

HARRIGAN AND HART—AND BRAHAM

BY ISAAC GOLDBERG

I love to talk of old New York, and of my boyish days.
—*Paddy Duffy's Cart.*

THE era of Gilbert and Sullivan in London town was contemporaneous with an institution that served, for New York and secondarily for the entire United States, a purpose similar to that which for two decades animated the series that was the Savoy. But in spirit, as in fact, an ocean of difference lay between the polite animadversions of Gilbert and Sullivan and the melodious rowdyism of Harrigan and Hart. The Englishmen dwelt in a fantastic realm of their own creation; they were, in the words of a forgotten playwright, Richard Brome, who preceded Mr. Gilbert by some two centuries in the vagaries of topsy-turvydom, the ministers of an "anti-London,"—the merry andrews of the capital's antipodes. In their work, which still has an undeniable vigor, there was also a suggestion of effeteness that derived not so much from an inherent quality of the collaborators as from the type of civilization that they portrayed.

Not so with Harrigan and Hart. They were, at their height, of New York newyorky; no delicate fantasy here, but a crude realism that was of the soil, for all its staginess; no effeteness, but rather a crudity, a rawness that were garbed in authentic outfit. Instead of topsy-turvydom, pandemonium; instead of anti-London, pro-Gotham. If Harrigan and Hart and Dave Braham were too much of their own day to remain for any other day; if Braham's music and Harrigan's librettos—let us call them such—lack the vitality that has preserved the operettas of their English contemporaries, they represent none the less an

important epoch of the national humor, and even a document upon the national growth. They are among the treasured memories of a slowly rising American theatre, as notable for what they helped lead to as for what they were. The Harrigan plays were plays in only a secondary sense. An outgrowth of the vaudeville sketch, they were built around the actor rather than shaped by the dramatist. They lived on the stage; the library would be fatal to them. And so they have had the jaunty, strutting career of the actor, whose sole immortality is remembrance. To revive them today would be possible only if we could resurrect Harrigan, Hart and Dave Braham.

Doubtless the later Gilbert, who had conveniently forgotten the operatic travesties of his prentice days, would have been appropriately shocked to behold the female impersonations of Tony Hart; such transvestite humors were never permitted in the hey-day of the Savoy. Yet, at bottom, the chastity of Gilbert and Sullivan was paralleled by the fundamental purity of the typical Harrigan and Hart production. Just as the Comedy Opera Company, founded by D'Oyly Carte, was "how English and how pure!" so was the enterprise of Edward Harrigan pure and American. Over both the establishments hovered, after all, the spirit of a Queen who took her pleasures soberly.

"The moral standpoint," wrote Harrigan some forty years ago, in a short article upon his stage pieces, "is, if not falling into abeyance, at least changing to a very remarkable extent. Within the memory of theatre-goers the nude was almost un-

known, and anything savoring of immorality was tabooed. At present no light opera nor spectacular performance can be a success without a superabundant display of corporeal charms, and the number of . . . plays . . . whose corner-stories are unchastity and vice is constantly on the increase." Today, it might be Fred Stone or George M. Cohan speaking; Cohan, indeed, reckons Harrigan in his genealogy as surely as Harrigan reckoned Dion Boucicault.

It is the actor-tradition, not the play-tradition, with which we have chiefly to do. That is why Harrigan's depictions ran to types, and why he was quick to follow the lead of his public. "This, in all probability, is what gave me a decided bent, and has confined all my work to certain fields. It began with the New York 'boy,' the Irish-American, and our African brother. As these grew in popularity I added the other prominent types which go to make up life in the metropolis and in every other large city of the Union and Canada. These are the Irishman, Englishman, German, Low German, Chinese, Italian, Russian and Southern darky. I suppose ere long"—Harrigan wrote these words in 1889—"I shall add the Bohemian, Hungarian, Roumanian, Polak and Scandinavian. As yet, however, their time has not come. This system has given my pieces their peculiar polyglot character."

Harrigan's sense of realism, again, was quite as acute as Gilbert's. If the famous librettist could draw, for his scenery, upon the English courts, the English navy, and the English army, Harrigan, with equal fidelity to his milieu, could pattern the bar-room of one of the Mulligan series after a saloon in Roosevelt street; the opium den in "Investigation" after a joint on Pell street; the dive in "Waddy Googan" after a den in the neighborhood of the Bowery. In fact, whether of types or of scenes, it may be said with equal truth that Harrigan had but to look upon them and enclose them in the proscenium of his theatre.

