winter season.77 Smith explains
his non-appearance in Mobile as due to sickness in his
family, but insists that he wrote to Ludlow an authoriza­
tion "to secure a joint lease of the theatre."78 Whatever
the true story, Ludlow operated the Mobile theatre alone
during the 1834-1835 season. As stated above, the agree­
ment was finally signed in Mobile in the spring of 1835.

The theatre in which Ludlow and Smith began their
partnership in Mobile had been built by the circus manager
J. Purdy Brown in 1833 and opened in the spring of 1834.79
The theatre became available upon Brown's death in 1834.80

76 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 419.
77 Ibid., pp. 421-22.
78 Smith, loc. cit.
79 Ludlow, op. cit., pp. 343-44.
80 Ibid., p. 419.
It was located on the west side of St. Emanuel Street, near Dauphin street, and was adapted to both regular and equestrian performances.

Under the terms of the agreement which they signed Ludlow and Smith were each to bring into the concern the sum of two hundred fifty dollars. During the seven years for which the partnership was projected, each might withdraw from their common bank account forty dollars a week subsistence, and the clear profits of any season were to be divided at the close of each season. Backstage and front-of-the-house duties were to alternate annually. Detailed provisions were made, not only in the matter of the roles each was to play, but for those to be played by the partners' respective wives. Final adjustments in the contract were made in St. Louis when Smith visited Ludlow's theatre as a star during the summer of 1835.

During the next four years the partnership of Ludlow and Smith operated a successful theatrical circuit between Mobile and St. Louis. It was their custom to play a winter season from about early November to May in Mobile, and then travel by way of New Orleans up the Mississippi to St. Louis where they played from about June to October. In St. Louis the pair constructed a new theatre, and in Mobile they continued to occupy the St. Emanuel

81 Articles of Copartnership between Ludlow and Smith, as quoted in Carson, op. cit., p. 162.
82 Ludlow, loc. cit.
Street playhouse built by J. Purdy Brown.

The southern season of 1838 had just been opened ten days when their Mobile Theatre burned to the ground on November 20. Their loss was sizeable—wardrobe, scenery, music, gas fittings, properties, "not even a wig saved," and the partners carried no insurance to indemnify them for the $20,000 to $30,000 in property which went up in flames. But they lost no time in attempting to recover from their apparently hopeless situation. Smith scurried to New Orleans where he purchased "all the dresses, music, machinery, &c. belonging to the late Richard Russell." By December 1, 1838 they were back in business in a playhouse which had been erected on Government Street in Mobile by a Mr. Ferry in the spring of 1837. Ferry had, according to Ludlow, built the theatre in the centre of an aristocratic neighborhood with the intention to "soon close the theatre of Ludlow & Smith," but his own theatre failed the following autumn. The partners completed the season in this small building, but in the

83 Ibid.
84 True American, November 23, 1838.
85 Ibid. The Daily Picayune of November 24, 1838 quoted Sol Smith as saying their loss could "not fall much short of $30,000."
87 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 492.
88 Smith, op. cit., p. 132.
Fall of 1839 it too was consumed by the flames of the great conflagration which destroyed about a third of the city of Mobile, before Ludlow and Smith had arrived in the southern city.

During the season of 1838-1839 Ludlow and Smith had an arrangement whereby the stars whom Caldwell had engaged for the St. Charles and Camp theatres would play engagements in Mobile. Dan Marble, Ellen Tree, Forrest, Booth, Miss Meadows, Celeste and the Bedouin Arabs were among those who appeared at the Government Street Theatre and who also appeared in New Orleans. Sol Smith later claimed that Caldwell tried to foist off on him "certain members of his stock company as stars . . . to the exclusion of Ellen Tree, Forrest, and Booth," with whom Smith claimed he was in negotiation. Smith records the following conversation as having taken place between him and Caldwell during Smith's visit to New Orleans to purchase Russell's stock for outfitting the Government Street Theatre:

In the heat of our argument, Mr. C. said:
"I must control the drama in Mobile. Several citizens, not altogether satisfied with your management, have already expressed a wish that I would build a theatre there; and if you will not cooperate with me, and receive such persons as I choose to send you, I will build a theatre at once in your city."
To which I answered:
"All right; Mobile is open to you and all

89 Ibid., p. 136.
other managers. Our theatre being burned down and we being obliged to occupy the Government Street concern, a new theatre in a good location would take the business, and we should be driven from our ground and compelled to seek some other city for our operations. New Orleans is near, and might support a second theatre, which Mobile can not do; so, if you build a theatre in our city, you must not be surprised if we should attempt a competition with you here."

"Oh! of course, of course," replied Mr. Caldwell, "you have a perfect right to open a second theatre here, though one can scarcely be supported, except out of the manager's pocket; and it is certainly quite likely you can find friends to erect a house for you here in New Orleans, while you acknowledge your friends have failed to assist in rebuilding the St. Emanuel."

I replied, "I have frequently been invited to this city by responsible individuals, who, 'not altogether satisfied with your management,' as strange as it may seem to you, are willing to assist in building a new house."

"Threats have no effect on me," said Mr. Caldwell--"twenty theatres in New Orleans could not affect the St. Charles a jot."

"If any threats have been made, you have made them," I replied. "If I come here, which I shall not think of doing unless driven by you from Mobile, which, as I have already said, can not sustain two theatres, while New Orleans possibly can, it will not be with the expectation or wish to 'affect the St. Charles' at all, but simply with the view of repairing the losses at Mobile, if possible, and accumulating something for the support of my family and the education of my children."

"Very well," said Mr. C., and
"Very well," said Mr. S.\(^9\)

Smith's recollection of such precise details of a conversation which took place thirty years previous to his setting the words to paper must of course be regarded as pleasant fictionalizing. Whether Caldwell actually tried to dictate to the Mobile partners whom they should accept

\(^9\)Ibid., pp. 153-54.
as performers at their theatre is a matter for speculation, in the absence of anything more conclusive than Sol Smith's recollection. Ludlow makes no reference to such tactics on Caldwell's part. Of course, Caldwell's regal view of himself as "the founder of the Drama in the Southwest" admits the possibility of his being capable of it. An equally valid interpretation of the incident could be that Caldwell was being generous to the besieged managers in sharing with them the stars with whom he had made engagements the previous summer. The attempt to send Ludlow and Smith some of the principal members of his stock company such as Scott, Browne and Finn to appear as stars at their theatre could be regarded as an act of kindness. These actors were frequently featured at the St. Charles and would have drawn well, although not as substitutes for Tree, Forrest and Booth, as Smith suggests they were intended. In the same account Smith admits something of this argument:

New Orleans and Mobile being neighboring cities, and the managers on friendly terms with each other, many civilities and courtesies were exchanged between them; and it is but just to say that we were greatly benefited by the good understanding which existed between the St. Charles and St. Emanuel managements, particularly in the facilities afforded us of obtaining any quantity of star-light we might need, without going far for it.92

In December when Ludlow returned to Mobile to begin the 1839-1840 season he encountered a competing theatre

92 Ibid.
already open. But it was not Caldwell who had entered the lists against Ludlow and Smith. The William Chapman family had engaged the only building in the central part of Mobile which might be readily adapted to theatrical use. The Chapman family for a number of years had plied the waters of the Mississippi with their Floating Theatre, first a flat boat and later a steam vessel, giving performances at any landing where they might hope for a few admissions. Why they chose this year to abandon their watery peregrinations and fit up the Alhambra Ball Room in Mobile as a theatre, neither Ludlow nor Smith makes clear. The result for the partners was that Ludlow was compelled to engage a building for their theatre in a district which Smith complained was so remote that the populace could not locate it. Smith called it the "Swamp Theatre." The partners seem not to have resented the intrusion of the Chapmans on their domain, possibly because the Alhambra was not a threat for long. The Chapmans closed their theatre shortly after Ludlow and Smith opened the "Swamp Theatre" in State Street on December 31, 1839.

The depressed times and the loss of two theatres

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94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., p. 147.
96 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 515.
by fire had proven nearly ruinous to Ludlow and Smith in Mobile, although they seem to have done fairly good business during their St. Louis summer seasons. This last winter in Mobile, in particular, was so poor that they were compelled to end their season at an early date—March 1, 1840. 97 Ludlow and most of the company departed for St. Louis, and Smith remained in Mobile to settle their business affairs. Just how long he remained there is uncertain. He himself says he remained in the South two months. 98 A few regular members of the company remained with him to provide an "after season" to accommodate the Barnes family who had been engaged as late season stars, but how many weeks this lasted is not known. Ludlow says Smith remained "about a week" and then, learning that Caldwell proposed to erect a new theatre in New Orleans, Smith went to New Orleans and arranged for a theatre to be built for the partners there. 99 Ludlow's account would have Smith remaining in Mobile well into June and coming to New Orleans to sign the lease for the theatre on June 25, the established date of its signature—100 a period longer than "about a week" by more than two months. In his own narrative Smith does not say how long he remained

98 Smith, op. cit., p. 148.
at Mobile. He claims to have taken a short trip into Georgia and returned to Mobile, after which he appeared at the St. Charles in New Orleans on May 6 to assist at the benefit of his friend J. M. Field.\textsuperscript{101} Next he claims to have embarked on June 7 for St. Louis, where he stayed briefly, went to Cincinnati to play a six-night engagement, and visited Illinois to inquire about some lands he owned there.\textsuperscript{102} He concludes his account of his summer activities by saying, vaguely, "I passed most of the summer in making arrangements which were to lift from us a portion of the heavy burden of debt by which we were crushed down."\textsuperscript{103} Obviously Smith could not have left New Orleans on June 7, visited St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Illinois, then returned to Mobile—as he later claims he did when he went to New Orleans to arrange for a theatre there—and still arrive in New Orleans by June 25 to negotiate the lease on which his signature and this date appear. It is more than likely that "Old Sol" confuses another summer's perambulations with the one in question, and that he remained in Mobile, with the Georgia side-trip he describes, until June.

Sol Smith gives the following account of his decision to enter competition against Caldwell in New

\textsuperscript{101}Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 150. See, also, \textit{Daily Picayune}, May 5, 7 and 8, 1840.

\textsuperscript{102}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid., p. 151.
Orleans:

It seems that my friend Caldwell thought the time had come when he could strike the threatened blow effectively, it being now quite certain our crippled condition would not permit us to build such a theatre as was required in Mobile. He therefore caused proposals to be privately circulated for the building of a "splendid new theatre," and invited the citizens to take stock therein. (I can not learn to this day that one dollar was subscribed by the worthy citizens who had so strongly invited him to build.)

I was in Mobile at the time, settling up the winter's business, but did not hear of the movement for several days after the paper had been put in circulation; but when I found out... I scribbled and sent a note to my wife informing her I should be off in the 1 o'clock boat for New Orleans, and... at 8 o'clock next morning I was eating breakfast at the St. Charles Hotel in the Crescent City.

On Poydras Street, between St. Charles and Camp Streets, and on the site of an old cooper's shop, there was in the course of erection a large stable and circus by Messrs. Dubois & Kendig. Taking a look at it, I found that, with certain alterations which could easily be made, a tolerably commodious theatre could be formed out of this building. I sought the proprietors, had a talk with them, and a consultation with a few friends, and before any dinner went into my mouth that day a contract was made for the erection of a theatre, of which I was to be the lessee for five years at $10,000 per year....

Next morning the lease was duly executed; and this was the way there came to be a new American Theatre in New Orleans in 1840.104

The question is, "Who invaded where, and when?"

Did Caldwell threaten Ludlow and Smith with a competing theatre in Mobile in the spring of 1840 as they claim? Or did Ludlow and Smith, faced with certain ruin in Mobile, decide to seek New Orleans as a greener field for the

104 Ibid., p. 154.
southern half of their circuit? Caldwell's proposal to build a new theatre in Mobile did not receive public pronouncement until August 18, 1840, when the following item appeared in the Picayune:

A NEW MOBILE THEATRE.--A public meeting was held at the Alhambra in Mobile on Saturday afternoon, at which the subject of a new theatre was discussed and set in motion. We see the name of James H. Caldwell prominent in pushing forward the enterprise.

By this date Smith had already signed, on June 25, the lease for the Poydras Street property.

The one inescapable fact for Caldwell—though doubtless he did not recognize it as such—was that, as he passed his forty-seventh birthday and ended his twenty-first consecutive year of undisputed control of New Orleans theatre, he was faced for the first time in his career with real competition. His opponents were men who were already thoroughly entrenched in popular favor and who were strongly motivated to become a permanent establishment in the city. As the Daily Picayune of June 26, 1840 described Ludlow and Smith, "They are thoroughly experienced men in catering for public amusement, and will conduct the new establishment with spirit and enterprise."

If this threat to his sovereignty gave Caldwell any concern at the time, he did not express it. But whether he knew it or not, each brick that was laid and each nail that was driven in the neat theatre building on Poydras street during the summer of 1840 was raising walls which
would entomb forever the theatrical ambitions of James H. Caldwell. The enterprising and energetic manager had met his match.
The New York *Spirit of the Times* of October 17, 1840, prophesied that there would be "a prolonged theatrical struggle" in New Orleans commencing with the season which was just then beginning. "LUDLOW & SMITH open their new theatre between the 2nd and 9th of November," the paper announced, and then wisely noted, "Northern states will find their advantage in the competition, however ill it may result for the managers." The prophecy was to be proven wrong on two counts: the struggle was not to be a prolonged one--within a little more than two years Caldwell would be beaten from the field--and from the very outset Ludlow and Smith would find but few ill results in the competition, although they, like Caldwell, would encounter hardship in the form of fire and economic depression.

Caldwell had the initial advantage in the struggle and he was quick to capitalize on it. His theatre, one of the most magnificent in the United States, was already constructed and had a place in popular favor. The stock company which he had assembled this year was virtually the same as the one with which he had conducted the past brilliant and remunerative season. He was able to steal more than a month's march on Ludlow and Smith, whose theatre
was still under construction on his opening date of October 9. On that night the audience was treated to the double pleasure of a theatre which had just undergone its annual refurbishment of paint and upholstery and of the production of the sterling old comedy *Speed the Plough* and the farce *Loan of a Lover.*¹ The *Picayune,* in its columns the next day, paid tribute to the stock company, still not fully assembled, and said, "If the season should show an average of such houses as that of ... last night, the liberal and munificent manager will have no reason to complain of the success of his catering." And for the first month of the season Caldwell had no real cause for complaint. On November 3, for example, the *Picayune* reported "a coming out of the ladies," always a sure sign that the season was well launched and the attractions popular. Said the paper, "The house was better by five hundred dollars than any other of the present season."

Caldwell was not taking the competition of Ludlow and Smith lightly. He seems to have been sufficiently apprehensive of the threat they posed to extend himself in the matter of securing attractive stars for this year. The first of these was William Chapman, whom he introduced to the public only ten days after the theatre's opening. Chapman was followed, in succession, by the tragedian Fitzgerald Tasistro, Mr. and Mrs. Sloman— who then re-

¹*Daily Picayune,* October 7, 1840.
mained as regular members of the stock company—Dan Marble, Tyrone Power, the "Ethiopian imitator" Master Diamond, the delineator of French character William Ranger, John Baldwin Buckstone, and the illustrious danseuse Fanny Elssler. But of this galaxy only Power and Elssler were to have engagements at the St. Charles which would prove profitable to Caldwell. Tasistro, for example, despite his reputation and "infinite panegyrics from the New York Critics," as the Bee of November 19 wrote, was only mildly received. Part of Tasistro's failure could be attributed to the fact that he had sustained some accident after his arrival in New Orleans and, in consequence, appeared on the stage "lame and an invalid," according to the Picayune of November 21. But at least equally responsible for the thin houses at the St. Charles during his and other appearances by following stars was the powerful diversion offered by the American Theatre on Poydras Street which had opened on November 10.

The following description of Ludlow and Smith's New American Theatre is contained in the Daily Picayune of November 6, 1840, as taken "from the notes of F. D. Cott, the architect, and A. Mondelli, the artist of the interior:"

This building has three tiers, each containing seventeen boxes, exclusive of eight private, two managers', and two stage. The vestibule opens conveniently upon a level with the street, and is

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2 For details of plays and their dates of performance of this season, see Smither, op. cit., pp. 253-57 and pp. 470-79.
supported by handsome Grecian Doric columns. Over this is the grand saloon, forty by fifty-four feet, and elegantly finished and decorated. The vestibule measures forty by twenty-eight feet, upon each side of which are the box offices of the theatre. From this you ascend by a broad flight of four steps, running the whole length of the vestibule, into the parquette lobby.

Doors now, at convenient distances, admit you into a spacious pit, surrounding the grand equestrian circle, which is forty-two feet in diameter, and to which there are two entrances from the stables of the establishment. This circle is provided with a removable floor and seats, by carrying out or replacing which, it is either a parquette or a circle as occasion requires.

The grand saloon is immediately in front of the first tier, and connected with the lobby by broad and spacious means of communication. Besides this there are three other saloons, one on a level with the second tier and two above.

The dimensions of the stage are—depth fifty-four feet four inches, and the width opening on the audience forty-four feet; the breadth of the stage, as occupied by scenery, &c., is seventy feet; and the whole distance from wall to wall is some forty more, which extra space is divided into the usual apartments connected with the stage, viz:—one green room, one music room, ten dressing rooms, two star rooms, two manager's rooms, two property rooms, wardrobe, carpenters' rooms, shop, &c., besides dressing rooms for equestrians, and stabling arrangements for eighteen horses. In addition to the usual offices of such an establishment, there are four stores fronting on Poydras street, and one other apartment, reserved as a committee room. The whole interior height from circle to ceiling is forty-four feet. No person can, from an outside view, judge of the spacious and every way excellent arrangements of the interior.

We will now attempt to give some idea of the decorations. The whole interior is ornamented in a free modern style, and the painting, together with the drop curtain, was executed by our townsman A. Mondelli.

Four antes of a very neat and pleasing design, support the proscenium, which rest upon a handsome cornish "Sic", highly ornamented, and the whole painted in imitation of sienna, or white Italian marble. These antes are modeled after none of the ancient orders, but are of a
style first used in America, and which has won in New York much critical admiration. They are crowned by an elliptic arch, laid off in small square panels, in each of which is a small rosette in imitation of stucco. In the center of this arch the eagle of America spreads its broad wings over the stage, while the armory and starry banner of the Union form together a magnificent and imposing group. — This arch and the ante are, to our taste, the most beautiful points about the whole interior decoration.

The ceiling forms a combination of ten panels, five of which are occupied by figures of Tragedy, Comedy, Dance, Music, and a fairy nymph, all attended by Cupids and Zephyrs sporting among light-tinted clouds. The other five panels exhibit birds of variegated plumage, flowers, & c., and the whole are framed with rich, double gilt mouldings. The ventilator in the center of the ceiling is a perforated arabesque, forming a splendid garland of flowers and rich ornaments, through which the air will pass off from pit and boxes, keeping the atmosphere of the house constantly refreshed.

The main cornish around the house is painted in imitation of plain white marble, over which appears yellow frieze and stucco arabesques. All the tiers are set off in panels framed in richly burnished mouldings. The panels of the third tier are filled with garlands painted on a delicate milk ground of azure. The panels of the first tier are ornamented after the manner of the middle ages, on a ground of cream color, with stars in the centre numbering the states of the Union. The columns supporting the boxes are fluted, painted in imitation of white marble, and are purely American in style. From the proscenium falls a richly painted drapery, beneath which the damask curtain will fall, that color having been chosen in preference to the usual green.

The drop scene is to represent the landing of Columbus in the New World; a new subject and a beautiful one, and one well chosen for an American theatre.

According to a calculation made by the architect, nineteen hundred persons may be seated in the house, allowing eighteen inches to each individual. The removable parquette alone, it is estimated will seat about four hundred persons.

The building itself occupies a space of ninety by one hundred and fifty feet, and fills
the largest part of the block bounded by Lafayette square, Poydras, Camp and St. Francis streets. The height of stage from the boards to the elliptic arch is thirty-two and a half feet.

C. L. Smith, upon whom is dawning a brilliant reputation, is the scenic artist for the theatre, and he is now busily preparing a set of scenery for the opening, comprising some new and beautiful designs.

The whole establishment will be lit with gas, and a brilliant scene, beyond all question, must be anticipated on Monday evening.

The new house on opening night was "thronged from pit to dome," according to the Picayune of November 11, and "a favorable predisposition towards the new concern was fully evident." The opening play was The Honeymoon. Mrs. Farren delivered an opening address which the Picayune reprinted. Because of the sentiments this poem expresses towards Caldwell and the views it contains with respect to the anticipated competition with the "Lordly Temple," the address, in part, is quoted as follows:

Our managers, erst have smelt the lamp,  
And trod the new-laid boards of little Camp,  
And earlier still were foremost pioneers,  
Planting the drama here in bygone years,  
New come again, old toilers in the cause  
Asking to share your welcome and applause.  
Your Hands! Your hands! in friendly plaudits meeting,  
Give to your humble caterers a greeting!  
We plant no opposition standard here;  
No rivals we, no rival do we fear;  
Contented on our humble course to go,  
Cheered by the Lordly Temple's overflow.  
Here are our fairy patrons smiling o'er us;  
And troops of friends already throng before us:

3Mrs. Farren was formerly Mary Ann Russell, the daughter of the deceased Richard Russell. She had married the actor George Farren in 1838 (see New Orleans Bee, January 16, 1838.) She, her husband, and her brother were regular members of the American Theatre company this season.
And here the eagle and the starry banner
Shall freely float o'er fair Louisiana.
Long may our flag wave in a southern breeze;
Long may you smile and we still live to please!

The references to "fairy patrons" and "the eagle and the starry banner" were allusions to the Muses painted on the ceiling and the eagle and American flag painted on the Proscenium wall.

The favorable predisposition towards Ludlow and Smith's theatre which had been predicted by the Picayune was a reality. Within two weeks after the rival theatre had opened the Bee was driven to express its sorrow at the poor attendance at the St. Charles. The Bee pointed out that the public owed something to Caldwell and had "been but niggard in their payments." At the same time the Bee took Caldwell to task for his failure to meet his responsibility to the public in providing "an efficient and popular company." The Bee's complaint was not that the performers were "absolutely bad," but that they lacked "variety and versatility." "The corps dramatique of the St. Charles," said the Bee, "would do very well for some small theatre in America,......but as attached to the largest theatre in America, and to the city of New Orleans with her hundred thousand inhabitants, it is at best, barely tolerable." The Bee felt that this lack of versatility might be responsible for the repetitious nature of

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4 New Orleans Bee, November 26, 1840.
the fare at the St. Charles. "The 'Lady of Lyons' and 'Peter Wilkins' and 'St. George and the Dragon' are repeated usque ad nauseam said the paper. And "the goodness of Mr. Caldwell's heart" had "induced him to keep before the audience certain performers" whom the Bee described as "absolute eyesores," and whose "vulgarity, grossness, and ignorance of the first principles of their art" had resulted in the fashionable element of the city remaining away from the St. Charles. The further result, according to the Bee, was that the audiences were "principally confined to what is termed the floating population." Even when real merit was offered, the public was indifferent to it, and the Bee cited as an instance of this indifference the performances of Tasistro and Mrs. Sloman in The Merchant of Venice on November 24. One major source of this indifference was "the slovenly manner in which good performers are supported by the stock company," said the Bee, pointing to the frequent disposition of the supporting actors to make the stage wait upon them. The paper warned Caldwell to "have no one upon the boards of the St. Charles, who does not feel proud of his profession; who is not ambitious to please."

While generally admiring the "judicious and well-considered remarks of the Bee, the Picayune, of November 27 disagreed that it was the poor stock company which was the cause of the lack of patronage at the St. Charles. Rather, the public itself was to blame in its "craving appetite"
for stars, according to the Picayune:

It is all fol-de-rol to talk about the chicaneery of management. Managers cannot make the taste of the people. They can but watch the fluctuations of public whim...and cater for it to the best of their experience and ingenuity. Mr. Caldwell is as thoroughly versed in his business as a manager can be, and if a stock company embodying perfection was only required to draw out the people, he would have discovered the secret before this, and acted upon it, for he could organize such a corps far easier than he can find dollars to satisfy the exorbitant craving of stars....it should be remembered that the novelty of a new establishment is running away with theatrical patronage at present.

The Picayune, moreover, defended the present St. Charles stock company, except for "the want of an old man and woman," and said, "If Mr. Caldwell had the privilege to rob every other company in the Union to organize a force for the St. Charles, he could scarcely form a better practical company than he has at present."

The Bee continued its arguments in its November 28 issue, politely admitting the low state of public taste, but loath to "banish all hope of seeing the drama command the respect and patronage" which was its due. "And it is a moot point," said the Bee, "whether the degeneracy of the stock has rendered the starring system popular, or the system itself has deteriorated....the stock." While admitting the excellence claimed by the Picayune for such members of the company as Field, Barton, Pearson, the Barretts, the Slomans, and the De Bars, the Bee questioned whether these performers could be considered as belonging to the stock company. "If they do," said the Bee, "why
are they not more frequently before the audience? And what excuse can be offered for the trashy exhibitions at the Temple, when the manager has such merit at command?" The Bee defined what it considered the real problem as follows:

The New Orleans audience has a right to expect the best of acting from so formidable an array of clever actors. In this however, they are disappointed. And why? They do not appear except in the papers. Or if they do, they exhibit themselves as stock stars, so to speak, and domiciliate a system which is so loudly complained of. The members of the company set a bad example, if they desire to see starring put down. Let them one and all come to the relief of the manager; do what they can for the Temple; and leave off squabbling for the best party among themselves and the public will have playing worth patronizing....The strength of the company is never felt upon any piece. And although the success of a performance may depend in a degree upon the parts, unless Mr. Barrett thinks it in the light comedy range, Mr. Pearson or Barton in that of heavy tragedy, & c., it is handed over to some figurante and duly butchered. Exceptions to this regulation sometimes occur. We have seen Mr. Field play parts which savored little of "youthful tragedy," and it is owing to his willingness to apply the versatility of his talents to the best advantage of the manager as much as to intrinsic merit, that he has become so great a favorite in this city.