He had little respect for the upper class as material for his international fair. "Polite society, wealth, and culture possess little or no color and picturesqueness. The chief use I make of them is as a foil to the poor, the workers, the great middle class. The average gentleman is so stereotyped that he has no value except in those plays where he is a pawn on the chess-board of melodramatic vice or tragic sin. He does very well in 'Camille' and 'Forget-me-not,' but I can't imagine him at home in a happy tenement-house or enjoying himself at a colored ball." That was written before this average gentleman went home to Harlem and rose to Nigger Heaven.

Harrigan, for his purposes and his talents, saw true. More: his work, though not in print, still lives. It forms part of the tradition of burlesque and vaudeville. As sharply as any Goldoni cutting out the patterns of the Venetian pantaloons and his confrères, Harrigan helped to fix the figure of the stage Irishman and the stage coon. While Gilbert, across the Atlantic, was filling his gallery with a series of living caricatures, Harrigan, after adventures that had taken him to every corner of the United States, was picking his types off the sidewalks of New York. It is not impossible that Harrigan learned a trick or two from Gilbert; shortly after the authorized American production of "H. M. S. Pinafore" we find the Irishman's Bedelia, in "Squatter Sovereignty," playing "Billee Taylor" and "Pinafore" on her pianoforte; and Bridget, the marketwoman, in "Cordelia's Aspirations," singing a catalogue of her wares that she surely must have heard first from the lips of that round and rosy bumboat-woman, Little Buttercup. As playwright, as producer, as predecessor of Irving Berlin in the rôle of New York's troubadour—the folk lore in Harrigan's songs has been forgotten together with the tunes—and as actor, Edward Harrigan marks an important epoch in the development of the American song-and-dance show.

II

He was born to wandering; the sea was in his blood. Harrigan's Cove, Nova Scotia, and Cape Harrigan, Labrador, bear witness to the renown of his ancestors as seamen. The Harrigans had come to Canada in the Eighteenth Century. Edward's father, born in Newfoundland, was William Harrigan, a sea-captain and ship-builder; Edward was born, on October 26, 1845, at 31 Scammel street, New York, in what was then the center of the local ship-building trade. His mother, Ellen Rogers, had been born in the shadow of Bunker Hill, at Charlestown, Mass., but had received her early rearing in Norfolk, Va. It was there that William Harrigan had met her on one of his voyages, and married her. She, too, could boast an ancestry of the sea; what was more, she had acquired, from Southern residence, a repertory of Negro songs, dances and dialectal skill that her volatile boy was quick to absorb. He must early have learned to play the banjo, which in later years, at work upon a Negro novelty like "Pete," he would meditatively strum in search of darky words for his composer. The typical Harrigan productions, which are pivoted upon the clash of the Irish and the Negroes in New York, were thus determined virtually at his mother's knee.

New York itself he learned in truancy. He had left school in his fourteenth year and was slapping about as an errand boy, as a printer's devil; by sixteen he was apprentice in a shipyard of the city. He must have frequented the theatres of the cheaper sort, for at about this time he is discovered delivering, in association with Campbell's Minstrels at the Bowery Theatre, a burlesque stump speech of his own composition. Meantime, his mother had died and his father had married a second time; as a result of dissension in the family, Harrigan went off to New Orleans as an able seaman. It wouldn't be Ned if, during his later labors as a calker, he didn't wander about the levees, listening to the Negro songs

and taking down notes, without realizing it, for plays that were to come.

About California, more than a decade after the Gold Rush, there was still the halo of adventure. When New Orleans had ceased to interest him, the youngster set sail for the Golden Gate. His vessel was wrecked; he was cast ashore at Chagres, sick and penniless, and was—in the manner of a Cooper romance—nursed back to health by a compassionate Indian. Perhaps it is here that Harrigan, after safe delivery from the waves, first conceived those wrecks and explosions that so frequently form the dénouement of his racial rivalries. For these catastrophic finales there was, of course, precedent in the history of the English theatre, especially in the sensational century between the going of Sheridan and the coming of Robertson. There were prototypes, too, in the numerous harbor explosions of the day. They must have acquired added flavor, none the less, from this gruesome experience.