Criticism of the St. Charles became a popular journalistic pastime. By November 29, the Picayune reported "the whole town stage struck," with "even the sedate Courier...pouring forth...criticisms." Oddly enough, Ludlow and Smith's theatre had never been brought into the argument. As the Picayune put it:

All the critics of the town are crying up the legitimate, and yet are barking at a professed legitimate establishment, the St. Charles, and all the people of the town are patronizing

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another theatre—the New American—, which the critics have not yet condescended even to abuse. There is something in this exceedingly curious, if philosophy could find it out.

The Bee, meanwhile, doggedly adhered to its initial views, and in its issue of November 30 stated:

Our contemporaries who have taken up the cause of the St. Charles management, have not thought fit to controvert the fact of bad playing; but rest their defence upon the assertion that the stock company is as good as that attached to any theatre in America....The audience can not be made to relish a performance bad in itself, by being told that it is as good as the people of Gotham have; conceding the truth of the evasion.

But the next day the Bee conceded that the performances at the St. Charles were improving, and predicted that "if the management will continue to get up pieces with equal power, and the stock company play with like spirit, the Temple will go ahead."

However, Caldwell continued to have box office trouble on into December, despite the appearance of the ever-popular Dan Marble, who appeared alternately with Fitzgerald Tasilstro, and the introduction of several novelties. Among these novelties were a new French vaudeville performed by some of the players from the Orleans Theatre, and the introduction of a new play entitled Richard Savage. The latter was commended by the Picayune of December 9 as "one of the most interesting stories we have ever seen represented in dramatic form...The acting, dressing, the entire performance of the play forms the most complete thing we have noticed upon the St. Charles stage this season." But the
Picayune did not report that this superb production was seen by large audiences, while in the same issue it reported "every tier, pit, gallery and all of the new theatre was crowded again last night." The reasons for the popularity of Ludlow and Smith's establishment may be contained in an article praising them which the same paper printed on December 19:

**AMERICAN THEATRE.**—The bold and spirited manner in which Ludlow and Smith have opened and conducted the new theatre, we are glad to see is observed and appreciated, and that, too, without the aid of such means as are now pretty generally practiced among managers. Not only the people, but the press of the city, with a warmth and candor which is as creditable as it is scarce, have stepped forward yielding patronage and praise to the new establishment....The Poydras street company is a most excellent practical dramatic body, and comprises a very fair, if not a more than ordinary share of genuine and sterling talent.

And in a similar vein the *Bee* of January 18, 1841, gave its accolade to the managers of the New American:

The continued success of the American Theatre may be attributed to the hearty good will with which every member of the establishment undertakes the business of the stage. So long as the managers exhibit the interest heretofore displayed in catering for the public amusement and the company exert themselves in giving efficiency to the parts entrusted to them, the American will reap a harvest of patronage.

Another feature which served to make the Poydras Street Theatre popular was the manner by which Ludlow and Smith were able to surmount a problem Caldwell had never successfully contended with, either at the Camp Street Theatre or at the St. Charles. The following item from the *Picayune* of January 19 alludes to this policy of the managers:
We know that a system of organization has been persevered in by Ludlow and Smith which has resulted in the total banishment of annoyance to the audience from unruly conduct in the upper parts of the house, that prolific source from whence the drama has suffered so much degration. Nothing that these spirited managers have yet done would tend more to advance their favor with the community than this measure, for it is one that cannot be undertaken but at pecuniary sacrifice.

Caldwell began to retrieve his audiences with the engagement of Tyrone Power in mid-December. It was the first time in five years the Irish comedian had visited the city, and his very first appearance on the St. Charles stage. Power played a single performance on the night of December 7, and then mysteriously disappeared for a week. But by the 15th he was again performing to "the most brilliant and crowded audience of the season," and in the words of the Bee of the next day, "The Temple indeed looked itself again." Power fulfilled his contracted two engagements in December and into January, and then was re-engaged briefly when his steamer for Havana was delayed on January 20, 1841. But the popularity of Power had in no way diminished the attractiveness of the rival theatre in Poydras Street. Part of its attraction lay in its employment of an equestrian troupe which enabled the managers to present the popular horse spectacles of the day, such as

5Daily Picayune, December 10, 1840.

6Ibid., January 20, 1841.
Timour the Tartar, Tekeli, El Hyder, Mazeppa and The Cataract of the Ganges,\(^7\) as well as incidental exhibitions of vaulting and jumping. As might be expected, these horse pieces were particularly popular with children and this fact led Ludlow and Smith to anticipate by nearly a hundred years an American institution which was to be an integral part of another entertainment medium, the movies. This innovation was the children's matinee held on holidays. On the afternoon of the celebration of New Orleans' own particular holiday, the Eighth of January, for example, the \textit{Picayune} observed some "three or four hundred juveniles" present at the New American Theatre "decked out in all their finery, clapping their hands and demonstrating after other fashions the warm feelings of delight the riding and vaulting caused in their breasts."

Caldwell finally managed to attract substantial audiences to the St. Charles and throughout most of January the press reported good attendance. He achieved this in a variety of ways. To meet the audience's demands for spectacle he brought out the popular \textit{Aladdin}, which the \textit{Bee} of January 12 described as "got up in really gorgeous style, the whole of the scenery, dresses, decorations, & c., being on a magnificent scale. But the \textit{Bee} could not wholly abandon its fault-finding where the St. Charles was concerned and recommended "more attention to the working of the scenes." The \textit{Picayune} of the same date complained of

\footnote{Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 155}
"the lateness of the hour when its performance commences" and suggested that Caldwell should bring out Aladdin as the first piece of the evening. Still attempting to create a strong audience interest in his theatre, on January 17 Caldwell produced Bulwer's new play Money, but its attractiveness was considerably diminished by the fact that Ludlow and Smith produced the same play on the same night.

One novelty to which Caldwell resorted proved highly attractive at the time it was offered, but in the long run it created considerable hostility against the St. Charles. In the week of January 10 was presented Master Diamond, "a lad of about sixteen years of age,...who, with blackened face and hands, performed negro dances," according to Noah Ludlow. Little Diamond did extravaganza dancing and singing "after the Jim Crow fashion," as the Bee of the 12th described it. The youngster appeared under the auspices of P. T. Barnum, as yet unknown for the flamboyant promotional methods with which he was ultimately to become identified. Diamond's "cut-and-shuffles," "pigeon wings," and "breakdowns" were immensely popular for several nights and through his benefit. Then, at the instigation of Barnum, according to Smith, a wager of five hundred dollars was proposed on a dancing match

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8Ludlow, op. cit., p. 533. Ludlow incorrectly maintains that this performer appeared at his own New American Theatre.

9Smith, loc. cit.
between Diamond and any challenger. On the night of January 19, according to the Picayune of that date, "some daring young genius" aspired to win the bet. But the challenger was no more than a supernumerary from the St. Charles stock company, "with his face blacked, to dance with and be beaten by that jewel of dancers." When it learned of the humbug, the public was so incensed that it boycotted the performances at the St. Charles. The acting of William Ranger, which the press admired, went unattended and unappreciated by the general public. In vain the Picayune on January 23 appealed, "Let those who cry out against the degredation of the St. Charles stage by negro dancing, show now some positive evidence that they have legitimate taste, and go to see Ranger." And on the 26th the same paper said:

We have never been so decidedly disappointed as we are with the indifference manifested towards Ranger, and our notions which we thought were pretty correct, are all knocked into pi. Here is legitimate acting—pure, polished, high-toned and beautifully refined acting support, too, every way worthy of the star—and the St. Charles is empty. The fact is, the playgoers are humbugging themselves about this matter. In revenge for the tall gag of a humbug wager lately put upon them, they now stay away entirely, and miss what is really and supremely excellent. Perhaps, after all. managers would be wiser in adhering strictly to the legitime. For, though the "match dances" did bring $1500 to the house the other night, our impression is that it has kept out quite as large an amount since.

10 Ibid.
11 See Daily Picayune, January 20, 22, 23, 24, and 26, 1841.
12 Smith, loc. cit., says, "nearly $2000."
To his credit it should be noted that Caldwell was out of the city in Mobile at the time the wager was proposed, although he had returned by the 19th in sufficient time to stop the contest had he so wished.

Ranger finished his disastrous engagement on January 30, and Caldwell quickly sought to repair the damage done by the fraud which had been practiced on the New Orleans public. He resorted to an expedient which had always proved effective in the past. The Picayune of January 27 announced, "Caldwell is going to knock the dust off his old buskins and put them on again for an especial engagement of six nights at the Temple." Conveniently forgetting his previous farewells to the stage, Caldwell began his engagement on February 2, 1841. In advance of this performance the Picayune editorialized on the event as follows:

ST. CHARLES.--Mr. Caldwell will tread once more the boards of his own noble theatre tonight. It must be an interesting spectacle for those who know the "sea of troubles" that Caldwell has breasted in his time, and for those who have marked his advance in this city from clouded obscurity to wealth, fame and influence, to look upon him now--while the first snow of an honorable age is falling lightly upon his crown--walking the boards still erect, a proud and accomplished professor of the "art of arts;" the art he loved in youth and honors in his manhood.

The Bee on January 27 also expressed its interest in the

13 Infra, p.
14 Daily Picayune, January 19, 1841.
impending return of James Caldwell to the stage:

The announcement of Mr. CALDWELL'S intention to resume the buskin for a limited number of nights, has given rise to no little interest among theatre-goers. Those who remember his exquisite delineations of Benedict [sic], Gossamer, Bulwer, & c. will be anxious to witness the effects of time and abstinence upon the founder of south-western theatricals. We predict complete success for Mr. CALDWELL, if he will only bear in mind that he is yet one of the handsomest men on the stage, and does not require any extra-extion [sic] to make himself young enough for the parts in which he will appear.

Caldwell played on alternate nights to John Baldwin Buckstone, the English comedian and author of innumerable comedies and farces, which Buckstone chose as vehicles for his own histrionic talents. Buckstone opened on February 1, and the Bee of the 3rd "could perceive nothing in his acting to distinguish him as a star." Caldwell, the next night, was far more favorably received. His performance as Vapid in The Dramatist was greeted by a large and fashionable audience. Both the Bee and the Picayune remarked on the respectability of the dress circle, which was filled with resident family parties and made a better showing than at any time previous in the season, with the possible exception of Power's engagement.15 According to the Bee Caldwell exhibited some embarrassment upon his first entrance and grew hoarse before the final curtain, but his reception was highly

flattering. The Picayune reported that he had taken the occasion "to introduce in his part a Broad hint about public neglect of the legitimate, which was received with great good humor by the audience." The Bee, not forgetting its critical role, remarked that "by the time Mr. CALDWELL gets through with his engagement, he will have become convinced of the necessity of brushing up the stock company." Caldwell returned on February 6 to play Gossamer in Laugh When You Can, which induced the Picayune to note that "the stage has been robbed of a good actor ever since the active mind of Caldwell led him into other enterprises, and the public are glad to see him once again in his old line." On the 8th he performed in The School For Scandal, and on the 11th in The West Indian. But while Caldwell received a flattering personal tribute from theatre-goers during his few brief appearances, the crowds continued to flock into the New American to see Fanny Fitzwilliam and the excellent stock company there. The Picayune of February 3 noted "if the American could have held a few hundred more last evening the public would have been better satisfied, for a great number could not obtain admission."

Caldwell performed twice more in New Orleans before this season ended, his last performances on the stage of the St. Charles Theatre. The first of these appearances was a happy occasion, the result of the request of a number of prominent citizens to give him a complimentary benefit. M. M. Cohen, spokesman for the Committee for the Caldwell
Complimentary Benefit, in correspondence which the Picayune reproduced on February 24, stated to Caldwell that the benefit was tendered for "your many virtues: as a gentleman, in the fullest sense of this comprehensive phrase; your acknowledged excellence as a most refined and accomplished performer, in a very exalted department of the drama; your energy, enterprise and perseverance as the beautifier of our city, the founder of the English drama therein, and the introducer of gas lights in New Orleans."

Caldwell accepted the gracious offer and appointed February 26 as the date for the performance. The Picayune of the 25th announced that the plays chosen were The West Indian and The Liar, in both of which Caldwell would appear. The paper also gave space to the following communication concerning the impending benefit:

Messts, Editors:—The complimentary benefit to Jas. H. Caldwell, is I perceive, fixed for Friday next, the 26th instant. To say that no individual deserves more at the hands of the population of New Orleans, might be termed invidious, but to say that this gentleman is entitled at the least, to an equal portion with any other, is truth. Arts, science, mechanics, and literature, have in every manner been aided by his judicious zeal, excellent taste, untiring energy and determined enterprize. Will the Orleanois permit it to be said that he, the pioneer of the Second Municipality's bright fortunes, the encourager of every thing that exalts and embellishes civilized life, is not to receive some proud testimonial of their regard and esteem? The question once proposed, will be emphatically answered by an enthusiastic and delighted audience. GOSSAMER.

The Bee, normally staid about puffing benefit performances, editorialized at some length in urging attendance at this
event honoring Caldwell:

The complimentary benefit of Mr. Caldwell takes place this evening. It would be a reflection upon the liberality not to say justice of the city to intimate a doubt of the St. Charles being crowded from pit to dome. Benefits of this character have been got up upon occasions which, in our opinion, did not demand so special a demonstration of regard; but in this instance, the public are only called upon to do an act of justice too long deferred. We have seen in our day complimentary benefits, at which the cost of admission was raised four-fold, in favor of stars who could only be induced to appear before the public at a tax ruinous to the theatre, and in behalf of old stagers, who perhaps deserved such a compliment from those whom they had made it the study of their lives to please. Upon such occasions the beneficiaries reaped rich harvests, often to be spent in other countries. Will the people of New Orleans withhold from one, who as an artist has had no superior in his line, and who as a man of enterprise has done so much to beautify the city, a testimony of respect which has been so often conferred on those whose deserts were as nothing to this of Mr. CALDWELL?

The theatrical career of Mr. CALDWELL has been distinguished by more acts of a benevolent character, than that of any man we know of. His establishment has ever been at the command of public charity, and he has responded to the calls made upon him to succor the poor, the orphan, or the afflicted, with a promptitude that showed that charity was one of the elements of his nature. Policy often dictates a boastful exhibition of benevolence; but we believe no one ever had occasion to urge that argument to obtain the aid of the St. Charles for purposes of charity.

All professions have their ambitions, and a benefit such as is proposed this evening, is the highest triumph an actor aspires to. As a performer Mr. CALDWELL might justly claim such an honor. He has been at the head of his profession for a number of years—the first actor of the day in the most difficult and entertaining branch of the art—genteel comedy—one which demands the accomplishments of a gentleman and the application of a student.

But at least, whatever mark of esteem the people of New Orleans show to Mr. CALDWELL is returned with interest. If his benefit should yield him a fortune tonight, it would be spent tomorrow in some enterprise of public concern. His ambition is of that sort that the public reap the fruits of his labors. In fact those who attend the St. Charles tonight will
not only gratify a generous and enterprising citizen, but will be subscribing the amount of their entrance money to some improvement or other, upon which it will be certainly expended.\textsuperscript{16}

The committee which sponsored the benefit also awarded a prize of a silver cup to the best address written for the occasion. Winner was the actor J. M. Field, whose effort the \textit{Picayune} published on February 28:

\begin{quote}
The prostrate lion! reft of life and strength; With nerveless limb, and eye bedim'd at length; Reckless, and left--no more the forests shake--The ass's kick unconsciously to take; So lies the Drama! while its jackall train, To lions grown, assume the monarch's mane! Oh! glorious art! alas, that all of earth, Should take its parents nature at its birth; That all we have of beautiful or rare, Tho' watched by wisdom and perfecting care, Should own mortality! that men should say The Drama, like the rest, has "had its day!"
Well! be it so--yet, as beside the grave A thousand thoughts, and kind regrets will spring, The treasure lost, before our minds to bring--So let us muse---alas! so let us see What the stage was, and what it still should be.

The warrior-bard who fought at Marathon, Here sung, himself, the triumphs Greece had won! Here Shakespeare breath'd his own immortal lays! And here Moliere "shot folly" all his days--Immortal spirits! guardians of your age, Speak ye! defend the desecrated stage! And oh! is there a breast with feeling warm, That oweth not its soul refining charm? Humanity! thy witness is a tear, And will no crystal evidence appear, When, in a voice subdued, you hear it said, This proud, this gentle, this old friend--is dead?

The stage!--But let us now his name recall, Who loved it best, who longest stayed its fall; Who bade a temple rise 'mid yielding woods, And Avon warble to the sire of floods! To CALDWELL!--He whose vivid art, tonight, Hath woke anew, old visions of delight;
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} \textbf{New Orleans Bee}, February 26, 1841.
He whom the good, the generous, and wise,
Are met to greet— to him we turn our eyes!
What! shall this temple which to art he gave,
Its home— be that eternal home, the grave?
Or shall SUPPORT, that true Promethean fire,
Revive the Drama— cry again, "Aspire!"
Oh, may it be so! Yours the potent spell;
Shall taste remain— or this night say farewell!
The stage but echoes the wide public will—
Shall CALDWELL be presiding spirit still?

There is no record of what Ludlow or Smith thought of the
not-so-thinly veiled allusions to the type of offering
made at their theatre or the frequently expressed view
that Caldwell should be the proper custodian of theatri-
cal taste. Both of the rival managers totally ignore this
event in their memoirs.

Near the end of the season, as an interlude within
the engagement of Fanny Elssler while she was indisposed
with a severe cold, Caldwell again returned to the stage
on March 23 in The Honeymoon and on March 28 in Town and
Country. The Picayune took the latter occasion to again
support "the legitimate" in observing, "Caldwell fairly
deserves every praise that can be accorded a manager;
for, while humoring popular taste in its wildest excite-
ment, he still maintains the legitimate in spite of every
discouragement." As noted before, this occasion was the
last appearance for Caldwell on the stage of the St.
Charles.

The high point of the theatrical season for the
St. Charles, indeed for all of New Orleans, was the engage-
ment of the dancer Fanny Elssler which began on March 6
and continued until the season was ended on April 2. Caldwell had attempted to effect her engagement with the assistance of Tyrone Power, whom he had appointed his agent to negotiate with her at Havana.\footnote{Notarial Acts of William Christy, \textit{op. cit.}, January 20, 1841.} Caldwell had instructed Power to conclude one of three proposed engagements with the dancer: First was an arrangement whereby Caldwell agreed to divide the gross receipts with Elssler for twenty nights, after deducting $200 a night, and give her two half benefits on two additional nights, the engagement to begin March 15. Or, second, Caldwell agreed to give Elssler $800 a night for twenty nights, provided she could guarantee a box office of $1,600 a night, plus giving her two half benefits and the equal division of any money above these amounts which might be derived from auctioning off tickets. Or, third, Caldwell agreed to pay Elssler $7,000 for fourteen nights, spread over a period of three weeks, plus a half benefit on the fifteenth night and the option of renewal. In addition Elssler would agree to nine nights of performance at Caldwell's Mobile Theatre, spread over two weeks, for the consideration of $2,400 for eight performances and a half benefit on the ninth. In this last proposal the New Orleans engagement was not to begin before March 22 nor later than April 1. From the following letter which Tyrone Power wrote to George Holland, Caldwell's treasurer, it is clear that the Irish actor had little
success in Havana and the arrangements which Caldwell finally made with Elssler were accomplished by other means:

CHARLESTON, February 4, 1840

MY DEAR HOLLAND:—Here I am after four days have passed—picked up a fishing smack blown off the shore—landed here all right. The Shannon not in, nor while this wind lasts can she get in. I do not know that in my letter I fully explain to CALDWELL my not treating with MARTIN, I found out that they were speculating on ESSLER, and, therefore, thought it best not to mention the matter of letting the St. Charles. Mr. CALDWELL would not let it very readily on any terms, and I did not meet with success with ESSLER. I understand this was the most polite course of dealing with these folks. I open here on the 8th, and in New York on the 1st of March. Let me hear from you, if I can do anything. Offer regards to CALDWELL, and believe me, ever.

Yours truly, TYRONE POWER.

Parenthetically, after his New York engagement Power sailed for Liverpool in the ill-fated steamer President which disappeared at sea.

Caldwell eventually had to pay Elssler her usual fee of $1,000 per night, instead of the amounts he had offered her in the proposals made through Power. George Holland made the final contract under the following circumstances:

Caldwell had been for some time in correspondence with the Chevalier WYKOFF, on the subject, but was absent from the city when WYKOFF arrived. The

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18 Power here refers to a proposed lease of the St. Charles to the Italian Opera Company, managed by Marti'y Torrens with whom he was also empowered to negotiate.


20 New Orleans Bee, May 14, 1841; Ludlow, op. cit., p. 536; and Holland Memorial, op. cit., p. 44.
Chevalier presented to HOLLAND his proposition—
ELLSLER \textit{sic} \ to play for ten nights and benefit—
one thousand dollars per night, and for the benefit
night to receive the entire receipts, after de-
ducting five hundred dollars for expenses. For
the services of her assistants Madame Arraline and
Mons. SYLVAIN, $250 per week, to be paid by the
manager. HOLLAND, astounded at the proposition,
cast his eyes over the paper, muttering, "one
thousand dollars per night!" He was, indeed, tread-
ing upon dangerous ground. EDMUND SIMPSON, the
manager of the Park Theatre, New York, paid
ELLSLER \textit{sic} for one engagement $5,138, and netted,
a loss of $2,220. Yet HOLLAND finally accepted the
proposition of WYKOFF.\textsuperscript{21}

Elssler performed twelve nights, including her two benefits,
in the space of a month. She also performed gratuitously
for the benefit of J. M. Field on April 7, 1841.\textsuperscript{22} Her
appearance at the St. Charles resulted in a near mania in
the city of New Orleans. During the month of her residence
in the city there was scarcely a day in which some news of
her did not appear in the journals of the day. These arti-
cles ranged all the way from the purely reportorial to the
extravagantly adulatory. As early as October 10, 1840,
when it was merely rumored that Elssler might be coming to
New Orleans, and that it would be Caldwell who would accede
to her astronomical demands, the \textit{Picayune} had this to say:

\begin{quote}
We believe of all cities in the Union New Orleans
is the place where Elssler will be rightly appreciated,
properly treated, and neither disgusted with absurd
adulation, nor insulted by having her countrymen and
admirers driven from beneath her window for offering
her the simple compliment of a serenade. We laughed
heartyly at the press of New York when the delightful
phobia first took hold of the editors. One seized
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{21}Holland Memorial, \textit{loc. cit.}

\textsuperscript{22}Daily \textit{Picayune}, April 6, 1841 and Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 157.
his pen and scattered the ink in rhapsody over his paper, while another flew into such a violent rage that some of his garments were obliged to be taken from him lest he should tear them. Now this seemed to us rather ridiculous on both sides, and Fanny must be more even than she is 'cracked up to be' if she can make us run into either of these extremes.

But the Picayune, and all of the New Orleans press, found itself ecstatically anticipating and enthusiastically reporting the dancer's every performance and her off-stage moments as well. As the Spirit of the Times of March 20, 1841 described the situation:

The arrival of FANNY ELLSSLER in New Orleans has caused the liveliest sensation in that most excitable of cities. The newspapers there have all along been preparing themselves "to sing small," as divined some time since. They deprecated an engagement of the great artist upon her usual terms, as utterly suicidal; talked of the folly of paying a dancing woman sums so enormous--and all that sort of thing. They might, however, as well have talked to the winds; the people were eager to see her, and immediately upon her arrival an engagement with her was effected by Mr. Caldwell... She is the constant theme of newspaper paragraphs, which, though often intended to be satirical and severe, indicate the sharpest curiosity on the part of the writers to see her whom they really believe, and rightly, to be a prodigy of grace and beauty.

Caldwell, well aware of the powerful attraction he was promoting, doubled the prices of admission for Elssler's engagement. More than that, he put the box seats up at auction. This produced an irate protest by a writer to the columns of the Bee of March 4, a protest which the Bee itself cautiously supported with a word to Caldwell warning him that such an action was "more likely to dispel the Elssler illusion than fill the coffers of the St. Charles."

But the manager had no difficulty in disposing of the
tickets for the first performance. The Bee of the 5th reported that "one of the boxes was rented for a night at $60, and the remainder averaged upwards of $4 a seat. The parquet seats brought over four dollars a piece." Wisely, Caldwell did not sell a box at auction unless it was bid on by more than one party, a policy which the Picayune warmly endorsed in its March 5 issue.

For eight performances, through March 18, Fanny Elssler nearly filled the mamouth St. Charles each night. The week that followed found her indisposed with a heavy cold. She returned on March 25 to play four more performances through the 31st and then took her benefit on April 2 with the very elite of the city," in the words of the Picayune of the next day. Unable to reach an agreement with Caldwell for an extension of her appearance, Elssler moved to the French Theatre where she performed until May 11, at which time she departed the city and the country.

With Elssler's benefit on April 2 Caldwell abruptly closed this disastrous season at the St. Charles. He had recouped some of his heavy losses with the dancer's twelve appearances; the Spirit of the Times of April 3 reported the houses were averaging $2,000 a night. And according to the records of George Holland, Caldwell's treasurer, this average was exactly $2,597.35 for her ten nights, and an additional $3,760 was taken in on the night of her benefit.  