It was natural that, reaching San Francisco at last, he should hire out as a laborer on the docks; his real school had been the wharves of New York. It was natural, too, that he should hunt out the theatres of the city and shortly be inaugurating his stage career on the boards of the Olympic. In all likelihood he appeared as a one-man show; maybe his stump speech was the nucleus around which was built a song or two of topical interest; the entire output of Harrigan, indeed, possessed this topical nature. He rapidly became a town favorite, and before long was appearing at the Bella Union and the New Pacific Theatre. He remained in the city from 1867 to 1869. At the Bella Union he learned a few tricks from Alec O'Brien, with whom he often played. He sang and he danced; he impersonated darkies and chin-whiskered Dutchmen; he was acquiring the routine of production.

His association with Sam Rickey was even more valuable than that with O'Brien. Prospectively, Rickey was the model for Tony Hart. After two years of success in

'Frisco, Harrigan and Rickey began to look eastward; a series of one-night stands, including many a dive of the raw West, landed them at last in Chicago, where "the noted Californian comedians"—by grace of type and a showbill—opened some time in 1870. Harrigan was the Irishman, Rickey the coon. As success in 'Frisco had sent them to Chicago, so now success in the Windy City sent their eyes New Yorkward. On November 21 of the same year they made their début at the Globe Theatre, 514 Broadway, in a sketch entitled "The Little Fraud." It was simply a take-off on a popular tune, and was followed next week by "The Mulcahey Twins." The entertainment was funny and tuneful; it took the town. Also, it swelled Mr. Rickey's head, and before many months Harrigan, now definitely dedicated to the stage, was going it on his own. He switched back to Negro impersonation, signed up with Manning's Minstrels, and went on tour with them.

It was in Chicago, where he had scored his first great success with Rickey, that he was to meet Anthony Cannon, *alias* Tony Hart. Hart, at the time but a handsome lad, had been born in Worcester, Mass., on July 25, 1855; he was thus ten years the junior of his future partner. Something too pretty in his person must have suggested, originally, his adoption of comic female rôles. Nat Goodwin, early associated with Harrigan, recalled Hart in his book of memoirs with characteristic effusiveness; they had met some time in 1874 and from the first moment became the closest of friends. Says Nat:

Tony Hart was the name of the lad of melody, after he had fired the Cannon. From the time he became associated with Edward Harrigan until the name of Harrigan and Hart became famous from coast to coast, that boy caused more joy and sunshine by his delightful gifts than any artist of his time. To refer to him as talented was an insult. Genius was the only word that could be applied. He sang like a nightingale, danced like a fairy, and acted like a master comedian. No dialect was too difficult for him—Irish, Negro, German, Italian, became his own, and one lost sight of the individual in the truthfulness of portrayal. His magnetism was compelling, his personality charm-

ing. He had the face of an Irish Apollo. His eyes were liquid blue, almost feminine in their dove-like expression. His head was large and round and covered with a luxurious growth of brown curly hair which clustered in ringlets over a strong brow. His feet and hands were small, his smile almost pathetic. His disposition turned December into May. . . . Tony Hart was the friend of all mankind and my especial pal. I have loved three men in my life, and he was two of them.

When Harrigan first met him, Hart was singing with Arlington's Minstrels. Here was a fellow to take Rickey's place, he thought; in a trice, as it were, they had come to terms and soon "The Little Fraud" was running at the Chicago Winter Garden, as merrily as if it had never been discontinued. As Boston claims the honor of having first discovered to America the genius of Gilbert and Sullivan, so it may lay with equal justice the claim to having been the true discoverer of Harrigan and Hart. Seven years before Manager Field of the Boston Museum imported "Pinafore" into the United States, Manager John Stetson of the Howard Athenæum—it is still the Old Howard, in Howard street, dedicated as aforetime to the immortal themes of burlesque, with its churchly exterior, and its gallery seats thickly stained with tobacco juice—had spotted them and engaged them for his theatre; here, as "The Nonpareils," they warmed the hearts of the city for more than one hundred nights in the selfsame "Little Fraud." Here, then, their career may be said to have begun.