23 Holland Memorial, op. cit., p. 44.
Elssler also received half the proceeds of the benefit for her supporting dancers, Arraline and Sylvain, at which she danced and which amounted to another $2,384. Thus the gross receipts for the twelve nights of her engagement amounted to $32,117.50. According to Holland, Caldwell paid Elssler $10,000 for the ten nights, $3,260 for her share of her benefit, and $1,192 for her half of the benefit for Arraline and Sylvain. The total was $14,453. Caldwell's gross return, then, was $17,664.50. Ludlow was mistaken, therefore, when he said, "It was a profitable engagement for Ellsler [sic], but I doubt if the manager, Mr. Caldwell, made much. 24 But if Ludlow meant to infer that Caldwell had incurred heavy losses over the whole of his season, he was quite correct. Only Tyrone Power and Fanny Elssler had provided him with significant returns at the box office.

The New American Theatre of Ludlow and Smith had proven to be a formidable rival. Even during the Elssler craze the rival managers had suffered very little in attendance. Ludlow ascribes the reason for this to the engagement at the American of the comedienne Fanny Fitzwilliam:

The attraction of Ellsler [sic] at the St. Charles did not injure us at the American, and for the following reason: We had understood from Mrs. Fitzwilliam that she had a play well suited to the condition then existing between the two rival theatres; it was a play entitled "Foreign Airs and Native Graces." In the performance of this play Mrs. F. represented several characters, among them a French danseuse, and in this character she gave

24 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 536.
imitations of Fanny Ellsler [sic] in her different dances, and not bad resemblances either; a little extravagant, perhaps, but far from contemptible. We so arranged the time of commencing this play that it should begin about the time that Ellsler [sic] concluded her dancing each night, and at this time hundreds of persons came to our theatre, which was less than half a block from the St. Charles, in order to enjoy Fanny Fitzwilliam's imitation of the great danseuse. On Ellsler's [sic] first night, there were hundreds of people who could not get into the St. Charles, and the overflow there helped to fill our house.25

In a lengthy essay on March 16, 1841, the Bee offered some astute appraisals of the relative strengths of the rival theatres, as well as some sound advice for Caldwell:

THEATRICALS

The success which the managers of the American Theatre have met with is an evidence that the taste for the legitimate drama is not extinct. True the performance at that establishment have been diversified by exhibitions in the circle, yet we venture to assert that the excess of patronage derived from that source will not much more than defray the additional expense encountered by the managers in engaging the company of equestrians. The American owes its triumph to the intrinsic merit of its stock company, and the earnest good will with which each individual undertakes the part alloted to him. Messrs. LUDLOW & SMITH selected their corps dramatic with much judgment..... They engaged no one decidedly great, nor below mediocrity.... A company thus selected very well repaid the visoter [sic] to the American. If he was not startled by something very great he was sure not to be disgusted by any thing particularly bad. Owing to this general keeping of the performances, the managers got along very well when there was no star to illumine the boards of the American. But Messrs. LUDLOW & SMITH were not content to rest their claims for support upon their stock company. They have brought out a succession of stars, many of whom, by the way, were no better than several of the stock company, and when a novelty was produced, the whole strength of their establishment

was called into requisition to give effect to the performances....Every piece played at that theatre was given with the utmost strength of the corps; whatever could be done for the amusement of the audiences was done; and in 'a very little time the tide of public favor turned towards the American.

At the St. Charles there have also been a number of stars brought out this season; the manager has gone to great expense in catering for the public amusement; but Mr. CALDWELL, we apprehend, relies too much on others in the general conduct of his establishment....When a star appeared, the cast was sure to be bad, the performances worse, and the stage business worst. Mr. CALDWELL, during the few nights he appeared on the boards, had a taste of his company's quality. They did better than usual, too; yet he himself was frequently brought to a stand for the want of support. Had Mr. CALDWELL paid that personal attention to the representations at the St. Charles which his interests require, the audience would not perpetually be offended by such outre sights as an English Lord, and a fop at that, appearing with muddy boots, a soiled shirt and out at the elbows. Such things are every day occurrences. He would have also discovered that his theatre will not be supported whilst the management runs counter to the public taste in keeping perpetually before the audience some five or six players to whom they have, whether justly or not, taken a decided repugnance. We have been told, also, that a rehearsal is seldom gone through at the St. Charles; that the company cannot be brought together to perfect themselves in the conduct of a play. If Mr. CALDWELL will reform his establishment, give to it his personal attention, discard officious and interested advisers, and exercise his own judgment in the management of the St. Charles, he will find his reward in it. The people of New Orleans cannot be insensible to his claims upon them, and they would display their appreciation of his public spirit and enterprise in a tangible form, if it were not a painful operation to witness the butchery nightly perpetrated at the St. Charles. Mr. CALDWELL in an ill-used man; but he has been worse treated by those who feed upon his purse than by the public.

The season is drawing to a close. Our sympathies are all on his side, and we hope that the engagement of FANNY ELSSLER will replenish his coffers. We cannot but regret that the Second Municipality has been so backward in their attendance thus far. Some offence was given in the beginning of this engagement; but Mr. CALDWELL was
not here at the time, and it should be forgotten. At the commencement of the next season, we hope to see Mr. CALDWELL himself, take charge of the Temple.

The irony of this last advice is that Caldwell had, this season, spent less of his time on non-theatrical matters than he had in those years when his monopoly of the theatrical scene was not challenged. The affairs of city government had not occupied his time since his defeat at the polls a year before. Though he had run for the council of the Second Municipality again on April 2, and was elected, this transpired after the close of the theatre season. Parenthetically, the Bee strongly supported Caldwell's candidacy and asked the electorate to forget its "prejudices which originated in overscrupulousness, as the cause of them has been abated," referring to the public revulsion against Caldwell's lottery activities of the previous year. But during the season of 1840-1841 no such controversial activity had engaged his attention. He had acted as chairman of a joint committee of the three municipalities, which undertook the observance of funeral ceremonies for President Harrison the week of May 11, but this was long after the close of the theatre season also. The only activity outside the theatre that may have demanded a considerable portion of Caldwell's time was the

26 New Orleans Bee, April 2, 1841.
27 Ibid., May 11, 1841 and Daily Picayune, May 11, 1841.
ailing New Orleans and Nashville Railroad. The Picayune of February 26 reported that the Louisiana Senate had passed, the day before, a resolution instructing the Attorney-General to seize on the property and effects of the company and sell them for the debt due the state by the corporation. Further legal difficulties for the railroad arose on June 22 when an injunction was laid upon the New Orleans and Nashville at the instance of the Pontchartrain Railroad Company, according to the Picayune of that date.

But, except for these events, many of which were outside the theatre season, Caldwell's record of activity this year is largely restricted to theatrical matters. Moreover, it was chiefly the theatre which necessitated Caldwell's being absent from New Orleans and the St. Charles. The construction and opening of the new theatre which he had built at Mobile, and his reception of a complimentary benefit there, had necessitated Caldwell's journeying to the Alabama city on more than one occasion this season. The first of these visits occurred in September and was noted by the Picayune of September 17, 1840 after an earlier report had appeared in the Mobile Chronicle two days previously:

The foundation stone of our intended theatre will be laid tomorrow evening [September 16], between 4 and 5 o'clock, and it may well be considered the first step towards a revival of prosperity in our long depressed community. The site selected is that formerly intended for the St. Michael street hotel, on Royal street, and is most admirably adapted.
In a little more than a month the walls were up to the first story, and by the end of November the roof was ready to go on, with a January 1 opening anticipated. At Christmas time Caldwell again visited Mobile to give personal supervision to the completion of the work and to attempt to ensure his promise to have the theatre open "simultaneously with the new year." But it was a promise he was unable to keep and the opening was twice postponed, first to January 8 and finally to January 11, 1841. On that night the bill included J. S. Browne's performance as Rover in the play *Wild Oats* and an opening address recited by Mrs. Stuart, according to the *Spirit of the Times* of January 30, 1841. This paper also noted that the Chapman company, which had been playing at the Alhambra Theatre, had been incorporated into Caldwell's company, the remainder of which was made up of performers sent from the St. Charles in New Orleans. The prize address, which the *Spirit of the Times* printed, had been written by Matt Field. Field was the brother of the talented J. M. Field--also a writer of poetry of a jocular nature, and a journalist, in addition to being an actor.

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28 Daily Picayune, October 24, 1840.
29 Ibid., November 28, 1840.
30 New York Spirit of the Times, January 9, 1841.
31 Daily Picayune, January 10, 1841.
Matt Field was to become the son-in-law of Noah Ludlow shortly after this time. Like his brother's poem, which won the contest in conjunction with the Caldwell Complimentary Benefit at New Orleans some weeks later, "Phazma"—as Matt Field signed himself when writing in the pages of the Picayune—chose for his theme the concurrent low states of theatricals and business conditions of the day, but he offered a hope for the improvement of both. The poem concluded with these lines:

Behold again our noble city rise!
Again proud Commerce throngs the busy mart,
And welcome bids to science and to art.
Again glad sunbeams cheer a prosperous land,
And here again the Drama takes its stand!
Here shall once more Shakespearian strains arise,
Our hours to cheer our hearts to harmonize.
Strangers and visitors, from far and near,
To fair Mobile, shall nightly gather here;
And thus full soon our presence will be found
A lively influence to spread around;
As, when a falling stone smooth water break,
Increasing circles widen o'er the lake.
Thus shall the Drama lend its power to heal
The wounds of once more prosperous Mobile!

The theatre which Caldwell had constructed was described by the Mobile Chronicle and Advertiser as follows:

Our New Theatre, which is to be opened this evening, stands on the west side of Royal street, between St. Michael and St. Louis, on the site of the intended St. Michael's Hotel.---Its width is 66½ feet, and its depth 120 feet. The front is formed of six Doric pilasters, supporting a Grecian pediment head; and the height, from the ground to the apex of the gable, is 64½ feet. The entrance is effected through five spacious doors, leading into a vestibule 20 feet wide--

32 As reprinted in the Daily Picayune, January 15, 1841 and Spirit of the Times, loc. cit.
the southern end of which is appropriated for the box office, and at the northern extremity is the winding stairway leading to the gallery. In the center is a spacious opening leading to the pit, parquette, and bainnoirs, while on either side is a wide flight of steps forming the ingress to the boxes. The shape of the interior is a perfect semicircle, a form which brings the audience into a more agreeable proximity with the stage than does the usual elongated segment, and thus the nicer shades of expression, and more delicate tones the voice in which so much of the beauty of good acting lies, will be more equally distinct to every spectator.

The pit seats are covered and cushioned, and on each side is a range of 'lodges' or pit boxes, for private parties. Above these again is the dress circle, with a lock and key to every box, so that a party of family will be as uninterrupted as though seated in their own parlor. Over these is the second circle, and surmounting this again is the third tier and galleries.—Above the vestibule and attached to the circles of boxes, each of which has a spacious and handsome lobby, are two elegant saloons 55 feet long and 20 feet wide. The extreme capacity of the Theatre has been thus estimated, allowing the customary space for each spectator: Pit and pit boxes, etc., 350; first tier 320; second tier 450; proscenium boxes 48; third tier and galleries 700—making in all a total of 1878. The proscenium arch is supported by four handsome columns having elegant Corinthian caps, and surmounted by a bold Grecian cornice. The stage is 50 feet deep and extends the whole width of the house, affording unusual capabilities for scenic display. The whole is brilliantly lighted with gas, and its form and size makes it one of the most suitable Theatres in the Union for the perfect enjoyment of a play.

The stars of the St. Charles were, of course, dispatched to Mobile during the season to fill brief engagements in Caldwell's theatre there. January saw the appearances of Power and Dan Marble, and in February Ranger, who had

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33 Spirit of the Times, loc. cit.
34 Daily Picayune, January 28, 1841.
had a poor reception in New Orleans, played a Mobile engagement in a theatre "well filled, frequently crowded."\(^{35}\) But Caldwell's Nemeses, Ludlow and Smith, pursued him even unto Mobile. On February 18, the partners opened their "Swamp Theatre" where they presented Fanny Fitzwilliam in opposition to Ranger playing at Caldwell's theatre.\(^{36}\) Caldwell, to counter this attraction, paid another visit to Mobile to star at his own theatre during the first two weeks of March. He played his favorite roles of Gossamer on March 1, Vapid on the 2nd, Belcour on the 6th, and the Duke Aranza on the 8th.\(^{37}\) The March 6 performance was offered as a complimentary benefit to the Mobile Fire Department.\(^{38}\) Caldwell was himself the recipient of another Complimentary Benefit on March 12.\(^{39}\) The Bee of March 15 reported the event for its New Orleans readers as follows:

\begin{quote}
THE CALDWELL BENEFIT at Mobile went off finely. The Advertiser says:--The most brilliant audience yet seen within the walls of the new Theatre was assembled in it last night on the occasion of the complimentary benefit of Mr. James H. Caldwell. We were indeed gratified to find our citizens respond so nobly to the many claims this gentleman
\end{quote}

\(^{35}\) Ibid., February 10, 1841.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., February 18, 1841. Cf., also, Smith, op. cit., p. 157.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 277. Cf., New Orleans Bee, March 8, 1841.

has upon their good opinion, and we are fully persuaded the audience were just as pleased in their turn! The brilliance of the scene and the good humor of the immense crowd that thronged the theatre above and below, seemed absolutely contagious, for the actors and actresses must certainly have caught it—they played with such unexampled spirit. The comedy of the "School for Scandal"—one of the richest in the language—was acted admirably throughout;—indeed so generally as to leave us nothing to say about it but a general expression of unqualified approval. From his entrance in the third act, to the end of the play, Mr. Caldwell was greeted with every expression of warm regard from the closely-packed crowd; and at the finish of the comedy was obliged, in compliance with the public wish to reappear. We have no time even to sketch his remarks, but they were short, to the purpose, and warmly reciprocated.

According to Ludlow, Fanny Fitzwilliam's stay in Mobile was for two weeks, which means that beginning after mid-February it extended into competition with Caldwell's appearance at his theatre. She had accepted this Mobile engagement, according to Sol Smith, "very cheerfully.....in consequence of Mr. Caldwell having failed to accede to what she thought reasonable terms for performing at his new Mobile Theatre." Caldwell had many occasions during this year, in addition to this present instance, to regard Mrs. Fitzwilliam as a particular thorn in his already sorely afflicted side. There was some bad feeling between the actress and manager immediately upon her arrival in New Orleans. Ludlow claims she had come to perform at the St. Charles, had a misunderstanding with

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40 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 538.
41 Smith, op. cit., p. 156.
Caldwell, and applied for an engagement at his New American Theatre. If he ever learned of it, it must have been painful to Caldwell to know that the managers of that theatre netted $20,000 this season, no small part of which amount was a result of Mrs. Fitzwilliam's popularity. And it must further have galled Caldwell to see John Baldwin Buckstone, after a week's miserable failure at the St. Charles, perform four profitable weeks opposite Mrs. Fitzwilliam at the Poydras Street Theatre. The final humiliation to Caldwell came near the close of the season at the New American. Some gentlemen of the city wished to get up a benefit for the popular actor Henry G. Pearson, a regular in the St. Charles stock company. They applied to both Buckstone and Mrs. Fitzwilliam, who signified their pleasure in acting on the occasion. The committee wished the benefit to take place at the St. Charles, but Mrs. Fitzwilliam refused to act there, no doubt out of resentment at Caldwell, so the affair was held at the smaller American on May 13, two nights after the close of the regular season there. Caldwell kept his Mobile Theatre open until May 5 when, with a benefit for Barton, the season was ended.

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43 Spirit of the Times, May 29, 1841.
44 Ibid.
45 Bailey, op. cit., p. 284.
Most of the St. Charles company had been transferred to Mobile for the month following the close of the New Orleans establishment, and many of their names figure in the bills of the Mobile Theatre during this period. There is no evidence to dispute the Picayune's declaration of May 4, 1841, that Caldwell's Mobile season had been a successful one.

Seemingly undismayed by the disasters of the theatrical year just past, James Caldwell launched himself into a whirlwind of activity during the summer of 1841. Holland, Sloman and Barton were dispatched to New York to secure talent for both the Mobile and New Orleans theatres. During the month of June, Caldwell undertook to get his own affairs in order so as to be able to leave on a trip himself. One of his tasks was to initiate the completion of the construction of the Mobile Theatre. The interior portions of it had remained in an unfinished state all year due to the haste with which the theatre had been opened after the roof was raised. During the summer Caldwell set out to complete it in "most elegant style" according to plans described by the correspondent to the Spirit of the Times of July 24:

The entire fronts of the boxes will be lowered, so as to enable the fascinating belles of that spirited city to see and be seen with greater

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46 Ibid., pp. 281-84.
effect. The seats, also, both in the boxes and in the pit, are to be raised and provided with cushioned backs, to the manifest ease of the loungers, while the springs to be added to the doors of the upper tiers will prevent any sound entering the house from the street or lobbies. Elegant private boxes are to be added above and the loges below to be handsomely fitted up. One of the prominent features of the next season, will be the "ballet opera" to be done in a style not hitherto seen in Mobile.

Caldwell's reason for his removal from New Orleans during the summer was explained in the following item which appeared in the Picayune on June 17:

Our esteemed fellow citizen, Alderman James H. Caldwell, is about to visit Cincinnati, the scene of his triumphs in earlier days. Mr. Caldwell, some years ago, expended fifty or sixty thousand dollars in the Queen City, for the purpose of sustaining the legitimate drama in its purity and strength, for which he never received any adequate return. With an energy characteristic of the man, it is his intention to try his luck once more. He goes prepared, we believe, to make a proposition to light Cincinnati with gas, a measure for which the citizens of that city have long been prepared—although they have never been able to fix it in a manner to suit them. It is not at all improbable, either, that a beautiful and imposing edifice may "rise like an exhalation" from the unsightly ruins of the old theatre, on the corner of Third street and Broadway, We wish him a pleasant and successful trip.

The Picayune's optimism with regard to another Cincinnati Theatre rising Phoenix-like from the ashes of the old proved to be misplaced, although Caldwell may have entertained some notion of the possibility of re-establishing his northern theatrical circuit, since he also visited Louisville on this trip. But a gas lighting company

48Daily Picayune, August 4, 1841.
was the prime object of his trip, and a gas lighting company was created. On June 30 the Picayune reported that the city council of Cincinnati had passed an ordinance conferring the exclusive right upon James F. Conover, Esquire, for lighting the city with gas. Conover was identified as the former editor of the Cincinnati Whig and a "clever fellow in every sense of the phrase." During his Cincinnati visit Caldwell evidently worked out the details of an agreement, which he and Conover signed in the following January, creating the Cincinnati Gaslight and Coke Company.\(^4^9\) The company actually had been incorporated by the Ohio Legislature in 1837, but Conover recently had purchased all 1,000 shares of the company for $100,000. When they formed their partnership in January, Caldwell agreed to take 500 of the shares, but to advance the entire capital of $100,000 in order to enable the company to comply with a city ordinance requiring them to lay, within two years, 6,000 feet of leading pipe and 4,000 feet annually thereafter. Thus, Caldwell was providing sufficient working capital to enable the corporation immediately to comply with the city's requirements. Caldwell was to receive five per cent interest on this advance, to be paid out of Conover's share of the profits, except that Conover would be allowed to keep $1,000 a year profit over and above his salary of $2,000 the first year and $3,000 a year thereafter.

as President of the company. This profit was to be allowed him only if the profits were above $2,000 a year. Conover's stock was pledged as security for the loan and would be released at the rate of one share for each $100 he repaid. Caldwell, at the time of the agreement, already had advanced $1,000, another draft for $250, and had furnished—probably from his Mobile gas works—a station meter valued at $934.

Caldwell provided part of this loan by authorizing Conover to sell for him the property at Broadway and Third streets, the site of the former New Cincinnati Theatre, and to collect notes from a Miss Wright in the amount of $10,000. Failure of Caldwell to meet the terms of the agreement was to mean forfeiture of the money he had advanced; failure of Conover was to mean forfeiture of his pledged stock. Caldwell's title was to be Director and Manager and he was to have equal power with Conover when in Cincinnati but to draw no salary.

Cincinnati was not the only site of Caldwell's business activity this summer. Before he left New Orleans, he signed powers-of-attorney in favor of two business associates which enabled them to conclude important contracts during his absence. The first of these was made in favor of James Forster, the man who had been the lessee of the Camp Street Theatre during its brief and infamous history as a ballroom. Forster was authorized by Caldwell, as of June 20, 1841, "to act as my agent in all matters connected
with the renewal of my notes coming due,—to receive, receipt for and pay monies & to settle & adjust such matters as are in dispute before the petty courts." On July 23, Forster exercised this right in purchasing for Caldwell, and for Charles A. Luzenberg, the newspaper *The True American* from Thomas Wharton Collens for $2,565, thus finally giving some substance to the often-voiced charge that this paper was strongly pro-Caldwell.

The other legal instrument which Caldwell executed before his departure for Cincinnati was a power-of-attorney in favor of Levi Peirce, with whom he had been associated previously in the purchase of real estate. This instrument was specific in its intent: Peirce was empowered to sell to the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company the St. Charles Theatre, the St. Charles Arcade, and a piece of property forming the corner of Camp and Natchez Streets. This transaction, which took place on July 12, 1841, is a fair indication of the straitened circumstances in which James Caldwell found himself this summer. This becomes even more evident when it is realized that the sale of this property, in which Caldwell had invested so much money and which represented so many of his dreams

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and aspirations, was not entirely the result of his own free will. The preamble to the act of sale declared, in part, that "Caldwell is indebted in a large sum to the New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company...for money loaned to him; and... an arrangement has been entered into by which his said debt or a large portion thereof, is to be paid by a transfer of Real Estate to the said Institution." The details of this transfer were then set forth. The Bank would not agree to purchase the two lots at the corner of Camp and Natchez streets, so the contract was made for the Theatre and Arcade buildings and their respective lots, only. The mortgages already held against these properties were listed in the act of sale. The figure was staggering—over $175,000. This sum represented two separate mortgages to the Gas Bank for $40,000 and $50,000, a mortgage to the City Bank for $60,000, now reduced to $36,950, and the original mortgage to S. B. Davis for $18,000. Additionally, there were two other previous mortgages for $20,000 and $800 respectively, and five general mortgages against Caldwell made as the result of various court actions. One was in connection with the Caldwell, Oakley and Pritchard lottery, and another in connection with the New Orleans and Nashville Railroad. The total of these last five mortgages was about $11,000.

53 Ibid., July 12, 1841.
The sale was made for $206,000, but the refusal of the Gas Bank to purchase the Camp and Natchez lots reduced the total figure to about $161,000. For Caldwell, most of the purchase price was eaten up in the assumption of his debts to the Gas Bank, and others, and the balance was used to pay some interest due on his loan from the City Bank whose mortgage the Gas Bank did not assume. The remainder of the balance was applied as a credit on notes Caldwell had given as payment for stock in the Gas Light and Banking Company, notes now long outstanding. The net consequence of the sale to Caldwell was that he received no cash from the transaction, and, furthermore, he was required to clear up about $14,000 in other mortgages before the credit on his stock notes would be entered. He was given twelve months to do this. He was also given an option to repurchase the St. Charles Theatre property in three years at a price of $100,000 for $25,000 cash and the balance in notes due in one, two, and three years bearing seven per cent interest. In the meantime, Caldwell was given a lease on the St. Charles Theatre for three years at an annual rent of $12,000 with an allowance of up to $2,000 a year for necessary repairs to be deducted from the rent.

And thus the ownership of the great St. Charles, the Temple to the Drama, passed from the hands of James H. Caldwell. He was never to regain possession of it, and his loss of it was one more evidence of the weakening of
his once powerful grasp on reins which had guided and controlled New Orleans' theatrical fortunes for more than twenty years.

Caldwell returned to the city sometime in the late summer—in time to announce himself as a candidate for one of three seats in the state legislature to be filled from Orleans Parish in the September elections. Whether he ran as a Whig, or as an independent, it was with no success to himself. In a field of nine candidates Caldwell finished eighth. The Bee of September 4, analyzing the vote, called the result an "admonition to the Whigs." Said the Bee:

They ought to have elected an entire ticket, instead of frittering their votes on seven or eight candidates, and suffering their adversaries to run in one locofoco by plumpers. Had certain individuals calling themselves whigs acted as such, this untoward event would not have occurred. We are glad to see the candidates who ran on their own hook rebuked by insignificant votes.

It may have been that the Bee included Caldwell in this last group.

The severe losses he had sustained in the preceding season as a result of the energetic competition which Ludlow and Smith had offered, determined Caldwell to undertake a more vigorous campaign against his rivals in the new season. Not having had a summer season in another city, Caldwell was again able to begin the New Orleans season ahead of his competitors. He also decided this year to fight fire with fire, or, more accurately, horseflesh with horseflesh. His pre-season announcements
indicated that he planned, for the first six weeks of the season, to dedicate the Temple to amphitheatrical performances "in the style of the celebrated Astley," the famous London establishment noted for its production of such spectacles. It was reported by the Picayune of October 8, that the celebrated Levi North, Otto Motty, and the troupe of Fogg and Stickney had been engaged for the St. Charles. The employment of the latter aggregation was a decided risk of Caldwell's part, since both Ludlow and Smith admit in their respective autobiographies that the troupe the previous season had cost them in excess of $9,000, and had not added anything to their revenues beyond what they might have expected without the equestrians. The Picayune further reported as engaged Herr Cline, the rope dancer, and Mlle. Romanini, "whose performances on the slack wire have created considerable sensation in the Northern theatrical circles." All of the papers seemed to agree that Caldwell was making great efforts and expending huge sums in his attempts to satisfy the public, but the Spirit of the Times of November 6 could not help but comment, "Only to think that the sacred boards of the Temple, which had been trodden by the Divine Fanny, and which had been consecrated for the sole use of biped representatives of the 'legitimate,' should be desecrated by illegitimate quadrupeds!"

^54 New Orleans Bee, October 4, 1841.