They did not reach New York until October 16, 1871, where, at the Globe, likewise under the management of John Stetson, they made their metropolitan bow. They played then at the Union Square; for a time they went on the road under Tony Pastor, returning to his theatre on the Bowery in the perennial "Little Fraud," "The Big and Little of It," and "Sweet Summer." Only by December of the next year do they strike their true stride, at the Globe, now renamed the Theatre Comique. Here, under the benefits of a generous contract for two years, they grow wealthy and famous; here they study the contemporary nature of the variety

show and decide—that is, Harrigan decides—upon changes in the direction of a more natural type and a more realistic background. Here, before the contract has expired, will be conceived the Mulligan series. And here, finally, is discovered the third partner in an entertainment that is to charm America for the next fifteen years.

You will look in vain through the encyclopedias of music, American or English, for a worthy record, and often, indeed, for the mere mention, of Dave Braham. There may be a connection between his family and that of the noted tenor and less noted composer, John Braham, who, after his phenomenal success in his native England, toured America with but indifferent outcome. Again, however, the Jewish Encyclopedia, which lists John, has not a word for Dave.

David Braham was born in London, in 1838; he was thus seven years the senior of Harrigan, and by seventeen the senior of Hart. He was originally a fiddler, and it was as violinist that he engaged with Pony Moore's Minstrels when, at the age of eighteen, he first landed in this country. He knew the orchestra pit of almost every theatre that served up dances and ditties to Broadway,—Canterbury Hall, Wood's Minstrel Hall, the New Idea, Butler's Theatre, Mechanics Hall, and later, the Olympic, the Eagle, the Union Square and the Theatre Comique. His was, in fact, a musico-theatrical family; his brother Joseph led the band at Tony Pastor's; another brother, under the régime of Rudolph Aronson, led the orchestra at the Casino; his son Harry, who conducted the musicians at the Madison Square Theatre and at Wallack's, was later the first husband of Lillian Russell; to complete the picture, his daughter eventually would become the wife of Edward Harrigan, and his son, when Dave had become ill, would write music for the Harrigan shows.

Here, then, at the Theatre Comique, was the man that Harrigan needed; he knew the sort of tune that Broadway of that day whistled, and knew it so well, in fact, that

the famous melody of the Mulligan Guards was soon to find its way to Kipling's India, where it would become, for the soldiery, what "Tipperary"—an inferior tune—became in the World War. Braham was hardly a high-brow. But he was the very fellow to play Sullivan to Harrigan's Gilbert. He set the themes of New York to the music of New York, with natural overtones of the English popular song. There was no depth in the man, musically speaking; there need not have been. His melodic line is simple, at times to the degree of ingenuousness; there is no novelty and little cleverness in his harmonic structure. Indeed, only in the less exigent sense is he a composer at all.

Yet his very limitations provided the ideal service for Harrigan's trickle of inspiration. Braham's melodies, for the most part, are pleasant commonplace; they are a doggerel of music that at once fits and sets off the reminiscential patter of the congenial Irishman. They hold, or, at least, they held, the words in solution. To revive that music today, without the self-conscious air of one who comes upon baby-clothes that have been too affectionately preserved by a doting parent, is to wonder at the changing tastes of the theatre. Yet many of these tunes, too, have a ring of reminiscence that endows them with a value altogether out of proportion to their musical worth. Once in a while you meet an old-timer who knew these entertainers in the flesh; he will run his cane across his bended knee, as if coaxing the whine out of an androgynous 'cello, and sing you sad and unfamiliar words as if they were songs of Araby. They are songs out of his departed youth; the secret of their appeal to him, however, is precisely the secret of their hold upon the author. At the core of Harrigan's doggerel burns a vitalizing sincerity; these verses, whether in single example or as a historical collection, depict an era; Harrigan, in his unpretentious way, was the folksinger of an epoch, remembering its days and ways and setting them down in simple language.

What his songs were, his plays were: reminiscence, commentary, parody. The knight of his particular epos was a man whom everyone could recognize instantly: Dan Mulligan, who mixed his groceries with liquor, and spiced both with politics. Food, drink and warfare: epitome of life itself. Dan, however, was to become something more than a symbol of Irish ascendancy in the seventies and eighties; he grew into the hero of a minor American saga. Harrigan had conceived him in 1872, but he did not come to life until July 15, 1873, at the Chicago Academy of Music, whither the Josh Hart Combination had arrived on its travels.