But, as will be seen, Caldwell may have had another motive in sating the public with horse spectacles during the first months of the season.

The St. Charles was opened on October 25, 1841, to "a tolerable house," as seen by the Bee of the 27th. The first night audience found that the huge stage had been converted into an arena, leaving the pit intact. During the summer other "highly tasteful and elegant" alterations had been made to the theatre's interior. The Bee of the 25th reported "the heavy curtains which draped the triple row of boxes, have been removed, and the crimson painting in front has been replaced by a pure white with light gilded ornaments eminently beautiful and elegant." "The rich, massive and somewhat heavy coup d'oeuil," said the Bee, "will now be relieved by an airy and graceful appearance, less grand and gorgeous it may be, but more pleasing to the eye." The Bee also noted improvements in the lighting of the theatre, gas lights being added to the dress circle, and the burners of the central chandelier placed "with a view to diffuse a more extended brilliancy." The seats in the pit had had their annual recushioning.

Non-dramatic fare, coupled with standard farces, was the offering of the St. Charles through most of the first two months of the season. This diet was relieved in November when Miss Blanche Kemble, grandniece of John Kemble, was briefly starred, although Miss Kemble had come not as a star but as a regular member of the stock company.
similar situation occurred upon the arrival of George Barrett later in the month. The first genuine star was James Hackett, who began an engagement on December 6, playing his popular role of Falstaff in Henry IV, and then resorting to his Yankee roles for the remainder of his stay. On December 13, Hackett departed for the Mobile Theatre, which Caldwell had opened on November 6, and the horse spectacles at the St. Charles were resumed. On December 12, Caldwell produced the New Orleans premier performance of Dion Boucicault’s new play London Assurance, which proved so popular that both the St. Charles and the American repeated it frequently during the season. The Picayune of December 22 declared itself particularly pleased with the manner in which the play had been brought out at the St. Charles, noting that "the production of the piece had evidently occupied the close attention of the management, and any further lavish ostentation in these times might very possibly please the public, without greatly benefitting the treasury."

Equestrian performances continued through the remainder of December until the arrival of Dan Marble from Mobile in early January, at which time the Fogg and Stickney troupe transported the horses to the Mobile Theatre. Caldwell well may have accomplished what he desired in producing

56 Daily Picayune, December 6, 1841.
57 Baily, op. cit., p. 284.
so many equestrian novelties, if a correspondent to the 
**Spirit of the Times** of January 15, 1842 is correct in his 
opinions concerning Caldwell's "desecration" of the Temple 
with horseflesh:

Now for the **San Carlos**, that magnificent monument of CALDWELL'S genius and taste. The first few 
weeks of the season was /sic/ rather unpropitious, 
for the management, in consequence of the pesti­
ience, which was still lurking amongst us, and the 
great scarcity of the lateral lucrative amongst 
that portion of our floating population, who are 
in the habit of patronizing the drama, and for whose 
vitiated appetite for blue lights and thunder, tight 
ropes and tinsel, flying Indians, and Jim-along­
Jenny, the manager had been induced, at a heavy 
expense, to engage all the available talent in this 
line of the profession. If there be virtue in 
perseverance, he should deserve their thanks for 
the nocturnal doses which were so copiously adminis­
tered, ad nauseam, and which, I think, has had the 
desirable effect of producing--what the manager was 
aiming at--a reaction in favor of the legitimate 
drama, and inducing the resident population to 
"come to the rescue," and aid him in his efforts 
to preserve from pollution that splendid temple, 
which had been dedicated by him for the effusions 
of those gems of the mind, which in by-gone days 
were listened to with pleasure and instruction, 
rather than those classic contortions of india­
rubber artists, or the sparkling wit of a star 
clown, engaged for "a few nights, at a heavy ex­
 pense."

PROFILE.

This same correspondent reported that "Ludlow and Smith are 
doing a very fair business, considering the times." They 
had opened the New American on November 20.\(^\text{58}\) This season 
Ludlow and Smith intermittently pursued a policy with 
which they had had considerable success the preceding year. 
Unable to match the pretensions of the great St. Charles,

\(^\text{58}\) *Daily Picayune*, November 19, 1841.
they sought either to imitate it or to ridicule it. Frequently they would rush into production the same play which the St. Charles had announced, as for example, their simultaneous production of Henry IV, during Hackett's engagement, or their bringing out of London Assurance the night following its initial production at the St. Charles. But Ludlow and Smith had even greater success with burlesque. Since Fanny Fitzwilliam had provided Ludlow and Smith with their best audiences of the previous year with her caricaturing of the renowned Fanny Elssler, the managers hoped to repeat their success this season by burlesqueing some of the more pretentious attractions of the St. Charles. Thus, during the month of January when Caldwell, with the combined talents of the Seguins, Manvers, Madame Thielman and other singers, was presenting such operas as Norma, Cinderella, La Sonnambula, Fa Diavolo, Zampa, and La Gazza Ladra, the American brought forth the travesty written by J. M. Field, Schinder El'ler, and the burlesque of La Sonnambula entitled The Roof Scrambler.

This introduction of opera into a season which up to this point had been of little substance netted Caldwell considerable praise by the press of the city. The performance of Norma was described by the Picayune of January 6 as "a theatrical triumph," and the Bee of the 7th said:

It is the merest justice to award unqualified praise to the Manager, for the admirable, complete and effective manner in which the appointments of the opera were produced. The chorus was powerful, generally correct and carefully disciplined. The
Orchestra...accomplished its arduous task to the entire satisfaction of the audience. The scenery and dresses were tasteful and appropriate.

This performance was not without fault, however, since the *Picayune* of the 7th felt constrained to ask, "Have they a prompter at the St. Charles?...Where was he on Wednesday night when one of the fair vocalists was compelled to walk forward to the footlights and request the leader to give her the words?" But on the third representation of *Norma*, the *Bee* could report "not only a vast improvement perceptible in the three principal roles, but the chorus was more at home and more perfect." And on January 9, the *Picayune* wrote with enthusiasm:

Nothing has recently produced more delight among the true friends of elevated theatrical performance, than the production of opera at the St. Charles; and we are among those who rejoice to see a man of James H. Caldwell's reaching enterprise and expanded liberality bearing up with enduring constancy against the fickle wind of adverse circumstances, until at last he triumphantly grasps success....The St. Charles treasury will prove a pleasant witness to the proprietor that his hazardous and expensive endeavors in favor of opera are not only evidently appreciated, but are sure of corresponding reward.

Throughout the remainder of January the St. Charles was a popular resort, what with opera alternating with the Yankee portrayals of Dan Marble. The strong talents of J. S. Browne and Mrs. Stuart, who had been added to the stock company, permitted the production of good comedies as well. The *Bee* of February 10, with some satisfaction, called attention to these improvements:
The performances at this establishment are of a superior character. The legitimate drama is now ably sustained upon the boards of the Temple. Some of the most sterling comedies are in course of representation, with powerful casts and "appliances to boot."

However, the opera performers could not be re-engaged. In early February they departed for Mobile where, after a two week engagement, they were compelled to hasten on to a scheduled engagement at Charleston.

But opera, Caldwell had long before decided, must be the one area in which Ludlow and Smith could not successfully challenge him. The previous season he had desperately sought to engage the Havana opera for the period following Fanny Elssler's departure. He had instructed Tyrone Power, while the latter was in Havana negotiating with Elssler in March, to propose to the Italian Opera of that city that they rent the St. Charles during the late spring. Caldwell offered them the theatre, scenery, etc. for $1,000 a week, or six weeks for $5,000, from May 1 to July 1, with a rent-free week for rehearsals and the cost of lighting the theatre to be borne by them. Although in his instructions to Power, Caldwell declined to entertain any counter offers, he seemed confident enough of the acceptability of his proposition to advertise in the Picayune of February 9, 1841 for chorus singers. But as

60Daily Picayune, February 1, 1842.
it turned out Power was unable to conclude an agreement with Martí y Torrens, so Caldwell sent another agent to Cuba, this time with "a carte blanche to bring them over," according to the Picayune of April 4, 1841. But the Spirit of the Times of May 1, 1841, indicated that he was too late--the Italian Opera had, four days before the arrival of the emissary, engaged to go to Matanzas in Mexico, and the St. Charles was forced to remain closed from April 2.

This season 1841-1842, however, Caldwell had made his arrangements for the opera early. The manager of the troupe, Francisco Martí y Torrens, announced the first performance in the pages of the Bee of February 21, 1842, for the following night. In making his announcement the opera manager stated, "Notwithstanding the enormous expense of transporting such a company....with orchestra, chorus, etc.,...still, being determined to study the wishes of the public, he, the manager, has made the prices in the following way--Boxes and Parquet $1.50. Amphitheatre and Pit $1. Gallery 50 cents." To prevent speculation on tickets no places could be secured for more than one night at a time.

Donizetti's Marino Faliero inaugurated the opera season and played to a theatre "crowded to its utmost limits," as the Bee of the 24th recorded. The troupe played four times weekly--Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday--performing, in addition to the début opera, Beatrice di Tenda, Lucia di Lammermoor and Chiari di Rosenberg. Good
houses prevailed at every performance; The *Picayune* of March 1 even complained that the theatre was too crowded the previous Sunday: "We could enjoy nothing, on ac­count of the closeness and absolutely unbearable want of room." And the *Spirit of the Times* of March 26, in a communication datelined March 7 from New Orleans, predicted that Fanny Elssler, who was daily expected at the French Theatre, "will run afoul a snag if the opera is in blast."

But the anticipations of a competition between opera and ballet were never put to the test. On March 13, 1842 the St. Charles Theatre was destroyed by fire.

From the vantage point of his nearby office, the editor of the *Daily Picayune* had a good opportunity to record the destruction of the St. Charles and his account of March 15 describes the holocaust as follows:

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**Burning of the St. Charles**

Our gorgeous Temple of the Drama is gone!—Never have we sat down to record an event, the contemplation of which, could so deeply move us. The St. Charles Theatre has vanished in smoke and flame, and all that is now left of that proud building are the towering walls, majestic still in desolation and in ruin.

A small, back work-shop of Mrs. Quirk & Sons, situated close under the rear windows of the Theatre, burst into flames between six and seven o'clock, on Sunday evening; and those who were earliest on the

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62 There is some confusion about the precise origin of the fire. In another place in this issue, the *Picayune* corrected itself and said it had subsequently learned that the flames had not originated in Mrs. Quirk's coffin factory, but in an adjoining small kitchen. The *Spirit of the Times* of March 26, 1842 says the fire was first discovered in "a shed and stable," in the rear of this establishment, which adjoined the rear of the St. Charles.
spot, scarcely dreamed but that the arrival of a single engine would put a stop to the destruction, with the loss only of the little building then on fire. None could anticipate the terrible disaster about to take place. But by the time that fire bells and engines were in motion, the subtile element had lashed the wall of the theatre, and struck into a window, of the paint room! The very spot, of all others about the building, to welcome the entrance of the flame. This is the greatest example on record showing the utility of iron shutters! The fire, darted like a mad fiend in among the paint and oil, gathering such frantic strength in three minutes, as to startle away in consternation all who ventured an effort at opposition. It seized upon the scenery, and away it went, ranging, with the rapidity of a powder explosion, around the whole interior, of the stage section of the Theatre. It seemed that the fire peeped from the rear eaves of the Theatre in five minutes after the first straggling flame kissed the window sill and flashed into the paint room.  

On then the destruction proceeded, raging to the front, and presenting to the empty benches a spectacle of frightful grandeur such as few will ever forget, who peeped in as we did at the pit lobby, to view. We passed the door without registering our name as usual among the visitors of courtesy, and looked upon the grand closing scene of the Temple. We have ever respected, honored and esteemed James H. Caldwell, but from the flames of this terrible calamity we acknowledge the lighting up of a warmer sympathy than we ever knew before. We doubt whether the remainder of the present century can present society with one who shall fill the place of Caldwell in maintenance of the Drama. But we are premature in casting a thought forward for a substitute. He is the same energetic and public-spirited citizen still; and, that heap of ruins in St. Charles street seems already in motion with a Phoenix, as we endite his name.

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63 Apparently there were some assertions that the theatre could have been saved and that the fire companies acted inefficiently. The Bee of March 15, 1842 contested these statements, stating that "the mode in which the St. Charles was constructed, offering no access to the theatre and no open space for the working of the engines, effectually impeded and embarrassed the operations of the companies."
The account of the Bee of March 14 gives a further graphic description of the progress of the flames at this point:

When we got to the fire, the flames were beating with terrible fury against the gable end of the St. Charles and confined within an angle made by the theatre and the building which extends from it to the Camp Street arcade; ascended above the roof.--The windows of the Theatre were first to take fire. The engines by this time were numerous on the ground, and from the activity of the firemen, hopes were yet entertained that the noble pile would be rescued. For more than ten minutes the assembled multitude witnessed with breathless expectation the struggle between the firemen and the flames for the splendid prize. Hope and fear alternately agitated every bosom. After a short space a slight smoke issued from one of the windows of the upper story, giving dreadful omen of the appalling spectacle soon to follow. It ceased a while and hope again revived. But for how short a time. The smoke again curled in the air out of first one window, then another, when the flames burst forth with the suddenness of lightning, from end to end of the devoted building. It is not possible to describe the thrill of horror that shook the mass of spectators when the terrible truth was revealed that the St. Charles was thoroughly on fire. With an amazing rapidity the destructive element, as if to avenge the opposition to its ravages, wrapped the whole building--the flames in iambent ecstasy/sic/encircling the flag, the entire roof, rejoicing in its vast and splendid prey.

The flag which the Bee mentions was not that which had been created after the salvation of the St. Charles from fire three years before, and which had been presented to one of the fire companies by the theatre. But, by an odd coincidence, this flag, too, was consumed by the

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64 Supra, pp. 397-400.
65 Daily Picayune, March 5, 1840.
flames, as the *Picayune* discovered:

> It is something deserving of notice, that the beautiful silken banner, painted by Mandelli [sic], representing the St. Charles, as once before, in flames—was in the wardrobe, and made a delicate morceau of fuel, among the rest. The fire company, owning the banner, had lent it on the occasion of Mr. Holland's benefit, and it had not been removed. Now let the Company replace it with a piece of silk commemorating one of the most remarkable events that ever astonished New Orleans.

The Bee's account of the fire continued:

> The inflammable workmanship of the interior; the paints, scenery, oils and other combustibles contributed to a spectacle fearfully sublime. The smoke, black as midnight, rolled in dense and massy clouds above, whilst columns of flame would force their way in their midst. A more terrible sight it has never been our lot to witness. Light and darkness seemed contending for mastery in the heavens; but both the light and the darkness sprung from the desolation that was going on below. We gazed in mute amazement of the terrific sight, until the colossal statue of Tragedy, which adorned the front of the building caught on fire, and the mask of her dramatic sister Comedy, was likewise in flames. The entire figures were in a complete blaze, and objects of singular interest. From the extended arm of Tragedy the fire glowed with surprising effect. When the blaze died away, after having consumed the outer painting, her hands were a coal of fire, red as Lady Macbeth's after dipping hers in the blood of Duncan; whilst the face of Comedy was as Lady Teazle, when discovered in the apartments of Joseph Surface. They were the last mementos of the exquisite and sublime representations, we had witnessed in the Temple; and when they fell from their pedestals, we turned with a moist eye and heaving bosom—we had witnessed the last scene of the St. Charles. The curtain had fallen to rise no more, and the glory of the Drama had vanished forever.

Matthew Field, the "Phazma" of the *Picayune*, gave his own poetical account of the disaster in the March 23 edition of that paper:
"Twas in the stillness of a Sabbath even--
A Sabbath even of a southern spring--
When the soft twilight of a peaceful heaven
Was into starry ether vanishing;
"Twas at the hour when forth were issuing
Mock worshippers to seek the house of pray'r,
Who could have fancied that an angel's wing,
Invisible, gave motion to the air,
So calm were earth and sky--so beautiful and fair.

And on the silence of that holy time
Broke suddenly the warning cry of "Fire!"--
As swift to heaven's canopy sublime
A lurid flash each moment mounted higher!
In rapid accents then the iron crier
Peal'd forth alarm from every belfry high,
Searching the air as if in tones of ire,
Bidding the tardy speed, the swift to fly,
While furious din usurp'd the gentle calm gone by.

Swift even as the headling darting flame,
Like an embracing fiend enwreath'd its prey,
So, round the startled city ran the name.
Of the doom'd structure vanishing away.
Forth, then, as night absorb'd the ev'ning grey,
Throng'd the whole people of the Crescent Queen,
Choking the broad ways with a dense array!
While back from heaven came reflected sheen,
As if the day gone by return'd to view the scene.

Still swell'd the thickening multitude aroun--
Doors, windows, house-tops, steeples were alive
As the dense mass burst upward from the ground,
With wild commotion of a human hive.
Each spot of view for one was sought by five,
With that bold selfishness no teaching tames; Those farthest to be nearest still would strive
All restless with equality of claims
While in the center stood the great St. Charles, in flames!

The gorgeous TEMPLE vanishing in fire.
Away resplendently to ether speeding!
While still 'twas trembling terror to admire
A spectacle of grandeur exceeding!
O! Monster Flame!--"Twas a luxurious feeding!--
A costly supper for a hungry fiend!
Go hence now, gorged, and from thy future needing
Let New Orleans be in safety screen'd.
Task'd now enough to be from fear and danger clean'd!
Hark!— 'Tis the crashing of the chandelier,
That to the gulf of flame beneath descends!
The tall roof wavers like a thing in fear--
A sea of fire rolls o'er it as it bends--
The walls grow red as downward still it tends--
The mighty crowd is heartless--now once more
The earth around is shaken, as it lends
Terrific wildness to the human roar,
That rends the welkin as the ceiling seeks the floor.

The stars went pale and vanish'd, as that sheet
Of livid flame shot onward to the sky;
And the dense thro'ng press'd backward from the heat
Struggling in vain, though furiously, to fly!
Another crash!--O, hark!--a human cry
Starts shrilly, fearfully and wildly brief,
As though the shriek did with the victim die!
Cut off--0! pitiful and bitter grief!
With but that hopeless cry, from life and all relief!

In silent eloquence the painful story
Those broken walls and smouldering ruins tell--
Closing in flame an envied reign of glory,
How the great TEMPLE OF THE DRAMA fell!
Muses are mourners and their wailings swell
In plaintive harmonies, by zephyr fann'd,
Mingling with echoes of the parting knell,
And haunting where the Temple used to stand--
Boast of the sunny south!—pride of the western land!

The destruction of the St. Charles Theatre and The
Arcade and Baths was total. Some of the walls of the build-
ings remained intact and, in the next few days following
the fire, Caldwell had them surveyed and declared them to
be safe, but the following August it was necessary to
pull the tottering walls of the St. Charles theatre and
Camp street arcade down, according to the Picayune of
August 23. The little Camp Street Theatre had only nar-
rrowly missed being included in the destruction. It was
not buried, but it received considerable damage from the

66Daily Picayune, March 17, 1842.
falling walls of the Arcade. Its days were numbered, however, for on September 23 of this year it, too, was nearly demolished by fire.

Falling brick had accounted for the death to which "Phazma" alludes in his poem; a fireman was crushed to death in Arcade Alley when a brick wall collapsed on him. Several other firemen were seriously injured. But the loss of life could have been astronomical had the theatre been occupied at the time. As the Spirit of the Times stated on the 26th, "Had the catastrophe happened two hours later, God only knows what the consequences might have been."

There were other losses. The New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company was the principal material sufferer, of course, since it now owned both of the properties which were utterly destroyed. Moreover, insurance coverage of the buildings was negligible: The Bee estimated it at $60,000, but the Picayune's figure of $65,000 was probably more accurate, since the paper recounted the amounts of the several policies issued by three different insurance companies and its figure represented their total. Caldwell was estimated to have lost $70,000, "a low val-

67 Ibid., March 15, 1842.
68 New Orleans Bee, March 14 and 15, 1842.
69 Daily Picayune, loc. cit.
uation," in scenery, decorations, the chandeliers, fittings, etc. There were many other losses which, while minor when compared to the cost of the buildings, were nonetheless total and devastating to the individuals who suffered them. Members of the stock company lost their stage wardrobes and other personal possessions. In the case of J. S. Browne this represented an investment of $5,000, according to the Bee of March 15, and the same paper the next day reported George Barrett had "lost everything he possessed in the world." The splendid wardrobe of the Italian Opera, valued at $50,000, was saved, however, in consequence of its having been stored in a building apart from the theatre.

Caldwell had no choice but to disband the St. Charles stock company. Many of them received benefits at Ludlow and Smith's theatre in the next week or so. Mr. and Mrs. John Greene and Joe Cowell leased from Caldwell the Nashville Theatre and set out for there to attempt to retrieve their losses by managing a spring and summer season in the Northern city. According to the Picayune of April 20, this Nashville season was not due alone to the burning of the St. Charles, "for the campaign was planned under Caldwell's own creative genius, for a summer disposal of his company, long before the dread stroke of desolation fell." Joe Cowell records this Nashville season

71Daily Picayune, March 17, 1842.
as "not so successful," despite the appearances of Fanny Fitzwilliam and Buckstone. The season lasted from April to July of 1842, according to Cowell.  

While the New Orleans papers constantly referred to James Caldwell's indomitable spirit and his enterprise which would not be "overwhelmed with the destruction of its proudest achievement," as the Bee phrased it on March 18, yet the bereft manager was considerably crushed by the experience. Sol Smith, probably as genuinely distressed by the destruction of the St. Charles as he professed exchanged the following correspondence with Caldwell, which is somewhat indicative of the strain under which Caldwell labored from his loss.

American Theatre, New Orleans
March 14, 1842.

JAMES H. CALDWELL, ESQ -- SIR,— We respectfully tender a free benefit at this house to the sufferers by last night's calamity. If acceptable, we propose to devote Friday or Saturday next to the proposed benefit, and to pay the proceeds, without any deduction whatever, into your hands for distribution to the sufferers.

Very truly yours,
(Signed by the managers.)

Caldwell, with considerably more pride than courtesy, stiffly replied:

New Orleans, March 14, 1842.

GENTLEMEN,—I know of no sufferers by the calamity of last night except myself. I have not heard of any. No one has said to me, "I am a sufferer."

If, therefore, your offer of a benefit without any deduction whatever was intended for me, I most

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72 Cowell, op. cit., p. 97.
73 Smith, op. cit., p. 165.
respectfully decline it.

Yours respectfully,

JAMES H. CALDWELL. 74

In his frustration Caldwell was closing his eyes to facts--there were innumerable sufferers besides himself as a result of the fire and fortunately for them they were not to be denied the benefits of this charitable offer because of Caldwell's animosity towards his rivals. However, Caldwell's pride would not prevent him from accepting a benefit eventually form others. The Mobile Chronicle outlined plans for such an event held at Mobile:

The intention, we understand is to give him a complimentary benefit, to which all the dramatic talent in the city will cheerfully contribute; and thus while the good feelings of our citizens find an opportunity of testifying their respect for one to whom so much is due, the occasion will be distinguished by a greater display of attraction and variety than any other which could possibly offer.75

The talent in the city at the time were Mrs. Fitzwilliam, Buckstone, and Mrs. Stuart, and the benefit was held on March 29.76

About this time Caldwell and the Daily Picayune were the intended victims of a rather cruel hoax. The paper noted in its March 31 issue that it had just received a copy of the Mobile Ledger of the 29th which had, scrawled upon a margin this sentence: "The Mobile Theatre has just

74 Ibid.

75 As quoted in the Daily Picayune, March 29, 1842.

76 Baily, op. cit., p. 303.
caught fire and is burning to the ground." The Picayune, upon discovering the fraud, wrathfully editorialized, "Those who pride themselves upon such achievements lack the manliness of the sheep stealer and the courage of the assassin."

Another event occurred the week before Caldwell's benefit, which must have clouded the festivities: an actress of the company named Miss Hamblin had killed the actor Ewing, to whom she was unhappily married, backstage at the Mobile Theatre. The widow and murderess effected an escape from retribution by leaping from a theatre window ten feet to the ground.\footnote{Spirit of the Times, April 9, 1842.}

But amidst these minor embarrassments and the ruin of his theatrical career, James Caldwell could take some comfort in recognizing a host of friends. The ashes at the corner of St. Charles and Poydras were still warm when the following notice appeared in the Bee of March 16:

\begin{quote}
The undersigned, citizens of New Orleans, unwilling that the late disastrous fire that occurred on the evening of the 13th instant, destroying that magnificent "Temple" dedicated to the Drama, the St. Charles Theatre, should bury forever under its ashes the hope of restoring to its former condition, a building that was at once the pride and ornament of our city and the monument of the taste and liberality of the age in which it was erected, and sympathising most sincerely with its enlightened founder, under the losses he has sustained by its destruction, recommend that a meeting be called on Saturday next, the 19th instant, at the St. Charles Exchange, at 7 o'clock p.m. for the purpose of adopting measures for its immediate re-establishment.
\end{quote}
The notice was signed with the names of fifteen highly prominent citizens. The meeting was held at the appointed time. Caldwell's friend and attorney, William Christy was called to the chair, and two resolutions were passed by the group. The first expressed the assembly's heartfelt sympathies to Caldwell and offered "such pecuniary assistance as will enable him, with redoubled energies, to devote himself to the task of elevating the Drama to the lofty position she once held amongst us." The second resolution created a committee of fifty to devise "ways and means to assist the Manager of the St. Charles in procuring a wardrobe, furniture, appurtenances, & c., for a new theatre, about to be erected." At that moment, just how Caldwell proposed to erect a new theatre was not discussed, but he seems to have convinced a number of people of his ability to realize his stated intentions. The Picayune of March 17, in this regard, had said:

This theatre must be rebuilt--It will be rebuilt. We speak advisedly when we say Mr. Caldwell had determined that before the summer season has closed the St. Charles shall again be the home and the temple of the drama. We all know what the mind and energies of Caldwell can accomplish when he sets himself about any task. We all know that he has triumphantly surmounted obstacles far more formidable than any which beset his path.