III

The Mulligan cycle—it is no less—had its true origins, not in the Chicago skit, but in "The Mulligan Guards Ball," which was first presented, in New York, on January 13, 1879. It was not long before the town was agog between this admirable burletta on the target companies that infested the States after the Civil War, and the good ship "Pinafore." A long line of sketches had signalized the union of Harrigan and Hart, and in the Summer of 1875 they had gone on tour with Martin W. Henley, who was thenceforth to act as their business manager. Next year they leased the Theatre Comique, made Braham their official composer (he was now Harrigan's father-in-law), and a famous institution had been inaugurated.

It was here that Anne Yeamans, John Wild and William Gray founded more than one tradition of the vaudeville stage. The mingled top-loftiness and humility of a Moran and Mack derive, if indirectly, from the patterns established by Wild and Gray. It was these gentlemen who, in the early days of the Comique, started off the bill with a comic skit; there would be a sentimental song to eke out the olio, whereupon would follow the regulation after-piece. Harrigan was still feeling his way; Boucicault suggested such old-country ex-

cursions as "Iascaire" and "The Lorgaire." Harrigan's forte, however, was to be, not the Irishman of over-seas, but the Paddy that drank and fought right under his nose. It was a happy thought that sent him back to his old sketch on "The Mulligan Guards." Out of the success of the first elaboration grew the series that followed the Mulligans through chowder parties, Christmas celebrations, picnics, ward politics, mudscows and mud-slinging, down to the silver wedding of the garrulous, bellicose, but loving Irish couple, Dan Mulligan and Cordelia of the frustrated social aspirations.

Essentially, the Mulligan cycle chronicles the racial antipathies that divided the Irish, the German and the Negro; but the antipathies are not so deeply rooted that they may not blossom into understanding and coöperation. Salient among the knights of this round table are Dan and his wife Cordelia; Tommy, their son; Rebecca All-up, their colored cook, maid and Lord Low Everything Else; Sampson Primrose, owner of the alley barbershop and "policy" resort; Palestine Puter, captain of the Skidmore Guards, the black rivals of the Mulligans; Gustavus Lochmuller, butcher and political opponent of Dan; Bridget, the Irish wife of this German he-devil. A merry chase they led their public during the five years at the Comique.

And the critics, too. Harrigan had definite notions as to what he was about, but propitiating the high-brows was not one of them. Yet they came and listened and were conquered. As early as "The Mulligans Chowder" the *Times* spoke of Balzac and Zola as undisgraced prototypes of the humble Harrigan; the *Herald*, in "The Mulligan Guards Nominee," saw "The Pickwick Papers" of the Bowery Dickens. Another lustrum, and William Dean Howells would be invoking the names of Shakespeare and Molière as stage-manager ancestors of this gifted Irish actor-producer, while the *Times* would be speaking of a theatrical Hogarth.

Harrigan, certainly, did not suffer from

lack of contemporary appreciation; a day would come when Brander Matthews would bring the great Coquelin to see him, and be surprised to discover that Harrigan managed French with passable skill; (he had taken private lessons); Matthew Arnold, apostle of Swift's sweetness and light, would also catch the popular contagion. In his declining days, forgetful of the actor's evanescent fame, Harrigan might suffer under the imagined slights of a public that was being altered inevitably by the changes in the national scene, but in his hey-day, both before and after the split with Hart, he was the wealthy idol of a fascinated public.

When the original home of the Mulligan series proved too small to accommodate the surge of loyal New Yorkers, the New Theatre Comique was opened on August 29, 1881, at 728 Broadway, with "The Major." Rivalry still held the scene; for the nonce, the Mulligans had disappeared; there was little change, however, in the character of Harrigan's verses. "Cordelia's Aspirations," evolved out of "The Mulligans' Surprise," brought back, on November 5, 1883, the indispensable family. This time it was La Mulligan, as a climber, seeking to leap out the frame of the picture. She did, only to fall back with a resounding plump; the series ends on a pathetic note in "Dan's Tribulations," produced on April 7, 1884. Back to the grocery goes the wiser and sadder Dan, his wealth squandered by the aspiring Cordelia. His adventures among the shanties, the mud-scows, the target companies, the politicians of New York, the blacks and whites and yellows of dive and waterfront, the secret societies of the Full Moons and the *Turnvereine* of his German cadets, the clothes stalls of his Jews—these are all as a tale that is told.