It is gratifying to discover that Mr. Caldwell has not seated himself, to whine over his misfortunes, but that he has characteristically set himself to work to repair them. His head is already filled with plans for rebuilding the St. Charles upon a scale quite

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78 New Orleans Bee, March 21, 1842.
commensurate with its former magnificence, and in many particulars even improving upon its original construction.

And for a time it looked as though this might actually come to pass. On April 20 the Picayune reported, triumphantly:

Yesterday the Insurance Companies formally notified the Gas Bank that they had finally concluded to rebuild the St. Charles Theatre and Arcade Buildings, as they stood previous to the late conflagration. At a regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the Gas Bank last evening, the proposition to rebuild was ACCEPTED. We have never announced any fact with more pride and gratification—we shall again have the Temple of the Drama in all its splendor and glory.

Caldwell certainly was in no financial condition to undertake such a huge task by himself at this point. Much of his capital was tied up in the Cincinnati and Mobile gas works. In March he had lost another court suit. Some time after the St. Charles had been built he had sued a contractor named E. B. Cogswell for $10,000 damages for the "bad and unworkmanlike manner" in which the zinc roof had been applied to the theatre. Cogswell had countersued for Caldwell's refusal to pay the price stipulated in their contract. The contractor, in his own defense, claimed the roof leaked because of "the unfitness of the building for the reception of a roof" at the time it was applied, the whole edifice having been run up in a great hurry, the walls not having had time to settle, the windows, doors and both gable ends being open to the weather, defective sheathing—all of which Cogswell had objected to at the time. But Caldwell had insisted that the St. Charles must be completed by a certain date because of
"wagers to a large amount having been made that it should be open on a given day." In this suit a lower court had found against Caldwell and had awarded the defendant $2,500. It was this judgment, appealed to the Louisiana Supreme Court and affirmed by that body, with which Caldwell was now faced.79

Another indication of his financial distress has already been shown in his forced sale of the St. Charles Theatre and Arcade. He was also forced to attempt to forestall some other obligations which were pressing him. He had to petition the Council of the Second Municipality for an extension of ten years on notes of his held by the city in the amount of $27,000 which he had borrowed to purchase a square of ground at St. Charles, Perdido, Poydras and Carondelet streets. He was granted this extension on March 22.80

A week after the Picayune's optomistic report that the St. Charles was to be rebuilt by the Gas Bank, the same newspaper related what it called a "curious rumor:"

Can there be any truth in the report that the Gas Company has sold the site of the St. Charles Theatre to a plenipotentiary from Saint Joseph Smith, for the purpose of erecting thereon a magnificent Mormon temple, said Saint Joseph paying $200,000 for the land and ruins, payable in bills of the Bank of Nauvoo, at

79James H. Caldwell v. E. B. Cogswell, et. al., 1 Robinson 554 (1842).
80Notarial Acts of J. B. Marks, April 28, 1842, Notarial Archives, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.
times to be duly signified in his holy visions to come?
The facetious nature of the item and its reflection of the anti-Mormon sentiments then prevailing does not obscure the obvious indication that the announced plans of the Gas Bank were not nearly so thoroughly committed as previously suggested. On May 1, Caldwell placed in the Picayune a notice to stockholders of the Gas Bank requesting a meeting on that date at which he would "present matters of great importance to their consideration, and which will require prompt action." Whether the meeting had anything to do with the question of rebuilding of the St. Charles is not known, but it may be significant that it was not called by Caldwell in his official capacity as President of the bank, a position to which he had been re-elected February 8, 1842.61

Whatever had happened to the announced plans to rebuild the St. Charles, during the summer it was revealed that James Caldwell had changed his intentions to a scheme for erecting an opera house. This was first disclosed in the Picayune of June 17, 1842. The plan was a relatively modest one: Caldwell proposed to raise $30,000 upon $100 shares in a stock scheme, and to this end he had already printed and circulated his prospectus. Further details of the scheme were disclosed in the Spirit of the Times

81Daily Picayune, February 8, 1842.
of July 2: Subscribers of $50 were each to be entitled to a season ticket; and building materials at current prices, and labor could be repaid in tickets at the regular price of admission. The Picayune of July 24 said that Caldwell already had raised more than half the money, that the new opera house would be located in St. Charles Street at the corner of Union, and that cornerstone ceremonies could be anticipated by August 1, with a completion date as early as November 1. As late as August 16 Caldwell continued to pursue this plan, as evidenced by his advertisement in the Picayune of that date for brick and other materials. On September 6 he attempted to borrow $15,000 from the Gas Bank with which to pay for gas fittings and fixtures, and to pay for gas at the rate of $2,500 a year for his "intended opera house." As surety for this loan he proposed to mortgage to the bank the old Camp Street Theatre, now an auction mart. The notarial act for effecting this loan is not signed, however, and apparently the loan did not go through. This is further evidenced by the fact that one of the stipulations by the Gas Bank in the act was that Caldwell take insurance on the mortgaged building to the amount of the loan. Yet when the Camp Street Theatre building burned on September 23, 1842, both the Picayune and the Bee of the following day, in reporting the event, asserted that Caldwell was totally uninsured.

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In the meantime, another fire occurred and Caldwell's theatrical plans were radically altered as a result.

Ludlow and Smith had closed their New Orleans season at the New American Theatre on May 24, 1842 and transported their company to St. Louis for their usual summer season there. The partners' second New Orleans campaign, unlike their first, had been a losing one financially. This was due in large part to the hard times and to some injudicious ventures with their equestrian troupe to Natchez and Havana, but it was also caused in no small part by the superior competition Caldwell had provided until he was burnt out in March. Ludlow and Smith had departed from New Orleans in arrears in their rent to the owners of the Poydras Street Theatre, Dubois and Kendig, to the amount of $2,416—a bill which was to figure prominently in the sequence of coming events. After a brief spring season in St. Louis—no more rewarding to them than the previous New Orleans winter had been—Ludlow remained at St. Louis to prepare for an early fall campaign there, while Smith travelled to the eastern seaboard to engage talent for the winter. Then to their other afflictions was added the same fiery misfortune which had befallen James Caldwell—their theatre in New Orleans was burned to

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the ground. This calamity was described by the Picayune of July 31, 1842 as follows:

Our other theatre is gone, and the Second Municipality is now without a home for the drama. At the earliest dawn of yesterday, July 30, about a quarter past 4, or maybe nearer 5, a heavy column of black smoke arose in Poydras street, quickly succeeded by a deep lurid glow, and next the crackling flames shot upward to the sky. The alarm was no sooner given than the well-known location was recognized, and every body hastened out to look their last at the American Theatre. The conflagration spread with violent rapidity, and it is most fortunate for the buildings near that the atmosphere was calm. Had there been a high wind, heaven knows what destruction might have ensued. In fifteen minutes after the flames broke out, and as the citizens began to block up the streets around, the roof over the stage fell, and almost immediately after the rear gable wall wavered and sank with a loud crash into the street. This exhibited a very singular and beautiful spectacle. The interior framework still held together nearly entire, and every beam and rafter was enwreathed in brilliant flame. Through these, gorgeously illuminated, was seen the boxes in front with the fire climbing and shooting about among them in wildness and splendor inconceivable.

At this time many active citizens and friends of the absent managers were busy dashing in the front doors and rescuing the furniture of the box offices, one being upon each side of the vestibule. Not an atom was saved from stage, green-room, saloons, or boxes. Messrs. Ludlow & Smith had a fine stock of valuable scenery and stage properties, all of which is swept away irretrievably. We do not know, but have reason to believe that no insurance had been secured upon this property. The owners of the building, Messrs. Dubois & Kentig, had effected long since insurance upon the house to the amount of $15,000, $2,500 in the Western Insurance Company's office, and the like amount with the Firemen's Insurance Company, the erection of the theatre having cost over $20,000. But, unfortunately, the policy in the Western office expired on the 25th inst. and the company declined renewing at the time. There still exists, however, a policy in the Merchant's Insurance office for $8,000, made by the owners of the ground to secure the improvement of their property. These sums ($8,000 and $7,500) in these times are more than sufficient to erect a building of twice the size and
capacity of the house just burned, and the opera-
tion would put into profitable employ numbers of our
now idle mechanics. This we understand is the in-
tention of the owners, and certainly we think it
every way to the interest of all parties concerned.
A fine house can easily be put up in ninety days, and
that will open the new theatre just at the usual time.
Let the horses be given up, and let us have a sub-
stantial, commodious theatre, with fire-proof window
shutters.

They would most certainly have saved both the
St. Charles and very probably the American; for in
the last named instance it is suspected that the
incendiary threw his combustibles into one of the
broken and unprotected windows.

Our firemen were even more than usually active
on this occasion. At one time Doyle's extensive
painting establishment seemed inevitably doomed,
but a pipe from No. 14 was carried through the store
to play upon the approaching ruin, and by the prompt
action the whole corner pile upon Camp street was
saved.

The fire generally was believed to have been the work of
an incendiary, and Ludlow even pointed an accusing finger
at a former stage carpenter who had sworn revenge on the
managers for dispossessing him of a room in the theatre
as the result of "a beastly and outrageous piece of conduct
too disgusting" for Ludlow even to mention.\footnote{Ludlow, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 552.}

In the tangled skein of events which followed the
burning of the New American on July 30 the precise actions
of James Caldwell are somewhat obscure. His opponents,
notably Sol Smith, left fairly detailed accounts of these
events as they recalled them, documented with the prolifer-
ation of public utterance made at the time in the name of
their partnership. Except for an address made on the occa-
sion of the opening of his new theatre, and a statement made when he closed that theatre the month following its opening, Caldwell remained silent about his side of the controversy. No presumption of his motives for silence is made here. It may well be, as previous writers on this subject strongly suggest, that Caldwell's actions were reprehensible in the extreme. His silence on the matter at the time, as opposed to the prolixity of Ludlow and Smith, leaves the modern writer little choice in sources of information. And, inevitably, that very silence tends to reinforce a view of Caldwell that he was a moral, if not actually a legal, poacher on the theatrical domain of Ludlow and Smith. The fact that Ludlow and Smith utilized the same weapons in retaliation to Caldwell's piratical tactics does not condone his own questionable business ethics, of course. Nor does Caldwell's apparent sincerity in believing that he had the sole and proper responsibility for dictating the theatrical taste of New Orleans condone the ruthless means he felt were necessary to achieve his altruistic goal. Only one element of the controversy seems moot in the light of the evidence.

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86 The reader is invited to compare two accounts: Kendall, op. cit., pp. 203--25, is notable for its omissions of evidence and lack of documentation, although the writer's attitude is impartial. Joseph Patrick Roppolo, "A History of the American Stage in New Orleans, 1842-1845," Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Department of English, Tulane University, 1948, pp. 13-49, is an excellent, impartial and well-documented treatment of the subject, to which the present writing can add little in the way of new evidence.
available. That is the question of whether Caldwell actively sought the site of the burned-out American Theatre, or whether it was offered to him. There is little question that Caldwell, Ludlow and Smith, and Dubois and Kendig all, at one time or another, resorted to deceit, evasion, and reprisal in seeking to serve their respective ends.

Ludlow and Smith's side of the story was revealed by Sol Smith on October 21 in the *Daily Picayune*, three days after Smith had returned to New Orleans and learned that rumors of Caldwell's acquisition of the Poydras site were true:

**THE AMERICAN THEATRE.**

*Where the offense is, let the great axe fall.*

We have never obtruded our private affairs upon the New Orleans Public. An excuse for making the following statement, it is believed, may be found in the fact that we have been connected, in the responsible capacity of managers, with a public institution which has been sustained and fostered by our 'resident population,' as well as by the numerous residents of other parts of our country, who pass a part or the whole of the winter in this southern emporium, and in the other fact that by no fault of ours our connection with that institution has ceased.

We have no wish to excite sympathy. Since 1837, blow after blow has fallen heavily upon us. We have been constrained to abandon one of our strong-holds (Mobile) for want of means to compete with a powerful professional contemporary, who, 'with appliances and means to boot' has for many years aspired to control the destinies of the Drama in the entire South and West. In St. Louis we were enabled to maintain our position, the stockholders having refused to listen to his propositions for a lease of their splendid temple.

We came to New Orleans as to a place of refuge.

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Although it appeared plain to us that we could not compete successfully with the theatre then building in Mobile by Mr. Caldwell—our last theatre in that city being in a comparatively bad location—we thought that here two theatres might be sustained. We opened the American. To the threats of our contemporary that he would shut us up in a month we made no answer; his sneers at our humble temple, which he endowed with the classical appellations of a 'dogpit' and a 'shanty,' we heeded not; his statements in the public newspapers that 'the expenses of his orchestra alone exceeded those of our whole establishment,' we noticed not, though, at the time that statement was made, our orchestra contained ten more musicians than his, and our dramatic company was superior to his, both in number and talent, to say nothing of two equestrian companies which were attached to our establishment, and which certainly did not lessen our expenses. We pursued the 'even tenor of our way,' satisfied that our exertions were appreciated by the public and munificently rewarded. Affairs are changed; both theatres have been destroyed by fire. One (the 'Little American') is being rebuilt, and as the time approaches when we expected to resume our professional operations, we find our 'shanty' in possession of James H. Caldwell! And that is not all; he has managed, hard as the times are, to find means to purchase a judgment, which he holds in terrorem over our heads! We repeat, we do not wish to excite sympathy; we trust we have sufficient energy remaining to enable us to rise even from this last blow. We shall at least make the attempt.

STATEMENT.

On the 14th of January, 1841, we leased of Messrs. Dubois and Kendig, for the term of five years, computing from the 1st of July, 1840, all and singular that portion of ground situated on Poydras Street, in the second municipality of this city, which was leased by Dubois and Kendig from George Morgan and others, by an act passed before H. B. Cenas, a notary public in this city, on the 4th of May, 1840, together with all the buildings and improvements thereon, known as the American Theatre.

A clause in the lease provides that, 'in case of the destruction of the said premises by fire or otherwise, the rent shall cease and be no longer payable.' In virtue of this agreement of lease, we occupied the premises two seasons. On the 30th of July last the premises was set on fire by an incendiary, and burned to the ground, together with all our theatrical property in New Orleans, consisting of scenery, furniture, machinery, gas fittings, and properties of every description pertaining to a well-regulated theatre,
and which cost over twelve thousand dollars. We were the only parties interested, who were utterly uninsured. When the intelligence of the destruction of the theatre reached St. Louis, one of our firm was in New York making engagements for the ensuing winter campaign; the other immediately communicated with Mr. Dubois, then at St. Louis, and it was distinctly agreed between them that if the theatre could be rebuilt with the insurance money, a contract would be made to that effect immediately, and we were to continue to occupy it until the close of the term of our lease. Neither party being in possession of a copy of the lease, neither was certain what stipulation it contained in regard to the contingency which had occurred; but Mr. D. observed that, whatever the stipulation might be, they should feel themselves morally bound to rebuild, if they had the ability so to do, and he considered we were morally bound to go to work with our occupancy; and Mr. Dubois departed for New Orleans. On his return he said he had not made himself acquainted with the "stipulations in the lease," considering it quite unnecessary to do so, as the rebuilding was contracted for, and we were to have the theatre as matter of course. He said an application had been made, immediately after the burning, for a lease of the American, should it be rebuilt; but he laughed at the idea of any one supposing it could be taken out of our hands, after the great loss we had sustained. It being clearly and distinctly understood that the lease was to be held good by both parties, the partner in New York was so advised, and, placing implicit confidence in the honor of our friend Dubois, we felt no uneasiness on the subject. The theatre was to be ours beyond a doubt.

On the strength of this understanding, and without a suspicion of bad faith any where, we proceeded to make our arrangements for the ensuing winter—engaged performers, orchestra, artists, and machinists—commenced preparing scenery and fixtures—applied for gas fittings, and expected to commence business in the new house about the 20th of November.

On the 24th of September, the Commercial Bulletin contained the following editorial article, founded, as we have since learned, upon information furnished by Mr. James H. Caldwell himself:

"We hear that Mr. Caldwell has leased the American Theatre, Poydras Street. There was a clause in the late lease by which it was stipulated that, in case the building was burned, the lease should end."

This article was republished, in substance, by nearly all the city papers, and in the papers of the Eastern cities, much to our injury, as we believe—though we cheerfully acquit the Bulletin of any
intention to injure us-- holding out to professional people at the East who might be engaged to come to us the supposition that we should have no theatre at which to receive them. Seeing this paragraph in the newspapers, we had another interview with Mr. Dubois, and he assured us he knew of no such proceeding as the one spoken of, and placed no reliance whatever on the report.

A confidential clerk of Messrs. Dubois & Kendig had been to St. Louis a few days previous to the above paragraph meeting our eye. He had two or three interviews with us, and did not say a word about any intention to lease the theatre to Mr. Caldwell or anyone else. On the contrary, our conversation was exclusively confined to the progress of the new building; the preparations we were making to carry down scenery from St. Louis; the necessity of one of us proceeding to New Orleans in the course of a few weeks; and, finally, he promised to write us immediately on his arrival, and advise us of the state of the building, and when it would be necessary for us to commence work on the stage and machinery. Mr. Dubois informed us that the clerk had visited him for the purpose of raising means to go with the building, in case one of the insurance companies should fail, as he feared it would, to meet the payments which would be due the contractor. He added that he had given the clerk authority to raise means from his personal friends, if they could be so raised, and if those means failed and the insurance company did not come up to the mark, he feared the building must stop, but said not a word about transferring the house into other hands.

On the 9th of the present month we received intelligence that the new building had certainly been leased for our unexpired term to Mr. James H. Caldwell, and that he had obtained control over a judgment for $2418, which we had confessed in favor of Dubois & Kendig for a balance due on last year's rent. In short, we received the assurance that we had been 'headed by Mr. Caldwell, trifled with by Mr. Kendig (for to this day we sincerely believe Mr. Dubois was no party to the transaction, and knew not of it; he assured us so himself), and our company, orchestra, artists, machinists, and all others who had formed engagements with us for the coming season, numbering nearly one hundred persons, were thrown on our hands, and we without a place to employ them in!

One of us is here, and to save the time and trouble of answering questions—for there does appear to considerable curiosity to know the particulars of a transaction by which we have been thrust out of the American Theatre—this statement is thus publicly
put forth. The community may think we have received ill treatment; indeed, we believe there will be but one opinion on the subject. We shall not occupy our time in useless complainings, but act. If our courts will afford a remedy for the injuries we have sustained, they may be appealed to, when leisure will permit us to 'wait the law's delay;' at present a new theatre must be prepared for the reception of our company. We shall exert every faculty and use every honorable means to resume the position from which we have been ejected by incendiarism, intrigue, and treachery. Notwithstanding the untoward circumstances in which we are temporarily placed, we confidently expect to be able to fulfill every engagement made for the ensuing winter.

In a letter to the editors of the Picayune dated October 26, 1842, Robert L. Place, the confidential clerk of Dubois and Kendig, gave his version of what had transpired at St. Louis, denying that Caldwell had sought the American Theatre initially, and placing the responsibility for the decision to lease the property to Caldwell not on Kendig, as alleged by Sol Smith, but on Dubois, the man whom Smith believed "no party to the transaction, and knew not of it:"

GENTLEMEN—The mater-of-fact part of the business of the American Theatre, so far as I am concerned, is told in a few words: I went to St. Louis to make arrangements respecting the releasing of the building, the former leasing having become nothing in consequence of the destruction of the property. Ludlow & Smith were, with all due propriety, consulted about the matter, but it seemed to me that they were unable, in any satisfactory manner, to do aught for the full interest of my employers. Their incompetency to do this was obvious from their acknowledgment that even the gas fixtures they could not place within the theatre—nay, more, even that the scenery could not be transported from St. Louis. Now, inasmuch as Ludlow & Smith had been unable to keep their engagements with my employers, Dubois & Kendig, despite the "munificence" of New Orleans public, and the "pinching" of their actors to boot, I thought that I had a right to secure for the interested parties the best terms that might be offered. Jas. H. Caldwell, Esq. was sounded on the subject, and in his businesslike
manner at once said, "I will take that theatre willingly, provided all parties are set free to act, and I interfere with no legal interest." There was one obstacle, however, which was a source of annoyance: and that was a stipulation of Mr. Dubois, who stated that he would not consent to the leasing of the theatre unless the debt due to the firm by Ludlow & Smith should be assumed by the lessee. Mr. Caldwell felt himself annoyed at this condition, but finally agreed to it, not, however, without the strongest feelings of dissent, or rather mortification. The matter appeared to him an unexpected requisition, and, I fully excuse him for any ebullition of feeling. I had the interests of my friends to secure, and I feel that I have done it to the best of my ability. The "cry-baby-isms" of my old friend "Sol" annoy us not, but certainly surprise; for surely his worldly experience is extensive enough to whisper gently in his ear, that the claims of Ludlow & Smith upon either the resident or floating population of New Orleans is not, and has not been, of a character to enlist either their feelings or their sympathies. Their popularity is of a very common and of an appreciable character—they work hard, earn their money and carry it away. Widow Wiggins may back us in this without being accused of "New Orleans Assurance."

A cruel and unreflecting censure is passed upon Mr. Kendig in your column of "Mawworm" mawkishness, and that is your writer's forgetfulness of his serious domestic misfortune. Mr. Kendig had nothing whatever to do with these theatrical matters—they were all left to me, as their agent.

New Orleans, October 26, 1842.

ROBERT L. PLACE.

Place's defense of Caldwell would seem to be strongly supported by one fact: Although Ludlow and Smith were in fairly constant contact with Dubois in St. Louis, and although they were visited there by Place who had just come from New Orleans and, it must be presumed, from some intercourse with Kendig, no lease was concluded with Ludlow and Smith in St. Louis. Certainly Dubois, as a full partner, or probably even Place, who by his own statement seems to have had considerable autonomy, could have negotiated a lease in St. Louis with Ludlow and Smith had they wished.
to do so. From this it would seem that Caldwell did not seek possession of the American Theatre property and, until he was approached by Kendig or Place, was pursuing plans for his opera house at another location. As previously indicated, however, the question of whether Sol Smith or Robert Place lied about the method by which Caldwell obtained the property must remain unanswered. There is more than a little reason to suspect that in this instance, however, Caldwell's hands were clean—Dubois and Kendig may have sought him out and made the offer to him in their belief that he, better than the near-bankrupt Ludlow and Smith, could assure them a continuing source of income from their property.

The lease which Caldwell had signed had been negotiated with Bernard Kendig, however, on September 30, 1842, which indicated that, despite Place's claim, Kendig did have something to do "with these theatrical matters."

The lease required Caldwell to pay an annual rent of $11,206 for the three years it was to run, that is, from November 15, 1842 to July 1, 1845. Caldwell was to pay the rent in five equal installments of $2,241.20 due on the second of each month. Caldwell was to have the right to sub-lease and was to take possession on November 15 or receive damages from the builder's contract.

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Thr right to light the building in his own way was re­served to Caldwell should the owners not provide gas fix­tures. Whether stipulated by Kendig, by Dubois, or by Caldwell, the subrogation of the claim against Ludlow and Smith for $2,418 was included in the lease, and it appears that Sol Smith's later claim that this debt had been added to the annual rent is justified, since Caldwell was paying more than the $10,000 a year for which the previous building had been rented to Ludlow and Smith. In fact, he was paying rather dearly for the judgment against them; he was to pay $3,618 over the three year period of the lease—$1,200 more than the claim.

If Caldwell thought the protested paper of his rival which he now held was to be the ultimate weapon for driving his opponents from the field of battle, he was soon disa­bused. The manner in which this missile boomeranged on the unfortunate Caldwell is set forth in the following statement which the energetic and garrulous Sol Smith provided the Picayune on November 26. Smith began this latest essay with a quotation from The Merchant of Venice, Act IV, in which Shylock is told by Portia to "tarry a little" before collecting his pound of flesh. After considerable moralizing on the illustration he had chosen, Smith finally got around to applying it to the matter at hand:

About a week since, notices appeared in the Courier and Bulletin newspapers, in the English and French languages, announcing that the sheriff of the District Court had seized all our rights in a lease of
the lot of ground on which the New St. Charles Theatre is being built, and that the same would be sold by public auction on the 30th instant, at the St. Louis Exchange, to satisfy an execution in favor of Dubois & Kendig, whose rights had been subrogated to Jas. H. Caldwell.

It has been already stated that Mr. Caldwell purchased of D. & K. a certain judgment which we had confessed in their favor for $2418. When we confessed that judgment (it being what is termed "a friendly suit"), they agreed to wait for the amount until January next; but when they broke their contract with us by leasing the American Theatre to Mr. Caldwell, it appears they "made a clean sweep of it" by giving him control over the judgment against us, and left us entirely at his mercy. By examining the notarial act, we find that the amount of the judgment is added to the rent of the American, so that Mr. C. has three years to pay it in, the first payment (one eighteenth part) falling due in January, 1843. Having such easy terms himself, and having not only taken away "the prop that did sustain our house," but taken possession of the house itself, we expected that a proposition as they should fall due. We were mistaken. The ink was scarcely dry with which we signed the lease of the ground on which we are building the new St. Charles before the sheriff was ordered to make a seizure. We do not suppose that Mr. Caldwell expected to make the money out of us at the present time. He knew—"none so well as he"—that burnt-out managers can not be always ready for such a call as that made upon us by his order.