Perhaps there is a relation of one sort or another between the end of the Mulligan cycle and the end of the partnership between Harrigan and Hart. "Investigation" had followed the chronicle of Dan and his regression; again Kipling found, in a Har-

rigan piece, in the person of "the solid Muldoon," a figure for his Indian tales. On December 23 of the same year the New Theatre Comique was destroyed by fire; the building was not covered by insurance and the loss to the partners was \$100,000. Temperamental differences between them were growing into barriers; Hart, fond of the lighter aspects of theatrical life, tugged in a different direction from Harrigan. Their parting was amicable enough; they appeared for the last time together at Colonel Simm's Theatre in Brooklyn, on June 13, 1885. Hart's place was effectively taken by Dan Collyer, and an institution had come to an end.

Harrigan and Hart, after the fire, had leased the New Park Theatre. It was here that Harrigan carried on for almost five years, undaunted by the loss of a fortune and of an associate even more precious. His pieces took a more serious turn. "Old Lavender," reverted to an early sketch, which he enlarged into a portrait not without pathos; "Pete" likewise reverted, in part, to a still earlier sketch, "Darby and Lanty," that had already been subjected to a number of transformations; "Waddy Googan," named after its hackman hero, descended into the night life of a growing metropolis, and prompted the *Times* to mention Zola's name again, while *Town Topics* played up Cruikshank.

Harrigan had recouped himself in both finances and spirit. He was riding at the top of his bent. This troubadour of *boi polloi* was being hailed as America's representative dramatist. He celebrated the Christmas of 1890 by opening, on December 29, his own Harrigan's Theatre, with "Reilly and the 400." The play was to become famous as establishing yet another theatrical tradition, that of Ada Lewis's tough girl, her gum playing a *perpetuo moto* between her jaws. How many recall from it now the spirited waltz of "Maggie Murphy's Home"—a Gotham tune that can dance with the best Victor Herbert ever wrote, swimming in his favorite lager?

Behind a grammar schoolhouse,
In a double tenement,
I live with my old mother
And always pay the rent.
A bedroom and a parlor
Is all we call our own,
And you're welcome, every evening,
At Maggie Murphy's home.

CHORUS

On Sunday night, 'tis my delight
And pleasure, don't you see,
Meeting all the girls and boys
That work down town with me.
There's an organ in the parlor
To give the house a tone,
And you're welcome every evening
At Maggie Murphy's home.

Such dancing in the parlor,
There's a waltz for you and I;
Such mashing in the corner,
And kisses on the sly.
O, bless the leisure hours
That working-people know,
And they're welcome every evening
At Maggie Murphy's home.



Braham, for one reason or another, had balked at setting these words; the tune, played to this day, became one of his greatest hits.

He was a fellow of melodic simplicities; his music was no more sophisticated—it did not have to be—than Harrigan's catalogue of words. Yet I believe that anything like a full account of Victor Herbert's musical comedies should consider, as one forerunner, the humble Boweryism of

David Braham. In little touches such as the mincing notes of the chorus to "Maggie Murphy's Home," and the jocund octave on the word "pleasure," Braham achieved expert musical delineation.

For three and a half years Harrigan would carry on (in both senses of the phrase) at the theatre named after him. On November 4, 1891, Hart died in the city of his birth, Worcester, Mass. Perhaps another signal of the end came with the death of Harrigan's eldest son, Edward, in February, 1895. The loss took the heart out of him; the theatre was leased, in April of the same year, to Richard Mansfield, and renamed the Garrick. The Garrick it is to this day, under the auspices of the Theatre Guild, but close inspection will reveal, as a token of its former glory, the legend "Harrigan's Theatre" chiselled into the stone of the façade.