It is proper to remark here that the effects of the seizure and advertisement of the lease have not been, we believe, exactly what were intended. Many persons have inquired, "Has the building stopped?" but we are glad to say that the contractors have not been for a moment dismayed—the furnishers have not held back a single material—the work has not been delayed by the hostile proceeding a single hour; and it only remains for us to state, for the information of those gentlemen who have contributed to the building of the new theatre by taking stock or purchasing certificates for tickets, that we hold protested paper of Mr. Caldwell to an amount sufficient to pay the judgment against us; an INJUNCTION has been issued to prevent the sale of our lease, and—the new manager of the American has been told to "tarry a little."

We feel no pleasure in making a statement that Mr. Caldwell has not been able, in all instances, to meet his pecuniary liabilities, and nothing should tempt us to make such a statement now but a desire to,
protect ourselves from the effects of the judicial proceedings instituted by him against us. The misfortunes we have both met with in the destruction of our theatres should beget any thing but ill feeling among the sufferers.

To our friends and the general public we say again, "the work goes bravely on." Give us good weather for twenty days, and the NEW ST. CHARLES will open a week before the close of the year.

It was another of the many ironies in the career of James Caldwell that the Gas Company, which he had founded, was now the instrument by which his hated rivals were enabled to continue their fight against him. Not only had the company agreed to lease to them the lot on which the burned St. Charles had stood, but "a portion of the means... to pay the workmen as the building progressed" was provided by the bank to Ludlow and Smith.\(^8^9\) On June 29, Caldwell had severed the last tie between the Gas Light and Banking Company and the St. Charles Theatre when he had declared his lease with them null and void as a result of the destruction of the St. Charles,\(^9^0\) and by the same act relinquished his rights to the property which he had reserved in the act of sale to the bank. The "protested paper" of Caldwell's which Sol Smith had acquired provided another irony. During the ill-starred theatrical season of 1840-1841, despite the considerable success of his engagement, Tyrone Power had had to take notes from Caldwell in lieu

\(^{8^9}\)Smith, op. cit., p. 169. See, also, Picayune and Bee, October 29, 1842.

\(^{9^0}\)Notarial Acts of William Christy, op. cit., June 29, 1842.
of cash compensation for his appearance. These notes Power had sold in New Orleans prior to his departure on the first leg of the journey which was to take his life. Smith had purchased, on credit, the notes to Power as well as others which Caldwell had given to the equestrian firm of Fogg and Stickney the previous season.\textsuperscript{91} The amount of these notes was large enough to cause Caldwell to "tarry a little," indeed, and Ludlow and Smith were able to proceed with the construction of the new St. Charles.

At this point Caldwell wisely held his peace and spent all his energies on getting the New American Theatre into operation as quickly as possible. This was not difficult to do since the New American had been under construction since August. But Caldwell did not take possession on the November 15 date which had been stipulated in his lease. As he had announced in the Bee of November 19 he was able, however, to admit the first audience on December 5.

Extant newspapers of the day do not contain much information concerning the appearance of Caldwell's New American Theatre. The Daily Picayune of December 4 expressed its surprise that "its interior is more elegant in design than the architecture of the building would seem to allow," and noted that the theatre was "about the same size of the Park Theatre, New York," but gave no specific description of either the interior or exterior of the building. Fortunately, the Spirit of the Times troubled to

\textsuperscript{91}Smith, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 170.
We went over the interior of this building yesterday, and found everything in such a state of forwardness, that there is little doubt of Mr. Caldwell's being able to open it for the reception of the public on the evening of the 5th proximo. With regard to the comfort and convenience of the audience, nothing appears to have been omitted that could possibly suggest itself so as to render the theatre in that respect infinitely superior to any other at present or previously in New Orleans. The facade of the exterior has a most pleasing and tasteful appearance, being of the Grecian order, with an elegant Corinthian portico, crowned with a front surmounted by the statues of Melpomene and Polhymia. On entering the vestibule, the visitor is conducted into spacious lobbies, at the right and left of which are the staircases leading to the boxes, &c., also the entrances to the parquette and pit boxes. On a line with the first tier, and fronting Poydras street, is a saloon extending along the whole front of the building, ninety feet, and over this spacious room is another of similar dimensions for the second tier. The circle of the boxes is forty-two feet in diameter, and the distance from the centre box to the front of the curtain is over sixty feet. Including the pit boxes, all of which have doors of lattice-work, there are four tiers. The ceiling is decorated with eight subjects, and eight ornamented panels, in speaking of which, and of the other decorations of the theatre, we may observe that this department of the interior has been entrusted to those excellent and accomplished artists who painted the dome of the Bourse in the St. Louis Hotel--Messrs. Canova and Pinoli. It should be mentioned as a peculiar advantage in this theatre, that every seat is so arranged as to ensure, to a greater extent than is usual, the ease and comfort of the auditor. In the parquette the seats are all cushioned, and have solid backs to them, and the boxes on either side are partitioned in such a manner as to give the auditor a complete view of the stage from any of the seats. The stage department has been entrusted to Mr. Cranness, a distinguished and very ingenious mechanic, who has so constructed and arranged this important part of the theatre, that it is really a model of perfection in all its parts. That eminent artist, Mondelli, has control of the scenic department, and has already completed scenes for the opening night, which are calculated to have a very
splendid effect. Mondelli painted the first scenes for the late Camp street theatre twenty-two years ago, and here he is again to exhibit probably even greater evidence of his high and distinguished talent. Mr. Mondelli is assisted by a very talented young artist, Mr. Foster, who was previously his pupil; he also has been painting some admirable scenes, such as reflect the highest credit on his skill and judgment.

The architects of the building are Messrs. J. N. Depouilly and Mr. Goudchaux from whose ingenuity we have such admirable arrangements in the audience part of theatre, and to whose taste we are indebted for that very beautiful facade. The whole building stands on a lot ninety feet by one hundred and sixty, and has been completed within ninety days, so that it will be soon no unnecessary haste has had precedence over all due regard to safety and solidity. All that we have now to hope, and we do so most sincerely, is, that Mr. Caldwell, the lessee and manager, may receive from the public that full meed of patronage and support to which his great exertions on behalf of the Drama so justly entitle him.

The exterior of the building was described by the Picayune of November 23 as "really beautiful—far more so, indeed, than was ever that of the great 'temple' in St. Charles street," but the paper thought the upper story had a "queer, camel-back effect."

On December 5, 1842 James H. Caldwell began the last six weeks of his career of theatrical management. The New American Theatre in Poydras Street opened on that evening with performances of Speed the Plough and The Hundred Pound Note. The company included such names, thoroughly familiar to the New Orleans public, as Chapman, De Bar, and Pearson. The Bee of the following day recorded the performances as excellent and the audience "large and res-

92 Daily Picayune, December 5, 1842.
pectable," although the Picayune of the 6th found it necessary to make "an apology for there not having been a perfect jam in the house last night" and ascribed as the reason that "the weather was exceedingly disagreeable, hot and damp."

Caldwell opened the festivities this first night. When he appeared on the stage he received "the most enthusiastic welcome," according to the Picayune, and his address, written especially for the occasion and "made quite effective by scenic aid" of some of its points, was duly recorded in the newspaper:

As I am about to commence a new career in the Theatrical business, a few observations may be expected from me, by way of address. In attending therefore, to that presumed expectation, although I must necessarily touch upon matters as painful to my recollection as they have been injurious to my fortunes, I hope most sincerely that the public will acquit me of any desire to awaken their sympathies. I know that, generally, addresses to the public, howmuchsoever the writers of them may aver to the contrary, are expressly intended to excite sympathy, as well as interest, for the man who says to you that he wants no sympathy, asks for it in telling you so. I assert, however, that I am an exception to this general rule.

It will be generally conceded, I believe, that I am the founder of the Drama in New Orleans. I built the "American Theatre" in 1822, since termed the "Camp Street Theatre," which was recently destroyed by a vile incendiary, who, as yet, I have not been able to bring to justice, although I still live in hopes of that event.

Such was the situation at that time of the sixth ward, which is now the Second Municipality, that the streets in which are some of the greatest monuments, were scarcely even defined.

New Levee street was then a continuous line of canals for more than a mile, and Tchoupitoulas and Magazine streets could then boast of no better building than such as are denominated "shanties," with here and there the mouldering remains of a former plantation residence.
Camp Street had only, at that time, a few tobacco and cotton warehouses, and St. Charles street was best known to the boys, who sought in sport for snipe among the latanier in the marshes, which had never been disturbed otherwise in its original growth.

The gradual rise of the walls of the first "American Theatre," which walls are still standing, excited a great deal of curiosity; and naturally so; for people, conceiving no merchantile use of such a building, speculated jocularly on the idea of its being intended for a fortification.

For several years the public had to travel on gunwale sidewalks; and it is probably well remembered, by several of our present residents, carriages could not be used after a heavy rain, in places so far out of the way as Camp street.

The success attendant on my building the American Theatre, rendered it a nucleus around which enterprise and commercial prosperity first began to grow to the importance which may be said to have settled and called into existence the Second Municipality.

My enthusiasm in favor of the Drama, and my strong feelings in favor of New Orleans, induced me, in 1835, to build the "St. Charles Theatre and Arcade Baths." At this period I may state, merely for the purpose of explaining matters as I go along, that I had $176,000— one hundred and seventy-six thousand dollars, cash assets, in my grasp.

Circumstances, of which all of us are, more or less, "the most obedient humble servants," have left the "St. Charles Theatre," the "Arcade Baths," and the "Camp street Theatre" among the things that were," and myself with an accumulation of losses and misfortunes almost too serious to be reflected on.

Now, however, I begin again; but instead of commanding my own large ship from my own quarter deck, I have chartered a smaller vessel, to embark for sea in search of another golden shore, from which I may garner means to erect another; (for so I suppose I should), another REAL St. Charles.

I here take notice of the several advertisements put forth by two persons, the lessees of a theatre which stood on the spot of the present "American," and I hope to be excused for doing so, from the circumstance that strangers to me and my habits of industry and enterprise might otherwise fall into the error that not to answer the promptings of their malevolence, is a tacit acknowledgment of the deservedness of the infliction.

In the first place, I am accused by these gentlemen, Messrs. Ludlow & Smith, of having interfered with their rights in leasing the building which I now open to the public; whereas, I was most particularly scrupulous to avoid entering on the responsibilities
of a lessee, until I was applied to several times, and assured that Ludlow & Smith had no claim whatever on the property, and that they, Ludlow & Smith, were fully conscious of this fact. The following letter from the agent of Dubois & Kendig, the proprietors of the property, may answer such frivolous efforts on the part of said L. & S. to excite sympathy in their favor, and a prejudiced feeling towards me.

At this point in his address Caldwell read the letter which Robert L. Place had written in response to Sol Smith's first statement in late October, and which has been previously quoted. Caldwell then continued:

Now the propriety of these attacks upon me, with such facts known to the parties, is both slovenly and pitiable; and I thus stamp the conduct of these persons, because I think I know the community too well to believe that any thing like whining will affect its antipathies, or that crafty attacks upon my character will have any force to sully the general course of my conduct.

When the parties who malevolently attack me can say, as I can, on looking around, in both this and other cities, "such are the results of my industry and enterprise," I shall be found amongst the foremost in joining loudly in their praise.

I wish to everybody his full meed of public approbation and pecuniary success, whatever be the nature of his exertions, but I may, I hope, be permitted to express, also, and emphatically, my indisposition to recognize the bearing of insidious and spiteful rivalry with fair, open and honorable competition.

My claims upon the patronage of the public must rest, I well know, upon the attractions offered, in this new establishment, and consequently my utmost exertions will most assuredly be devoted to that end. I will state, however, that I am far from expecting the success which, at the outset of my new career, I had anticipated, and from the conviction that two theatres of a similar order of dramatic entertainments cannot be supported in the Second Municipality.

Competition does not always secure the best services, particularly as regards the drama; for it

⁹³Supra, pp. 533-34.
raises the price of everything connected with our stage, and fosters directly the most destructive system associated therewith—the Starring system.

But despite all difficulties and annoyances, I take the field again, active and determined, and like a prudent general, so to marshal my forces as not easily to be driven from the field.

It is more than probable, that had I expected the existence of a rival Theatre in this Municipality I would have retired with my fortune of laurels and losses, and fed upon the reflection that I had spent twenty-three years of unremitting professional labor to the advantage of those who intrude upon my path, not kindly or courteously, but with enviousness and misrepresentations.

The case is, however, otherwise, and I am now determined to bestir myself in such a manner as to render my new project in favor of the Drama, if not profitable to my purse, at least, additionally laudatory of my character.

JAMES H. CALDWELL

December 6, 1842.

The bills for opening night cited the usual city ordinances regarding the wearing of hats in the theatre, smoking cigars, and creating disturbances. To These Caldwell added his own rules as follows:

No smoking will be allowed in the Boxes, Lobbies, or Saloons.

No auditor can give away his right of admission after having entered the house, therefore checks transferred will not be received.

Tickets purchased for the night cannot be used afterwards, either in the whole or in part.

It is particularly requested that Dogs will not be brought to the Theatre, as they cannot be admitted. Nuts proscribed.⁹⁴

The particular hit of the first week of performances at the New American was the production of Robert Macaire, the burletta by Charles Selby, which featured Ben De Bar,

⁹⁴Spirit of The Times, December 24, 1842.
and William Chapman. The Picayune of December 11
declared, "We have seen nothing more excellent for a long
while." At the end of this first week, Caldwell announced
a retreat from a policy which had been in effect at his
St. Charles Theatre—Sunday performances. The Bee of
December 12, in noting that the theatre had been closed
the precious evening, commended Caldwell for taking this
moralistic step:

In this, Mr. Caldwell rightly echoes public opinion
in the section of the city in which his establishment
is located. Sunday—a day consecrated by the Catholics
to harmless gaiety by devotional exercises, is received
by the Protestant part of the community in a totally
different light, and that which would be regarded as
custody and proper downtown, is looked upon as
little short of desecration above Canal Street. Mr.
Caldwell, in closing his theatre on Sundays, consults
the moral and religious scruples of his patrons, and
we applaud him for it.

In the second week of the season Caldwell decided to put to
the test his own personal attractiveness as a performer in
an effort to enhance the box office. On December 12 he
appeared as Gossamer in Laugh When You Can—"a part
pedullarily his own—one in which he extracts roars of
laughter from ribs of steel," as the Bee phrased it in
urging the attendance of the public at the theatre. On
the 17th, with the support of Mrs. Anne Sefton, he essayed
Charles Surface in The School For Scandal, but with disap­
pointing effect. The Bee of the 19th, while conceding that
the drama was "played generally with spirit," found several
of the company woefully forgetful of the text. "We would
counsel the manager to discharge any member of the company
who does not feel a proper ambition in his profession, or a due regard for the interest of his employer," the paper advised Caldwell. "This is the only way to keep theatricals above water," was the paper's conclusion.

But James Caldwell was already beyond his depth in his theatrical venture, and the flood of bankruptcy was threatening to engulf him. Early in January he concluded to give up the struggle entirely. On January 7, 1843 the public read his decision in the following announcement:

AMERICAN THEATRE.
The establishment will be closed for the season on Saturday, the 14th instant.
The lessee is constrained to say that the situation of the times, to which alone he can attribute the nightly losses, compels him to a course unavoidable as it is painful to his feelings. Were the private fortune of the subscriber equal to what it was when he completed the late St. Charles Theatre, he would have been proud, as he then was, to sustain the losses which attended that beautiful temple; but all those means are gone—all in honor.

His pride now has to sustain a shock unparalleled to him, but which will be appreciated by all honorable men. He can not now, without the public support, continue in his much-loved profession, and he is aware that the drama, not only in this country, but in the old country, has sustained a shock, which can not be recovered from in a generation.

It is now my painful duty to announce that I shall retire from the Drama altogether—it is no longer a profession for a sensitive mind to follow; and as to pecuniary profit, the following facts, I hope, will illustrate to the world that I have done for it what few men with capital would have thought of. From the day of the completion of the St. Charles Theatre, on the 30th of November, 1835, to its conflagration on the 13th of March, 1842, I have expended in the support of its losses $100,000. In the belief—a belief which was sustained by the whole population—that no other theatre than the present American would be built for several years, I was induced to enter in the field again. Unfortunately I did so; and, although no theatre was open, the expenses have not been met by at least $200 per night.
Had I the means I would in very pride continue on, in the hope which constantly cherished me in the St. Charles, that better times would return, and that the Drama would meet with a competent support. Not possessing them, I must, though reluctantly, abandon it, and seek some employment by which I can live, for loss and double ruin is the inevitable result of a managerial career in the present day.

JAMES H. CALDWELL

Reactions to this announcement were varied, but mild. The Bee of January 9 expressed its regret and proposed a complimentary benefit to Caldwell. The Picayune of January 8 quietly disagreed with Caldwell's views with regard to the state of the drama and any special privilege he claimed for it:

It would appear that the years of calamity for the stage have been precisely those in which so large a portion of the business men of the country have been prostrated an overwhelmed. But we do not know that the drama had any plea which could have reasonably secured its exemption from the general ruin. We hardly can agree with Mr. Caldwell that the stage is to suffer so long an eclipse as he anticipates...

At present we wish but to express our regret that one who has been so long and honorably connected with the stage, who has expended such vast sums in the erection of theatres, especially in our own city, should be compelled by stress of circumstances thus to abandon his cherished profession. May success attend him in whatever other occupation he may choose for the employment of his energies.

The Spirit of the Times of January 21, 1843, raised a question that perhaps was in many minds:

How far the fortunes of the New American were affected by the extraordinary circumstances attending Mr. Caldwell's coming into possession of the lease of the ground upon which it was erected, we are not prepared to say, but the result was confidently predicted upon the publication of the statement of the former lessees, Messrs. Ludlow & Smith, the proprietors of the new St. Charles.

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96 Smith, op. cit., p. 172.
Writing nearly forty years after this event, and almost twenty years after Caldwell's death, Noah Ludlow still bore a deep grudge against his erstwhile rival. His pious summation of the affair was:

How true are the words that "man proposes, but God disposes." In all instances where men permit their rancorous feelings to urge them to commit acts of injustice to their fellow-men, "their evil deeds return to plague the inventors."97

Ludlow's partner, also writing long after the time of this incident, could not refrain from moralizing, too but his vein was somewhat more charitable. Referring to Caldwell's opening address at the New American in which he had expressed his determination to bestir himself in such manner as "to render my new project....if not profitable to my purse, at least additionally laudatory of my character," Smith said:

It will be seen that he [Caldwell] did not wait to be "beaten from the field," but wisely retreated before his competitors fired a gun. It appears from his own statement that his "new project" had not been profitable to his purse. It will be for others to judge whether it had been "laudatory of his character."98

When Caldwell's absolutely final farewell benefit to the stage took place New Orleans newspapers gave scant notice to the affair, as is indicated in the following letter which an editor wrote in hasty apology:

97 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 558.
98 Smith, loc. cit.
To James H. Caldwell, Esq.

My dear Sir, Accompanying this, I have the honor to hand you copies of the N. O. Commercial Bulletin, containing quite an imperfect and brief report of your late eloquent and feeling address to the audience assembled at the New American Theatre, in this city, on the night of the 14th inst. I was present, and listened to you with much attention, on this occasion of your Farewell Benefit, both as an actor and an accomplished manager, and I regret that I was so misled as to the intentions of editors publishing papers on Sunday morning, the 15th, that I failed to take copious notes in my capacity of associate-editor of the paper I send you.

Please accept the offering, however, in the spirit of friendship which I always felt for you, and in accordance with the interest I have always entertained for your dramatic success every way.

I have the honor to remain,

Your friend and servant,

A. C. AINSWORTH

New Orleans, Jan. 16th, 1843.

99 The Commercial Bulletin's report of the last night of Caldwell's management of the New American Theatre and his last appearance on any stage—the night of January 14, 1843—was as follows:

Mr. CALDWELL'S BENEFIT.—The American Theatre on Saturday was distinguished by a numerous yet select and fashionable audience, the best by far of the season. It is due to Mr. Caldwell to say, that never to our knowledge did he play with more spirit and feeling, or make a better impression. Hackneyed as we admit ourselves to be upon theatrical matters, and seldom going to the play when we can find a book to read, we sat the comedy through with a delight which reminded us of younger days. More than once during Mr. Caldwell's "Vapid" in the "Dramatist," we thought he could easily make another fortune by professional exertions on the British stage. At the close of the play he was loudly called for, when he delivered an address, apparently extemporaneous, yet distinguished for smooth language and perspicuous expression. He said some fine things therein, one or two of which are impressed upon our memory.

99 As quoted in the Spirit of the Times, February 11, 1843.
He remarked that though that was the last night of his managerial career, as well as the last of his appearance as a player, he felt that his faculties were as fresh, his perception as clear, his energy as impulsive and his intellect as unclouded as at any time during his experience upon the stage. (Applause.) He left it therefore, by reason of the pressure of imperious circumstances—the hardness of the times crushing the people—the general decline of the legitimate drama, from a supposed higher standard of taste, which people in following out, presumed laid in the direction of the opera and ballet. He had himself set up a standard for the legitimate drama, which appeared rather above the general tone, and he would sacrifice his own prospects rather than nullify the good old standard. He did not presume that the public taste in this respect would be regenerated in the lifetime of any of his audience, but he remarked, that with all the tendency of patronage to the opera and ballet in this country, the prospect was dark for the success of either, since in Europe, where the munificence of emperors, kings, potentates, ambassadors, princes, nobility and gentry is called in for its support, the opera is not sustained for more than sixty nights in a season!

He remarked that he left the stage, not as a war-charger, bruised, beaten down and disabled, but as one falling on the field in the full flush of his powers. This and other audiences had tasted the clear wine, and he was not the one to suffer the bottle to remain, lest they might at a future time be treated to the dregs! (Applause.) He concluded and made his last bow to the public.

This time Caldwell's farewell to the stage was final. He was never again to step before an audience as an actor, or exert his talents as a manager. In spite of his sentiments with respect to the taste of his age and his analogy of a warrior "falling on the field in the full flush of his powers," James H. Caldwell was not leaving the theatre as probably would have wished—successful, affluent, and

100 Ibid.
in a halo of general respect. Rather, he was beaten from the field by men whose huckstering methods were demonstrably below his own standard of theatrical taste. He had been forced to his knees by a crushing burden of personal debt. And his final, desperate efforts to preserve a theatrical domain to which he believed he alone could best minister, had led him to acts which received and deserved the public censure. Time would again restore to him the rightful recognition of his superb accomplishments and perhaps erase the ignominy of the moment. Now, with characteristic resolution, James Caldwell turned his back on the theatre and faced the next twenty years of a full and productive life in other fields.
James H. Caldwell's forced retirement from the theatre at the half-century mark of his life did not mean he retreated to inactivity and obscurity during the two decades of mortality remaining to him. Almost up to the time of his death in 1863 he busied himself in various business and political endeavors. Caldwell even maintained a peripheral interest in the theatre as a result of his ownership of theatrical property and shares of stock in various theatrical enterprises in those cities where once he had been the major entrepreneur. But his direct personal involvement in the theatre had ended on the night of January 11, 1843 when he took his farewell benefit as an actor and abdicated the managership of his New American Theatre. An account of Caldwell's busy life after that retirement would be, perhaps, as full of incident and achievement as the twenty-five years he spent on the American theatrical scene, but such an account lies outside and beyond the present study. Only a few highlights of the period from his retirement to his death will be noted here.

These twenty years which were to bring considerable wealth, added public veneration, and a never-before-experienced domestic bliss to James Caldwell began very...
inauspiciously. Caldwell's financial condition at the
time of his retirement was serious. From the record of a
series of desperate fiscal manouvers it is clear that he
was hard pressed even to meet his current obligations. One
week after the close of the New American Theatre on
January 14, 1843 Caldwell sold to his son William Shake­
peare Caldwell all the property he owned between Camp,
Poydras, St. Charles, and Gravier streets, including the
site of the old Camp Street Theatre.\(^1\) The sale was made
for $25,000, for which Shakespeare gave his father several
notes secured by a mortgage of the property. But on March
13 this conveyance was mysteriously cancelled.\(^2\) On this
same day the Camp Street Theatre and lot were mortgaged to
a Benjamin Florance for $10,000.\(^3\) With this money Caldwell
contracted with Christian Sindauer and Henry Wiegel to
rebuild the little Camp, which had been partially destroyed
by fire the previous September.\(^4\) The contractors undertook
the task for $4,671 and as part of their agreement promised
to use the old walls of the building so far as they would
serve. It is doubtful that Caldwell had plans for re­
entering the theatrical profession so soon after his

\(^1\) Notarial Acts of William Christy, op. cit., January
21, 1842.

\(^2\) Ibid., March 13, 1843.

\(^3\) Notarial Acts of H. B. Cenas, op. cit., March 13,
1843.

\(^4\) Ibid.
humiliating retreat from it, and the reconstruction probably merely represented his attempt to provide himself with a choice rental property. In the years to come the little theatre served as a locale for "occasional theatrical performances, balls, concerts, hops and exhibitions," but the respectability which should have gone with its age and distinguished history was somewhat tarnished by the giving over of the basement story of the building to an auctioneer of second-hand furnishings.

In April Caldwell again was in desperate straits and the same property which had been sold to him in January once more was sold to Shakespeare Caldwell for the same figure of $25,000. The only difference in the two transactions was that on the latter occasion the mortgage on the Camp Street Theatre which Caldwell had made to Florance was now assumed by Shakespeare and its value deducted from the sale price. And, once again, the act of sale was rescinded three months later. Obviously this parcel of real estate was being used as a pawn in a rather elaborate financial chess game, although what the precise motive for these repeated sales and rescissions was is not clear from the available evidence. It may be that

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7 Notarial Acts of H. B. Cenas, op. cit., July 1, 1843.
Caldwell was merely using his son as a convenient source of ready cash, although Shakespeare gave his father notes and not cash in each instance. It is more likely, however, that these transactions were a legal evasion employed by Caldwell to avoid attachments on this property by his creditors—if he did not have title to the property it could not be garnisheed. On the day of the rescission of the second act of sale, July 1, 1843, the Camp Street Theatre property was finally and irrevocably sold to a William Florance for $20,772 and passed forever from the hands of its creator. 8

But this sale in no way fully alleviated the situation and Caldwell's pecuniary distress continued for several years. A writer of later date described the situation as follows:

It would require pages to detail all the exploits of the wonderful enterprise and public spirit of this most useful citizen. Suffice it to say that, although all these enterprises proved eminently practical and successful... they involved Mr. Caldwell in such pecuniary losses that he was... for some years a virtual bankrupt. The indulgence of his creditors and his own energies and a fortunate investment in gas property in other cities, finally rescued him from complete insolvency. 9

In his frantic attempts to escape that insolvency Caldwell divorced himself in one way or another from his

8Ibid.

theatrical properties. On June 28, 1843 he empowered his son Shakespeare to sell his property at Third and Broadway in Cincinnati, the site of the former New Cincinnati Theatre. In this same instrument of procuration Shakespeare was given the authority to sell and convey Caldwell's stock in the Alexandria, Nashville and Huntsville theatres. Whether these stocks were actually sold at this time is not known. For several years, however, Caldwell continued to own the theatre buildings in Nashville and Mobile. In the latter city he had withdrawn from active management in the fall of 1842, during the time he was attempting to secure a New Orleans theatre to replace the burned St. Charles. The *Spirit of the Times* of September 24, 1842 noted that Caldwell had leased the Mobile Theatre to Mr. Julius Dumas, a well-known citizen of Mobile, and that the house was being decorated and prepared under the charge of Mr. Joseph Jefferson, son of the late lamented Jefferson. But during the next season, and for the next six years, Caldwell leased the Mobile Theatre to his old enemies Ludlow and Smith. Sol Smith recalls the circumstances of this arrangement as follows:

> It may be supposed that I entertained no very friendly feelings toward Mr. Caldwell... Such a supposition would not be justified by

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10 Notarial Acts of William Christy, *op. cit.*, June 28, 1843. This property had already been heavily mortgaged the previous year by Caldwell's partner, James Conover. (See Notarial Acts of William Christy, *op. cit.*, November 21, 1842.)
the fact. From the first moment I met him in 1827 until the day of his death, I entertained for him a warm friendship, and, except during the time of our rivalship in business, believe he reciprocated my feeling. When he retired from management, a very short time elapsed before we were on good terms again, and we so continued ever after. He soon came to take an interest in the new St. Charles, and was ever ready to advise with me (and I often consulted him) on difficult points which arose in its management. About the first act under the new (or rather restored) impulses which now inspired him was the offer to us of a lease of his new Mobile Theatre. Unfortunately, as it turned out, we took it, and lost a great deal of money there in after years.  

Noah Ludlow prefers to regard the offer of the Mobile property as another evidence of Caldwell's vengeance:

June 15th [1843], I received a letter from Mr. James H. Caldwell, offering us the Mobile theatre at a rent of $3,500 per year, without the saloons. Here was a strange event in theatrical history. The crusher offering to rent his Mobile theatre to the crushees! However, Sol Smith says in his book that Caldwell and himself were on very friendly terms after we opened the new St. Charles. Yes, upon as friendly terms as the monkey and the cat, when the former wished to use the paw of the latter to pull the hot chestnuts out of the fire. But the fact was this: Mr. C. was friendly because he desired to use Ludlow & Smith for his own interest's sake, and nothing more; and Ludlow & Smith were willing to rent his theatre because it suited their convenience in business, and nothing more. So, for the furtherance of this object, I left St. Louis on the 8th of June [sic], on the steamer Aleck Scott, for New Orleans, where Mr. Caldwell resided, as I preferred settling the matter in a personal interview rather than by writing, postal communication being a tedious process then.

On the 22d of June, about midnight, I arrived at New Orleans; the next day called on Mr. Caldwell at his residence, and we agreed upon the conditions for a lease for one year from the 1st of August ensuing, the principal conditions being the same as before stated. He wished the lease to

11 Smith, op. cit., p. 172.
be drawn by his attorney, Mr. West, who resided at Mobile. This was not inconvenient to me, for I desired to visit my family, who resided there. I started the same day for that city, arriving there on the 24th.12

Ludlow and Smith continued to lease the Mobile Theatre until the season of 1848-1849 when, according to Ludlow, they used the following incident to end the arrangement:

During the St. Louis season of 1848, Ludlow & Smith were informed that it was the intention of a certain number of gentlemen of New Orleans to erect in that city another theatre, which was to be rented to a manager who would bring a good company of performers, of such a kind as they should designate, and would also grant such privileges to the stockholders as they should require at the commencement of each season. Among these privileges were to be the following: Every stockholder subscribing a certain amount to have a seat exclusively under his control, in a portion of the parquet set apart and handsomely fitted up, and known as "Stockholders' seats." They were also to have a room conveniently situated, as a retiring-room during the performances, and known as the "club-room." There were other privileges, not necessary to enumerate, but which had never prevailed in the theatres under the management of Ludlow & Smith. That firm, having reason to believe that James H. Caldwell--of crushing memory--had something to do with this movement of a new theatre, took occasion at the proper time to inform that gentleman that they had no further use for his theatre at Mobile.13

Sol Smith, in his book, makes no such charge against Caldwell, but the suspicions expressed by Ludlow were confirmed in June of 1849 by the construction of Placide's Varieties Theatre. On June 1 Thomas Placide, one of the actor brothers of the late Jane Placide,

12Ludlow, op. cit., p. 576.
leased a lot on Gravier Street between Carondelet and Baronne—the site of the present New Orleans Cotton Exchange. The lease was given by Glendy Burke, a prominent New Orleans business man, and was for ten years, with an option to Placide either to buy or to extend the lease for another five years when the lease was up. The annual rent was to be $2,000.\(^{14}\) The next day Caldwell, Burke, and a large group of other individuals signed an agreement with Tom Placide, the chief feature of which was the formation of an association for the purpose of building a theatre on the aforementioned lot. Each member of the association was to issue five promissory notes in the amount of $100 each, for which he was to receive a share of stock in the association valued at $500. Placide agreed to pay an interest of eight per cent annually on each paid-up share, and to refund the stock out of half of his net profits. When all the stock had been retired he was to be the sole owner of the property. As in the plan outlined by Ludlow, each stockholder was to have a season ticket which admitted him either to one of two reserved boxes or to a special parquette section designated for members of the association, and to a retiring room appropriated to their exclusive use.\(^{15}\) The honor of laying the cornerstone of this new theatre was bestowed on James Caldwell, the third

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\(^{14}\) Notarial Acts of William Christy, \textit{op. cit.}, June 1, 1849.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., June 2, 1849.
time he had performed such an office in the city of New Orleans. The ceremony took place on July 19, 1849. In a speech given on the occasion, Caldwell remarked that this was the first theatre in the city to be erected by a joint stock company. The Varieties Theatre enjoyed a considerable popularity as a result of its policy of no stars and a reliance on the old stock company idea. In its second season the theatre claimed as members of its troupe Mr. and Mrs. George T. Rowe, he as prompter and she as a member of the stock. Caldwell married their daughter in the spring of 1850. The Varieties burned in 1852, but another theatre was built on the spot which was managed in succession by Dion Boucicault, William H. Crisp, John E. Owens and Mrs. Chanfrau. This theatre, which during its history bore both the names Gaities and Varieties, also burned in 1870 and a third Varieties Theatre was erected on Canal Street, where for a number of years Lawrence Barrett was manager. Sometime prior to 1853 James Caldwell came into possession of the property on which Placide's Varieties had stood, since this same property was sold by him in that year.

16 New Orleans Times, April 11, 1880.
17 Coad and Mims, op. cit., p. 176.
18 New Orleans Times, April 11, 1880.
19 Coad and Mims, loc. cit.
Caldwell probably maintained this kind of association with the theatre throughout the remainder of his days—for example, he was still in possession of his $500 share of Varieties stock at his death, although its value had depreciated to $4.00. But at the time of his retirement he seemed determined to put the theatre away from himself. In April of that year he transferred to the original owner the lease of a lot in Louisville which he, Samuel Drake, and Worthington Snethen had acquired in 1835 and on which it is believed they intended to erect a theatre. In January of 1844 he leased the Nashville Theatre, with all its props, scenery and fixtures, for three years to Alexander Mackenzie. The terms of this lease were rather curious. Instead of a fixed rent Caldwell was to receive ten percent of the nightly gross receipts. An agent of Caldwell was to run the box office, although his salary was to be paid by Mackenzie. Caldwell also included in the lease a dwelling house which he owned and which was in the rear of the theatre. The occupants of this house were to serve as caretakers of the theatre.

If the theatrical profession had proved a disappointing source of livelihood to Caldwell, his investments in gas manufacturing had returned profits of such magnitude that they

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21 Succession of James H. Caldwell, No. 20404, Second District Court, Civil Courts Building, New Orleans, Louisiana.


23 Ibid., January 15, 1844.
were eventually to make him a wealthy man. His initial and pioneering venture in this field had not resulted in anything like permanent success, of course. The New Orleans Gas Light and Banking Company had long since escaped his control, although he remained a large stockholder in the company at the time of his death. But he was more successful in retaining ownership of gas lighting enterprises essayed in other cities. His first attempt, after the launching of the New Orleans company, was in Louisville. In 1835 it was reported that the council of that city had entered into a contract with James H. Caldwell and Company for lighting their city with gas. However, at this writing there is no further evidence indicating that this project was ever carried out. Caldwell's successful conclusion of a similar contract with the city of Cincinnati, in partnership with James Conover in 1841, has already been noted. In 1850 Conover died and left one-fifth of his estate to a brother who was a captain in the United States Navy. Caldwell was able to buy the 100 shares of Cincinnati Gas Light and Coke Company stock, which the captain inherited, for $5,500, thus measurably increasing the strong position he enjoyed in that corporation by

24 Succession of James H. Caldwell, loc. cit.
25 Supra, p. 309.
26 Supra, pp. 494-96
virtue of the 500 shares he already owned. Similarly, his invasion of Mobile with his gasometers and pipes had resulted in his firm entrenchment there as the sole dispenser of illuminating gas.\textsuperscript{28} As in the case of Louisville, it is not known whether Caldwell actually concluded the treaty for gaslighting he was reported to have made with Havana.\textsuperscript{29}

Two successful gas companies was a handsome legacy for the Caldwell heirs and their father early provided his sons with a direct share in the affairs of his corporations. In doing so he seems to have been moved as much by paternal affection as by any selfish desire to perpetuate his possessions in his own name. His dependence on his eldest son, William Shakespeare Caldwell, in the dark days just after his withdrawal from the theatre has already been seen. At that date Shakespeare was just twenty-three years old and a resident of Mobile. He had, of course, spent his formative years with his mother, his sister Sophia, and his half-brothers in Virginia. At an appropriate age he had entered the University of Virginia, where he undertook the study of law. A classmate remembers him thus:

Of all our class, Shake Caldwell was facile princeps in his studies, as he was our "glass of fashion and mould of form." He was the son of Mr. James Caldwell of New Orleans, and the beautiful Widow Wormley of Fredricksburg. . . . My relations with Shakespeare were warm and affectionate till

\textsuperscript{28}\textit{Supra}, p. 309.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Supra}, p. 309.
the day of his death. He was one of the hand-
somest and most elegant gentlemen I have ever
known, as he was one of the ablest men of his
day. He was so handsome, so charming, so witty,
that many people credited him with being a
society man only; but, while brilliant in social
life, he was steadfast and strong in his affec-
tions and duties, with a great capacity for
business, so that when he died he was probably
the richest man in Virginia, and he used his great
wealth as a trust confided to him for the good
of his people.

After we parted, . . . I knew nothing of
his career for six years. . . . He went to Mobile
to enter upon the practice of law. After a year
of almost hopeless waiting for business, his
father, who had by that time successfully estab-
lished the gas works of New Orleans, resolved
to undertake similar works in Mobile, and wrote
to his son that if he would take charge of the
new enterprise, he would give him $750 per annum,
which was more than his law practice brought him.
After two years of successful management in Mobile,
Mr. James Caldwell decided to establish gas
works in Cincinnati, and offered Shakespeare the
management of these at $2000 per annum. This
property so increased in value in a few years
that Mr. Caldwell, enriched by the business in
Mobile and New Orleans, transferred to his son,
for his sister and himself, all of his interests
in Cincinnati. 30

The precise dates of Shakespeare's move to Mobile and his
subsequent transfer to Cincinnati are not known, but he may
have been a resident of New Orleans during 1849 to 1852;
since city directories of that period list a William S.
Caldwell as domiciled on St. John Street (now Loyola) be-
tween Gravier and Perdido streets, 31 a location very near
the New Orleans Gas Works, incidentally. By March of 1851

30 Dabney Herndon Maury, Recollections of A Virginian,

31 See, e.g., Cohen's New Orleans and Lafayette
Directory . . . (New Orleans: Daily Delta) for 1850, 1851
and 1852.
he was in Cincinnati, however, and apparently had at least maintained a residence there for some time previous to that. On March 18, 1851 James Caldwell, "for and in consideration of the faithful and important services which have been rendered by his son William Shakespeare Caldwell of Cincinnati . . . as his agent and particularly in his capacity of President of the Cincinnati Gas Light and Coke Company, of which the appearer is a large stockholder, and of the further consideration of the sum of one dollar" sold to his son two hundred shares of capital stock in the company. 32

In 1853 Shakespeare Caldwell took the grand tour of Europe. Letters which he wrote from there to his mother, his sister and his half-brother Carter Wormeley in Virginia reveal Shakespeare to have been a moody and mystical young man at this time. 33 He relates several instances of his own presentiment, and examples of what he calls "animal magnetism." His religious views, about which he goes on at some length, are unorthodox but profound—a position which was radically to shift after his marriage. At thirty-two Shakespeare was still unmarried, but had proposed to a wealthy Kentucky heiress. She was Eliza Breckinridge, daughter of the late James D. Breckinridge,

33 Virginia Historical Society, William Shakespeare Caldwell MSS., IW8945b452-458, IW8945b480, and IW8945a18.
a member of Congress from his native state from 1822 to 1824. According to a letter to his mother written from Paris on September 4, Shakespeare's return to America in the fall of 1853 hinged on whether Eliza would set an early date for their marriage. Eventually, the marriage did take place, although whether at the time proposed by Shakespeare is not known. After some years of marriage two daughters were born of this union, Mary Guendaline "Mamie" Byrd Caldwell and Mary Elizabeth "Lena" Caldwell. In their own marriages both girls followed the pattern of nineteenth century American heiresses in acquiring husbands with foreign titles: "Mamie" became the Marquise des Monstiers-Merinville; "Lena" became the Baroness von Zedtwitz. Their mother, Eliza, had converted William Shakespeare Caldwell to Catholicism, and during his later life he effected several philanthropies in the name of his new faith. In Louisville he established an asylum for indigent men to be run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, and a few years later endowed a similar institution in Richmond for $250,000. At least one of his daughters

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35 Daily Picayune, May 23, 1898.

36 Ibid., June 17, 1890.

37 Valentine Papers, op. cit.

38 Maury, op. cit., p. 21.
followed in his benevolent footsteps. "Mamie" is reported to have contributed substantially to the foundation of Catholic University in Washington, D. C. in 1884.\footnote{Ibid. Cf., \textit{New York Times}, December 20, 1884.} "Mamie" Caldwell died October 5, 1909, her sister "Lena" December 16, 1910.\footnote{Letter to the author from Mr. Ivan F. Read, vice-president United States Trust Company, New York, January 2, 1962.} At this writing one great-grandson of James H. Caldwell, through his son Shakespeare, survives--Mr. Waldemar von Zedtwitz of New York City.

Little is known of Sophy Caldwell, James Caldwell's daughter by his first wife Maria. Except that she was younger than her brother Shakespeare, not even the date of her birth has been discovered. On February 15, 1862, at her father's house in New Orleans, she married a Mr. Thomas J. Deane.\footnote{\textit{Daily Picayune}, February 15, 1862.} At the time of her wedding Shakespeare was living in Europe. He mentions the event in a letter to his half-brother Dr. Carter Wormley written at the time the latter was being held a Union prisoner at Fort Delaware. Parenthetically, Shakespeare had anti-slavery sentiments and did not serve the Southern cause, nor, apparently the Northern either, for that matter. In late September of 1872 Sophia Caldwell Deane died at Richmond.\footnote{William S. Caldwell MSS, loc. cit.}

James Caldwell's strong affection for his children

\footnote{\textit{Daily Picayune}, February 15, 1862.}
is attested to by his last will and testament in which he bequeathed them equal shares of his considerable fortune. Included in this patrimony were his two natural sons, James Henry Caldwell, Jr. and Edward Holland Caldwell. It will be recalled that these two children were the product of a liaison begun about 1837 with a Margaret Abrams. Presumably the Abrams woman died sometime before 1850. Presumably, also, Caldwell finally succeeded in obtaining a divorce from his wife Maria sometime before 1850. These assertions are made on the basis of two facts: First, on May 22, 1850 Caldwell married Josephine Rowe and would have had to be legally free to do so. Second, in a deposition he made in 1857 in connection with the legitimation of his two bastard sons, Caldwell denoted Margaret Abrams as the woman "whom he intended to make his lawful wedded wife, but who unfortunately died before the marriage promised . . . could be accomplished." It is assumed that had Margaret Abrams been alive at the time of his divorce from Maria he would have married her and not Josephine Rowe.

It is probably not idle speculation to suppose that Caldwell took his two sons into his own home, and that upon his marriage to Josephine his new bride welcomed the children as though they were her own. She herself

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43 Supra, p. 358.
44 New Orleans Weekly Delta, May 27, 1850.
soon was blessed with a child. Harry Stroud Caldwell was born on October 18, 1855. His father was a venerable sixty-two years of age, his mother a mere twenty-six. In two years the child's mother would be dead, at age five he also would be dead, but his aged father would survive him by three more years.

For the last thirteen years of his life James H. Caldwell led a far more conventional life than he had ever led in the sixty-odd years which had preceded that time. It was a life of business success, public respect, marriage and children, and the visitations of death in his new family. Success and acclaim were not new to him, of course, but the atmosphere of quiet accomplishment, as opposed to the mercurial rise and fall of his fortunes in former years, was something never before experienced, as was his new home life. And, ironically, this domestic bliss which he had finally acquired in the autumn years of his manhood was of only short duration. Little has been discovered with regard to James Caldwell's brief seven years of marriage with Josephine Rowe. Apparently he was nearly as devoted to her mother, Louisa, as to her. At his own death he bequeathed Louise Rowe the house in which they all had resided at 121 Carondelet Street, between Poydras and Lafayette, then Hevia Street. The terms of this bequest were that Mrs. Rowe be permitted to occupy

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46 As recorded on the Caldwell Family Tomb, Cypress Grove Cemetery, New Orleans, Louisiana.
the house rent-free for two years after his death, after which time the executors were to sell the dwelling, except that Louisa was to have the opportunity to purchase it for $20,000. To enable her to make this purchase, and to prevent the money becoming a part of his general legacy to his heirs, Caldwell directed his executors, three years after his death, to pay her the $20,000 with interest, in the event she wished to buy the property. In a codicil to this will he left her, additionally, all his "household and kitchen furniture, ... beds, bedding and fixtures." That Mrs. Rowe accepted these bequests is indicated by the fact that she was still living at this address in 1870 at the time when James Junior died.

Unfortunately, Caldwell's will does not give the total amount of the estate he left. In probating the will in New Orleans in April of 1864 an inventory of his Louisiana properties was appended to the document, and this gives some indication of the size of the estate, while clearly not representing the whole of it. A recapitulation of this inventory showed that the house at 121 Carondelet Street was appraised at $15,000, the appraised values of various stocks and scripts was $46,191.60, with dividends due on them in the amount of an additional

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47 Succession of James H. Caldwell, loc. cit.
48 Daily Picayune, April 6, 1870 and New Orleans Times, April 6 and 7, 1870.
$1,108.60. Two hundred forty-three shares of valuable New Orleans Gaslight Company stock represented the major portion of the total, but the other stock ranged from bank stocks to rail stocks--including forty shares in the New Orleans, Jackson and Great Northern, the successor to Caldwell's old New Orleans and Nashville Railroad--to stock in Placide's Varieties Theatre, which was declared "of no value." The total value of Caldwell's New Orleans property was set at $62,300.20. His Cincinnati and Mobile holdings undoubtedly increased this figure considerably.

The entire estate was left in equal fourths to the four Caldwell children, William, James, Jr., Edward and Sophia, with the daughter's portion to be administered by James, Jr. In a codicil which Caldwell wrote about two weeks before his death he made some additional specific bequests. James Junior received his silver goblets, William the silver punch bowl and ladle given him by the Gas Bank. William also received an armoire containing his father's library of books, "with the exception of sundry books therein belonging to my sons James H. and Edward H. Caldwell and Mrs. Louisa Rowe." After ten years of marriage, William and Eliza were expecting their first child at the time of James Caldwell's final illness. His excitement at the prospect of becoming a grandfather for the first time, even posthumously, is reflected in the following article in the codicil to his will:

I give and bequeath to the first born
child of my dear Daughter Mary Eliza Caldwell
the wife of my son William S. Caldwell the sum
of Five thousand pounds sterling as a birth gift
to the child, and in case my dear daughter Mary
Eliza Caldwell . . . does not give birth to the
child with which she is now enceinte, or the
child does not live, I then give and bequeath
the five thousand pounds sterling to my dear
daughter-in-law Mary Eliza Caldwell the wife of
my son William S. Caldwell.

The remaining bequests to his family included a seal ring
to Shakespeare, "the gold watch which I now wear" to Sophy,
and one thousand pounds sterling to his nephew James
William Hunt of the County of Kent, England.

The codicil to Caldwell's will reveals something
of his personal relationship to the slavery issue of his
day. He had been a slave-hol der himself, of course, and
presumably shared the Southern view with respect to the
legality and morality of slavery. He had even made public
utterance of anti-abolition sentiments. Just what his
slave holdings were through the years is not known, but,
for example, in 1844 he is known to have owned at least
nine slaves, since he mortgaged that number in securing a
loan of $5,000 from the Bank of Louisiana. It will be
recalled that he had inherited a female slave named Letty
in the property left him by Jane Placide. Though emanci-
pated at the time of his death, Letty had remained with

49 Supra, p. 310.
51 Supra, p. 251.
Caldwell throughout the twenty-eight years since Jane's death. At his own death Caldwell remembered this servant, and her son, with specific bequests:

That the sum of one hundred dollars per year shall be paid by my Executors or assigns to my colored servant Letty during her natural life, and she to have her choice of which branch of the family that she may wish to remain with at any time. And I give and bequeath her son Adolphe my second best suit of clothes in full. 52

This kindness to an old retainer is not the only instance of this sort in the life of Caldwell. While his motives for the deed are not clear beyond an apparent wish to do a kindness for a mother and her children, it is a matter of record that in August of 1840 Caldwell had, "in consideration of the friendship and good will which he feels for the two minors Jane & Oscar, children of Maria Bowers, a f.w.c. [free woman of color]," made a donation to them of certain items, listed in detail, of furniture, linens, dishes, pictures, horses, harness, cistern, etc. This same inventory he had purchased from the children's mother for $1,000 about ten days before. 53 What relationship to him these people were, or what the underlying circumstances of this curious transaction were, must remain a mystery.

One further legal transaction regarding Negro slaves is recorded. On January 14, 1853 Caldwell, in company with

52 Succession of James H. Caldwell, loc. cit.

his young wife Josephine and her mother and father, appeared before a notary to sell a mulattress slave named Elsey, "aged about 50 years" to Elie Charles E. Chosy for $275, the slave being the property of Josephine and her mother. 54

As suggested earlier, the Caldwell house on Carondelet street had become a sizeable menage: Caldwell, Josephine, Mr. and Mrs. Rowe, James Junior, Edward, baby Harry, and assorted servants. On March 11, 1857 the status of James Junior and Edward within the family circle was made legally equivalent to that of their baby half-brother Harry. On that date the Louisiana Legislature passed an act in which it was provided that "James H. Caldwell . . . is authorized to acknowledge James H. Caldwell, Junior and Edward Holland Caldwell, issue of said James H. Caldwell, Senior and Margaret Abrams, deceased, as his children . . . entitled to receive or acquire by donation of inheritance from their father . . . as if they had been his issue by lawful wedlock," 55 James Junior was twenty years old at the time, his brother Edward thirteen.

But this family group—hopefully a happy one—was soon to be destroyed. On September 16, 1857 Josephine Caldwell died. 56 Sometime before Caldwell's own death in September six years later, his father-in-law George Rowe


55 Ibid., March 17, 1857.

56 New Orleans Daily True Delta, September 17, 1857. This same data is inscribed on the Caldwell Family Tomb.
also passed away. Ludlow describes this gentleman as "for many years . . . prompter of different theatres . . . a reliable, intelligent, and quiet man." George Rowe was still alive early in 1858, however, on the occasion of Caldwell's presentation to Louisa Rowe, "as a testimonial of the regard and esteem which he feels," articles of silverware valued at $3,500, since Rowe's signature appears as a witness on this conveyance. Death touched the Caldwell name again, although remotely, on September 26, 1859. The Richmond Dispatch of that date carries the obituary notice of Mrs. Maria Caldwell. And James Caldwell, now doubly a widower, received a third blow from the Dark Angel on May 20, 1860 when his youngest son, Harry Stroud Caldwell, aged four years and seven months, died. Buried next to his mother, the child has this inscription carved in the tombstone over them:

Sweet Prattler, thou has gone,
Gone to thy mother's loving arm again,
Gone to that home above the homes of men.
We mourn not when the sun
Sinks in the west, for in the morn,
As thou has risen--'twill rise a glory to the skies.