There were a few more flashes from the guttering candle, but the Harrigan public was passing just as inevitably as was the public of Gilbert and Sullivan in London town. Rivalry of the races in New York City was giving way to a harmony which the Harrigan pieces had foreseen. For, after all, though you couldn't get his Irish and Negroes and Germans together, you couldn't keep them apart. Hadn't Harrigan himself married the daughter of his part-German composer, thus duplicating a classic situation in his own "Mulligan Guard Ball"? And, in "The Mulligan Guards' Christmas" doesn't Bridget Lochmuller's brother, Planxty McFudd, marry Diana, the sister of Dan Mulligan's wife, Cordelia,—thus adding to the interfamilial complications? When Mulligan runs for alderman ("The Mulligan Guards Nominee") isn't it the colored vote that he seeks, and don't the Skidmores—that phalanx of dark Apollos—parade in honor of his election?

On August 31, 1896, at the Bijou Theatre Harrigan attempted to reestablish himself in the popular favor with "Marty Malone"; a revival of "Old Lavender" at the Murray Hill Theatre was equally unsuc-

cessful. As late as September, 1903, loath to believe that his public had forsaken him, he produced, at the Murray Hill, his last piece, "Under Cover," with music by George Braham, son of David. Coincidentally, Anne Yeamans, herself in the show, was represented in the cast also by her daughter, Jennie. In the last, as in the beginning, the contentions of Irish versus Negro form the theme, and the quarrel this time raged over the question whether a certain parcel of land was an Irish race-track or a darky cemetery. The play ran for a few weeks, and went on a road tour. Another revival or two kept Harrigan occupied on the road, and then came the sunset.

On April 11, 1905, Dave Braham died after a long siege of kidney disease, leaving a widow, two sons and four daughters. Fifty musicians from the Aschenbroedel Verein, together with the orchestra of Wallack's Theatre—which he had led for many years, handing over the baton at last to his son, George—gathered on the sidewalk before his home at 75 West 131st street, to pay him the final honors. Harrigan, as those near to him could see, felt heart-broken over the inevitable decline of his once renowned institution. "His remaining years," as Mr. Sidney Rose has written,¹ "were passed in leisurely comfort. Despite his late professional reverses, he retained ownership of the Garrick Theatre, and with it, financial independence. In 1909 he began to suffer a physical decline. There is little doubt that he felt some disappointment at the public's failure to renew its interest in his work. He had been so used to its applause and to a certain meed of affectionate regard concomitant with it, that retirement from the stage, although it held no bitterness, was not congenial to him. He must have reflected with more than usual poignancy on the evanescence of the player's fame. He had been more than a mere mummer of the stage. He had been an institution, a symbol of the

city's commonplaces, and his theatre a microcosm of their activities. He had been the epic and the lyric poet of its slums, the historian of its back alleys and the dramatist of their petty intrigues, and he felt that his laurels were too soon faded."

Harrigan missed the old gang. To a friend he observed that the new generation didn't know, and therefore couldn't appreciate, the Mulligan types. He missed, too, his gallery gods. "I'd hate to play," he once confessed in an interview, "in a theatre without a gallery." He had one ear cocked to the verdict of what he called his twenty-five cent critics. In fact, it was a habit of his to sit incognito among his audiences, the better to gauge the effect of lines and situations.

There were several farewell appearances, one at Wallack's, on October 6, 1908, another at a Lambs' Gambol in the Metropolitan Opera House, in 1909. He ended his days amid deep depression, in his home at 249 West 102nd street, where he died on June 6, 1911.

IV

Out of songs his pieces had grown; today, only the songs remain. The songs, and a reputation for stage-production and an ensemble unequalled in its day. The very supernumeraries in a Harrigan production were, both by instinct and by training, artists. They were regarded as such not only by the producer but by the foremost stage critics of the era. Harrigan had a conscientious eye for apparently insignificant detail. He did not make the mistake of thinking that the importance of an actor varied in direct ratio to the length of time he appeared on the stage. The reputation of Ada Lewis, for example, was made in a rôle that allowed her but one spoken line in the performance. "I suppose a great many people think this business of mine is all velvet," observed Harrigan in one of his newspaper interviews. "They think that I am surrounded by a company that does not cost much. Why, bless you,

¹ In a book on Harrigan—as yet unpublished—from which I have been privileged to extract some data.

these people of mine cost a great deal more than the usual actors. They are all specialists who are the best paid in their lines that I can find. Sometimes in the street mobs you see on my stage every man is an actor, capable of getting a laugh out of his lines. You cannot play my pieces with one star and a lot of sticks."