The cemetery in which his family reposed, and to which his own remains would be consigned, had come into existence in 1838 through the energies, in part, of James H. Caldwell.  

57 Ludlow, op. cit., p. 279.
59 New Orleans Bee, March 24, 1838.
Caldwell's life after his retirement from the theatre was filled with more than just familial affairs, however. He still had political aspirations and a strong sense of public duty. Even before his retirement he was reported as being considered for a choice federal appointive post. On March 10, 1842 the Daily Picayune carried the following news item:

The nomination of JAMES H. CALDWELL to the office of Superintendent of the Branch Mint at New Orleans, has been sent to the United States Senate, by the President. Mr. John M. Kennedy has been removed. If any change was necessary, we venture to affirm that a more popular appointment could not have been made. Mr. Caldwell's industry and capabilities are so well known, that his nomination will undoubtedly be confirmed forthwith, by the Senate.

Two days later the same paper reported that the correspondent of the New York Tribune was of the opinion that this nomination would be rejected by the Senate. On March 15 the Picayune gave its explanation of the motives it supposed underlay this honor:

Six or seven years ago, it will be recollected, a complimentary benefit was tendered to the veteran tragedian, Thos. A. Cooper and his daughter, by James H. Caldwell, proprietor of the St. Charles Theatre. Miss Cooper was then a beautiful girl, . . . her entire worldly wealth consisting in the histrionic genius she inherited from her gifted father. Of course they were poor. All sorts of reverses had deprived the father of his substance; yet

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60Supra, pp. 257-58. It will be recalled that at this time, April 14, 1834, Caldwell had retired briefly from management, and the benefit was actually held at the Camp Street Theatre then under the management of Russell and Rowe.
they were deserving; the old tragedian had been one of the pillars of the American stage--his child was as pure as she was talented and accomplished, and promised to shed lustre upon the profession which destiny seemed to have marked out for her. The founder of the drama in the South, saw in them the features of those who had eloquent claims upon every son and daughter of Thespis--their situation demanded his sympathy--they had a right to his respect and esteem.

He did all that he was capable of doing--more than they had reason to anticipate. He gave the use of his theatre, free of charge, for the purposes of a complimentary benefit. The house was crowded with the beauty and fashion of the Crescent City, to do homage to intellect, and a substantial addition was made to the worldly resources of the aged player and his fair child. The incident, like a thousand others, passed away from the memory of the great public, and in the whirl of life, Cooper and his daughter were nearly forgotten.

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The child of Thomas A. Cooper became the bride of a son of John Tyler, and is now the daughter-in-law of the President of the United States. During the few years that have flown since the benefit was given to Cooper, James H. Caldwell, like almost every man engaged in active business, has experienced some vicissitudes. Although his great energy of character and unflagging spirit have carried him safely through, yet he has experienced many of the difficulties which beset us all in our career from the cradle to the grave. A few days ago Mr. Caldwell received intelligence from Washington, that President Tyler had nominated him to the Senate as Superintendent of the Branch Mint in New Orleans. It was an appointment entirely unsolicited and unexpected, and to this hour, so far as we have any knowledge, Mr. Caldwell knows nothing of the originally secret motives which prompted the action of the President. Great as is the fitness of our esteemed fellow citizen for the station to which he has been nominated, and popular as the appointment is likely to be, yet he is well aware, we imagine, that other considerations, and other influences first turned the attention of the President towards him.

May not the solution of all that is mysterious

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61 There was a charge of $300 which was paid to Russell and Rowe for the use of the theatre.
in the affair be found, by a glance at one of the brightest traits of human character: May it not be possible that the daughter of Tom Cooper, the tragedian, has ever remembered the kindness and attention of James H. Caldwell to herself and her venerated parent, while the star of their prosperity was hidden behind an envious cloud? May not the action of President Tyler be traced, in the first instance, to the irresistible power of woman's gratitude?

But the United States Senate, perhaps of a less romantic turn of mind, did not confirm this proposed honor. There is no record that James H. Caldwell ever received this or any other Federal appointment.

But Caldwell did continue to walk the paths of public life. He continued as a member of the Council of the Second Municipality throughout the rest of the existence of that body, and when the City of New Orleans returned to a single governing body in 1852, he was elected to the new Board of Aldermen and served as president of that body during 1855-1856, after which time he seems to have withdrawn from public life. During the last two years of its existence he had served as Recorder for the Second Municipality, a post which combined the executive function of a presiding officer for the council and the judicial function of a petty magistrate.

James Caldwell also served a term in the Louisiana

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63 Ibid., 1851, pp. 21 and 217; 1852, pp. 31 and 260.
House of Representatives, from 1848 to 1850. He seems to have been a responsible and active member of that body when he was present, although roll calls show him frequently absent. He served on the Committees on Public Education and on Public Buildings.

Caldwell also fulfilled his public duty in military matters, at least for a time. The Picayune of December 7, 1842 reported his acceptance of his commission as captain in the Louisiana Militia, Forty-second Regiment of the First Brigade. Caldwell was Captain of the Eleventh Company and as First Lieutenant of the Tenth Company was Sol Smith.

With increasing age Caldwell naturally began to restrict the range and intensity of activity which he formerly was wont to engage in. His real estate holdings in New Orleans and elsewhere were still extensive, and during the 1840's and 1850's he engaged in various sales and purchases of property, much of it in the newer sections of expanding New Orleans. In 1857 he became a principal stockholder in the Bank of James Robb, the institution which succeeded the ill-fated Gas Bank. Robb had gained control of the Gas Bank stock by buying at low prices during the Panic of 1837. In 1846 he founded the new bank

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65 Daily Picayune, December 9, 1842.

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bearing his name, and in 1857 reorganized it with a capitalization of $600,000, of which he held $500,000 of the stock. The remaining $100,000 was distributed among such men as Judah P. Benjamin, P. N. Wood, Henry T. Lonsdale, Cornelius Fellowes and Caldwell.

Concrete evidence of progress had always been an enthusiasm of James Caldwell's, and his talents for expediting construction projects led him, sometime in the 1850's, to undertake the following interesting job:

The U. S. Marine Hospital, on the opposite side of the river, facing the second municipality, which had been commenced in 1834, but was unfinished and half in ruins, was taken under contract for its completion by James N. [sic] Caldwell, founder of the theatres and gas-works, projector of the Nashville rail route, and, in short, the personal exponent of the material advance and enterprise of those times. The hospital, turned into a powder-house during the late war [Civil War], met its end one day by being blown to atoms.

The foundation of James Caldwell's growing wealth was, of course, his interests in Cincinnati and Mobile, principally the gas companies of those cities. He was fortunate to have readymade executives for these companies in the persons of his three sons. It has been seen that Shakespeare had become president and a major stockholder

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in Cincinnati. Sometime during the 1850's James Junior and Edward removed to Mobile, where they undertook the management of the Mobile Gas Company. The elder brother, James, served as President of the company until his death in 1870, whereupon Edward succeeded to the office until his death two years later. Neither of these sons shared their father's longevity; both died at relatively youthful ages. James died at his brother's residence in Mobile on April 4, 1870 in the thirty-third year of his age. His funeral was held in New Orleans, from the house of Mrs. George T. Rowe, on April 6, and he was buried in his father's tomb in Cypress Grove Cemetery, then known as the Firemen's Cemetery.  

His obituary in the *New Orleans Times* of April 6 incorrectly identified him as "the youngest son of that distinguished and venerated citizen of New Orleans, to whom this city is so greatly indebted," but mentioned his position as president of the Mobile gas works and as "a young man of excellent character and popular traits" with "a large circle of friends." The shadow of his late father hovered over him even in death, and the following day the same paper, in reporting his burial said:

> Without being distinguished for that far-reaching enterprise which rendered his father a man of such special note in this city, the deceased was yet characterized by many of

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68 *Daily Picayune*, April 6, 1870, and as recorded on the Caldwell Family Tomb.
his father's virtues. He had the suavity of manner and gentleness of deportment; the same unflinching integrity of purpose and abhorrence of all that was mean and despicable. Mr. Caldwell was married a few years ago to a young lady of Mobile; whom he leaves a widow.

The name of his wife and whether or not the couple had children has not been determined.

When Edward H. Caldwell died on October 8, 1872, just a little over two years after his older brother, and in the twenty-ninth year of his age, the newspaper still took the occasion to recall the memory of the father. The New Orleans Times of the day of his death called him "the youngest son of Mr. James H. Caldwell, whose memory is still cherished with so much affection and respect by our old citizens." Edward was reported, incorrectly, to have succeeded to the presidency of the Mobile Gas Company at his father's death, rather than at his brother's. The paper further reported that two Caldwell children survived--W. Shakespeare, "a very wealthy and accomplished gentleman now resident in New York, and a daughter who lives in Richmond. The Times apparently had not learned of Sophy's death at Richmond in September.

Edward also had married. This fact is revealed through the biographical data on his distinguished son, James H. Caldwell, the third of that name. This material reveals that Edward's wife was Carolina Amelia Shields.

Their son James III was born at Mobile on March 21, 1865, and thus was seven at the time of his father's death. He attended Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute at Troy, New York where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1886. He returned to Mobile where he assumed the vice-presidency of the Mobile Gas and Electric Company, a post which he held until 1904. On May 3, 1887 he married Margery Josephine Christy and returned to Troy as an engineer with the Ludlow Valve Company, an institutional name of some significance in his heritage, though probably of only coincidental nature. James Caldwell III served on the boards of various corporations, charities, railroads, and banking firms throughout his life. One such position of trust was as vice-president and trustee of his alma mater, a position he held at the time of his death on November 18, 1931. A dormitory on the Rensselaer campus is named for him, according to the obituary notice which appeared in the New Orleans Times-Picayune of November 19. This notice also states that he was "said to have installed New Orleans first electric lighting system for public use."

Considering the many miles of New Orleans streets, it is ironic that a city, which owes so much to the name of Caldwell for the illumination of those thoroughfares, has never seen fit to designate a single one "Caldwell Street." 

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70 The only twentieth century public recognition of New Orleans' debt to Caldwell occurred on December 17, 1948 when a ceremony was held at the Cabildo in New Orleans'
When William Shakespeare Caldwell died in New York City on May 23, 1874 the New Orleans Daily Picayune of May 26 headlined his obituary as "The Last of the Caldwells." Again, more than half the notice of the son's death was devoted to a review of the life and accomplishments of the deceased's father, but the paper had this to say about James H. Caldwell's eldest son:

William Shakespeare Caldwell was as near the perfection of manly beauty as we have ever known. In mind and character he was as comely, attractive and highly endowed as he was in personal graces and attractions. Every attention was given to his education, and all the advantages of wealth and of the devotion and care of admiring and devoted parents were enjoyed by him. He grew up an accomplished, elegant gentleman, of exquisite taste, refined manners and at the same time, of solid judgment, excellent business qualifications and great knowledge of men and affairs. Intrusted by his father with the management of the gas works in Cincinnati, he succeeded, by the great advance in the value of that property, in rescuing his father from great financial embarrassments in this city, and eventually became at an early age a wealthy man. Then he married Miss Breckinridge, a great heiress of Kentucky, and for many years resided abroad, leading the life of a retired capitalist and gentleman of elegant leisure and great lover of the arts. His father dying during the late war, William S. Caldwell devoted himself to the settlement of the large estate bequeathed by him, among his various heirs and legatees, which pious duty he performed so satisfactorily that no dispute ever arose among them. After seventeen years of marriage, his wife, whose large property, in case of her death without issue, was bequeathed by her father to collateral relatives, presented

French Quarter. The two gas jets which now burn in the arcade there were lighted, a short address was given in front of Caldwell's bust (a possession of the Cabildo Museum), and a female singer rendered "The Old Lamplighter." (New Orleans Item, December 13, 1948.)
her husband with his first born. There were several other children born to them, and the wife died some years ago. The announcement of the death of the husband, at the comparatively early age of fifty-four, will excite surprise as well as sorrow among all who knew him, as we did, as a model of masculine vigor, temperance, equanimity and good sense.

James H. Caldwell had himself died in New York City, where he had moved sometime shortly before his demise. The exact date of his leaving New Orleans is uncertain, but it was sometime between February and October of 1862. He doubtless was present at his daughter's wedding in New Orleans in February. But by October 6, 1862 he was living in Cincinnati, probably with Shakespeare and Eliza, since his will bearing that date was written there.\textsuperscript{71} By August 29, 1863 he was in New York where, on that date, he added a codicil to his will.\textsuperscript{72} His health had been poor for some time and this change in his will, coming so close to the date of his death, may indicate that he felt the end was near. On Friday, September 11, 1863 at 5:30 P.M. that end came\textsuperscript{73} in the 70th year of his life. He died at 91 Prince street where his friends were invited to call to see his remains. On the 14th his funeral took place at St. Patrick's Cathedral, with a solemn mass for the dead sung by three clergymen. This, incidentally, is the sole reference discovered as to Caldwell's religious

\textsuperscript{71}Succession of James H. Caldwell, loc. cit.
\textsuperscript{72}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{73}New York Times, September 12, 1863.
affiliation—apparently he died a Catholic. A long procession, including "a large number of New Orleanians, and others who have been resident at different times of that city," followed his remains from Prince Street to the church. Many of these mourners were "of the theatrical profession," and several of the family relatives were reported to be present.\(^\text{74}\)

Notwithstanding that the war between North and South was still raging, arrangements were made to transport James Caldwell's body back to his adopted city New Orleans for burial. By October 11, 1863 the steamboat Morning Star, with Caldwell's remains aboard, had arrived at the Crescent City. His funeral was announced for that afternoon.\(^\text{75}\) "Largely attended by the solid men of the city," according to the Daily Picayune of the 13th, Caldwell's funeral began at the Dead Church on Rampart Street and proceeded to the Firemen's Cemetery where the body was deposited in the family tomb which already contained the bodies of Caldwell's wife Josephine and their child Harry. The Picayune said:

> Without pretending to be a saint, James H. Caldwell was a man of enlarged and judicious enterprise; of noble and generous impulses. For many years he was the pioneer of progress in this his adopted city. The square block paving stones on our principal streets and the

\(^\text{74}\) New Orleans Times, September 29, 1863, as quoted from the Philadelphia Inquirer, September 14, 1863.

\(^\text{75}\) Ibid., October 11, 1863. Cf. New Orleans Daily True Delta, October 11, 1863.
gas lamps which illumine our thoroughfares, pronounce, in the silent eloquence of utility, a constant eulogium on his name. In advance of his age, he served at once as a guide and an instructor. But he taught by example, never assuming the airs of a superior intelligence, which might repel, nor the avarice which is sometimes the concomitant of comprehensive genius. Kind in his nature, urbane and accommodating in his deportment, he passed through life, performing well his part, and at last died, without an enemy. Such men are few and far between. Let their memory be revered.

Caldwell's other eulogies in the press were equally laudatory. That of the New York Express of September 11, 1863, which the Daily True Delta reprinted on September 22, said, in part, after reviewing Caldwell's many accomplishments:

Mr. Caldwell, in the midst of his other duties and avocations, has been a true friend to the profession to which, in his youth and early manhood he belonged. He from the start took a deep and active interest in the American Dramatic Fund Association, and when, a few years ago a plan was suggested for an increase of its usefulness, he invited two others to join him in a donation of $10,000 each to the fund. Within a few months, we believe, he had paid his portion of that donation.

And in its own panegyric the following day the Daily True Delta summed up what must have been the memories and emotions of at least the older citizens of New Orleans:

DEATH OF AN HONORABLE CITIZEN.--In ordinary times of tranquility the death of a citizen, whose life, since its first identification with our city and State, has been so blameless, useful and honorable, would have made a profound impression upon this community, albeit he died at a ripe old age, watched over, tended and prayed for by the fruit of his loins and the flesh of his flesh. Such was our late fellow-citizen, James H. Caldwell. The deceased gentleman was a native of England, and at an
early age adopted the stage as a profession. His histrionic talents were fine, and to aid them nature richly endowed him with a handsome, genteel and attractive person. In the practice of that profession, some forty years ago, he first came to New Orleans, with which-we had almost said from its real creation, he fully identified himself thereafter. He might be considered as the founder of dramatic representations here: and, indeed, in the highest appreciation of the actor's profession, and a just and creditable pride in its exaltation, we doubt if the deceased ever had a competitor worthy of him in the United States. It is not, however, as the founder of the finest theatre in America, or in connection with theatricals, that the heart of Louisiana will ache at the announcement of his demise. We have seen him as legislator and as city counsellor, aiding by his cultivated mind, his large experience, his wonderful creative faculties, in the establishment of a prosperity and the development of a civilization in Louisiana which, at the commencement of this civil war, was surpassed in no community of equal numbers upon the earth. Nor did any man, living or dead, ever so largely contribute to the prosperity, the comfort, the just pride and the social independence of this city as James H. Caldwell; none of his predecessors, of his contemporaries, or of the living race of today at all approached him in prevision, in practical grasp, in enlightened perception of the great that was possible, in generous and noble enterprise, and utter unselfishness of purpose. He was hawked at, maligned, vilified by the mean and the ignoble in his more active days; and the man who above all others majestically towered, was charged and sneered at as a utopian and a visionary by creatures who, years afterwards, claimed a reputation for doing that he had--with the foresight and sagacity of surprising genius--ineffectually, against their opposition, endeavored to accomplish. He has left lasting memorials of his just claims to the respect and homage of the people of his adopted State; the gas works, deemed at the period of their construction little better than a crazy dream, in a city located as this was, were eminently successful. He first proclaimed the wisdom and possibility of square block pavement, and had the ignorance, envy and corruption which has ever cursed the administration of our city affairs been conquered then, not a street of our city would today be
without it, and doubtless thousands of dollars
would have been saved, while the benefits to health,
enjoyment and cleanliness would have been incredi-
ble. In truth, no great undertaking of the early
times was unidentified with his name, character
and enterprise. The Nashville railroad was one of
his earliest propositions for the aggrandizement
of our city, and while his genius may in such
vast undertakings have been in advance of the
spirit, or perhaps we might say the capacity of
the times, this cannot in the least detract from
the transcendent merits of the faithful citizen,
ever restless in furtherance of the greatness
and peaceful glories of his country.

There is as much truth as there is propriety in this tri-
bute. James Henry Caldwell's fifty years spent in catering
to his city were, in themselves, a complete testimony.
His life record could speak for him.

James H. Caldwell was a product of his times
at the same time that he was in many respects far in
advance of those times. In his book Young America, Robert
E. Riegel describes the standards of social acceptance
in the period in which Caldwell spent his productive
years. He says:

Wealth was not only a very pleasant
possession but the most usual criterion of
social importance in a new and amorphous nation,
where other lines of demarcation were often
either blurred or non-existent. . . . The
acquisition of wealth was for most people the
favored way to improve their standing in
society. 76

Whether Caldwell consciously set out to achieve social
status by means of the acquisition of wealth is immaterial.
In the amassing of his fortune it is obvious that he took

76 Robert E. Riegel, Young America 1830-1840, (Norman:
a giant step toward a social status far beyond what he might ordinarily have expected as a member of the acting profession. As Riegel further points out:

The morals of actors and actresses were viewed with suspicion. Actors were only infrequently from the more cultured classes, and were tempted by the hard life, bad hours, exhausting travel, and dirty and drafty theaters, now and then to drink too much. Actresses might individually be considered charming and talented, but collectively they were thought to be little better than prostitutes, with their jobs dependent on bodily favors to the manager."77

Obviously Caldwell was of a different cut from the types which Riegel describes, but perhaps to overcome the current prejudices he early associated himself with people of refinement. The successes he enjoyed in Charleston and in his first years of management in Virginia attest to this and, while it may be presumptuous to infer that his marriage to the aristocratic Widow Wormley, for all its odd history, was born of ambition, still it is at the same time apparent that this alliance did no harm to his career. From the first of his New Orleans residence, too, he sought out and cultivated the progressive, the educated and the cultured men of the city and, in company with them, became a leader of the so-called American movement for economic expansion and material improvement of the city. Here, again, his innate talents cannot be denied. As a contemporary of Caldwell's described him:

It was a peculiarity of James H. Caldwell

77 Ibid., p. 374.
to do whatever he did with all his might. No obstacle seemed to deter or impede the execution of any public or individual enterprise of his. Beside being a splendid performer, he was an accomplished gentleman, and a fine, classic scholar. His reading was select and extensive. At a very early day, he was impressed with the future importance of New Orleans as a commercial city, and commenced to identify himself with the American population, and to make this his future home. His ideas on this subject were in advance of those of many whose business had always been commerce, and they were generally deemed Utopian and extravagant; but his self-reliance was too great to heed any ridicule thrown upon any thought or enterprise of his. He invested his limited means in property in the second municipality, and lent himself, heart and soul, in connection with Samuel J. Peters, to its development into the proportions his imagination conceived it was ultimately capable of attaining, should the extent of its commerce reach the magnitude he supposed it would.

It is even more to Caldwell's credit that he engendered such respect almost in spite of his unconventional connubial alliances. Without any attempt to judge him, it can be noted that his attitudes toward marriage and family life were somewhat outside, if not beyond, the strictures of the times in which he lived. It must be concluded, then, that his position of respect within the community, achieved despite his non-conformity, was a tribute to his civic accomplishments and his personal attractiveness. At the same time it should be noted, perhaps, that New Orleans has never been a city which has adhered in any strict fashion to the norm of current American mores.

78Sparks, op. cit., p. 447.
Perhaps one of the most incisive comments upon the character and personality of James Caldwell was given by another of his contemporaries, Judge J. S. Whitaker. Whitaker wrote a whole series of sketches of prominent Louisianans which subsequently were reproduced in a collection published in book form. Of Caldwell, Whitaker said, in part:

Wonderfully versatile in his mind and character CALDWELL is endowed with singular and most opposite talents; a perfect mechanic—\[he served no apprenticeship; the author—the actor—the literary man—he experienced not the advantages of a literal education; ever planning, ever projecting; he is no visionary enthusiast.—He works for the present and for future generations, and yet is a man of many and various fancies—an excellent adviser in public affairs, we shall find him the safe and useful legislator. Such a man as CALDWELL will not work at the capitol for nothing; he will accomplish before he retires from the body, some great work for his beloved city; perhaps secure water navigation between lake and river—the sure and certain means of destroying the baleful pestilence of New Orleans.

In ... Caldwell, I find one who labors for the public more than for himself; who in every movement of his life, displays a utilitarian spirit; who projects public improvements, and carries them to successful issues; who, while regarding the useful and the beneficient, looks also to the enjoyments of his fellow-citizens—supplies festivals, games and amusements, and finds therein his own profit and gratification; who seeks out unfriended talent and genius winning liberal patronage from strangers in foreign lands, to the Burkes and others, whose abilities he has brought to light; who works for his own fame while he seeks to elevate others; who is neither spendthrift in his means,

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nor contracted in his schemes of benevolence.

But while James Caldwell's personal achievements of fortune, respectability and political power, and his public accomplishments of corporations, city improvements and governmental reforms all attest to a person of superior intellect—a visionary who at the same time embodied the elements of boundless energy, practicality, ambition and personal magnetism—it is clear that these same qualities had stood him in good stead during the years he spent in his first profession, the theatre. To these sterling attributes he added good taste, dedication to art, and a sincere belief in the moral and cultural power of the theatre and drama to better the society in which it existed. His excellent business and organizational instincts were coupled with a respect for his profession and for himself as an artist. All of these were the ingredients which went into the massive contribution he was able to make to the American theatre of his time. That contribution was more than the building of theatres in frontier communities, more than the creation of a theatrical empire in the West and Southwest, more than the conveyance of his and other's strong talents into virgin territories to set a standard which others who followed might seek to emulate, but did not often surpass. To the cities in which he made his theatrical presence felt he brought this standard of excellence in advance of his times, before there was any real reason to expect such a
standard. In doing so he gave an impetus to the American theatre it might have had to wait decades to receive had he not been present to provide it. Perhaps the words of Sol Smith, Caldwell's old and bitter rival, written in praise of Caldwell, the actor, are the sincerest and most meaningful tribute he ever received:

I can express my opinion of Mr. Caldwell as an actor in no better way than by saying I have never yet beheld his equal as a light comedian. Murdock comes the nearest to him (of those that I have seen), and Charles Mathews next. In Reuben Glenroy he was so true to nature that, in the scene with the Hon. Mrs. Glenroy, he not only brought tears into her eyes, but to those of all the young mothers among the audience. Mr. C. played the whole range of tragedy, and but for some mannerisms, such as drawing out certain words as if he were running the chromatic scale of the gamut in music, no actor gave greater satisfaction to Southern audiences than he did. He was scrupulously guarded in giving the true text of Shakespeare when performing his characters. In later years of his life he only appeared in comedy, and in that he was unapproachable.

Old Sol could not give his former competitor a totally unqualified tribute, but perhaps that, too, is most appropriate for James H. Caldwell.

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80Smith, op. cit., p. 173.
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VITA

Paul Smith Hostetler was born in Butte, Montana July 9, 1921. He received his elementary and high school education in the public schools of Miami, Arizona. In September, 1939 he matriculated at Stanford University, where he received the B.A. degree in 1943. He served in the United States Naval Reserve during World War II as both an enlisted man and an officer, and was separated from that service as a Lieutenant, Senior Grade. In 1947 he returned to Stanford University for graduate study and received the M.A. degree in Speech and Drama in 1949. After further graduate work at Indiana University, he entered the Graduate School at Louisiana State University in 1958. He is at present a member of the faculty of the Department of Theatre and Speech of Tulane University.
Candidate: Paul Smith Hostetler

Major Field: Speech

Title of Thesis: James H. Caldwell: Theatre Manager

Approved:

[Signatures]

Major Professor and Chairman

Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Date of Examination:

January 14, 1964