What pleased William Dean Howells in the Harrigan productions was almost precisely what later pleased Brander Matthews. Howells, in 1886, recognized in the Irishman "the spring of a true American comedy, the beginnings of things which may be great things." Harrigan, indeed, was more decent than Shakespeare, maintained the ruling spirit of the "Editor's Study" in *Harper's*; his plays, moreover, like those of Shakespeare and of Molière, were the work of one who was a manager and actor in addition to being a dramatist. "Possibly this is the only way we can have a drama of our own; it is not a bad way; and it is at least a very natural way. At any rate, loving reality as we do, we cannot do less than cordially welcome reality as we find it in Mr. Harrigan's

comedies. Consciously or unconsciously, he is part of the great tendency toward the faithful representation of life which is now reanimating fiction." Even Grover Cleveland—at the time "Reilly and the 400" was produced, he was resting between his terms as twenty-second and twenty-fourth President of the United States—found in this racy piece the acme of realism; and found it, indeed, in a character, Quiller, a shattered devotee of the horses, who had not a single speaking line.

Harrigan did not pass into literature, however; he was, as an influence, absorbed into the history of the American theatre. His songs, as a part of New York's folklore, deserve a chapter to themselves; they receded long ago into that distance which is happily veiled by pathos. Hart, of course, can be truly remembered only by those who saw him in the yielding flesh. Braham's music, once the admiration of the continent, gathers dust in the libraries and is heard occasionally in a medley of old-time numbers. It is, on the whole, as old-fashioned, but as quaint, as the *daguerreotype*. *Sic transit gloria theatri!*

IS COMPULSORY EDUCATION JUSTIFIED?

BY KNIGHT DUNLAP

THE habit of appealing to the government to regulate the lives of other people according to our own prejudices is growing in the United States. Prohibition is merely one governmental intervention in a long and growing list. Nor is Prohibition really the most flagrant example, for something of a case can be made out for it on other grounds. Sunday observance laws are much more illustrative, having no warrant in social needs. There are many other types of governmental meddling in operation, among them the compulsory education acts in force in various States. Before the procession of imperialistic legislation becomes much longer we should consider carefully the present situation, and especially in regard to compulsory education.

It is a plausible scheme. In the first place, education is a good thing for us, and so we wish to bestow its blessings on others. If they will not take it gladly, we will make them take it: for their own good, as religious sects have always said when proselyting the heathen by force.

In the second place, children need protection from ignorant and vicious parents. These low-lived progenitors deny their helpless offspring the educational privileges to which they are rightfully entitled. We are not really forcing education upon the children: we are merely forcing their parents to allow them to grasp it.

In the third place (and this makes the strongest appeal to some), the rising generation cannot become useful citizens without instruction. We have a right, for the protection of our own interests, and those of our children, to insist that the children

of others shall be given adequate training in citizenship. That means schooling for these children.

Finally, there is the argument from democracy. It is not in accordance with the principles on which our nation is founded that class and caste distinctions should be encouraged. An illiterate class, sharply distinguished from the literate, is unfortunate and dangerous. Therefore, there shall be no illiterates if we can prevent it.

This is indeed a strong line of *a priori* argument; strong enough, it would seem, to justify even the overturning of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Common Law regarding the rights and duties of parents. But curiously enough, the argument remains only *a priori*, in spite of the fact that the compulsory education experiment has lasted long enough to produce results by which it might be judged.

Compulsory education is, in fact, an experiment of the approved scientific sort. First, we have a plausible hypothesis, or a coherent group of hypotheses, which are capable of trial. Compulsory education, our hypothesis runs, will produce such and such results. The hypothesis has been subjected to trial: this constitutes the experiment. If the results are as predicted, then the hypothesis is justified. If not, the hypothesis is discredited, and needs to be modified or suppressed.

What are the actual results of compulsory education? It is strange that no one seems to know. It is more strange that few seem to care. The vital part of an experiment, the checking of the hypothesis by the results, has been omitted. There are a number of points on which information