

Marx Hardy Machiavelli Joyce Austen
Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Byron Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Hall
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
London Descartes Cervantes Voltaire Hesse
Poe Aristotle Wells Bunner Shakespeare Cooke
Richter Chekhov Chambers Irving
Doré Dante Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Pushkin Alcott
Newton



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**Representative Plays by American
Dramatists: 1856-1911: Love in '76
An Incident of the Revolution**

Oliver Bell Bunce

Imprint

This book is part of TREDITION CLASSICS

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LOVE IN '76

AN INCIDENT OF THE REVOLUTION

[Illustration: OLIVER BELL BUNCE]

OLIVER BELL BUNCE.

(1828-1890)

The name of Oliver Bell Bunce is not prominently connected with the American Theatre. Authorities have taken little or no trouble to unearth his association with the plays and players of his time—the mid-period of the nineteenth century. Yet they all agree that, as illustration of "parlour comedy," his "Love in '76" is a satisfactory example of sprightliness and fresh inventiveness. For this reason, the small comedietta is included in the present collection. It challenges comparison with Royall Tyler's "The Contrast" for manner, and its volatile spirit involved in the acting the good services of such estimable players as Laura Keene, Stoddart, and Ringgold. In the cast also was J.G. Burnett, author of "Blanche of Brandywine," a dramatization of a novel by George Lippard, also produced by Laura Keene.

"Love in '76" was given its première at Laura Keene's Theatre, New York, on February 28, 1857, for the benefit of the Shirt Sewers' Union; and was the second offering of a double bill beginning with "Faust and Marguerite." Though the critiques of the time recognized in it a "nice little play," they balked at what was considered to be a foolish nomenclature, "Comedietta." What was liked about it, particularly, was the absence of patriotic fustian, for the national drama of the time seems to have been loaded down with long flights of fancy on the subject of liberty. Others hailed it as smart in the social sense. As late as March 31, 1892, the little play was revived by amateurs for the benefit of a monument to be erected over the neglected grave of Washington's mother.

This was not the first time Bunce had appeared as a playwright. There had been seen, on June 10, 1850, at the New York Bowery Theatre, a tragedy entitled "Marco Bozzaris; or, The Grecian Hero," and in the cast were J. Wallack, Jr., and his wife, together with John Gilbert. It was not based on the poem by Fitz-Greene Halleck, but,

for its colour and plot, Bunce went direct to history. For Wallack he also wrote a tragedy, entitled "Fate; or, The Prophecy," and, according to Hutton, during the summer of 1848, the Denin Sisters produced his "Morning of Life," at the New York Chatham Theatre.

Such was the extent of Bunce's drama writing. His life was not cast in the dramatic field, but rather in the publishing world. The plays were done in his early manhood. But he was pledged in interest to the theatre, and there are many significant criticisms and descriptions in print which convey an excellent impression of his attitude toward plays, players, and acting.

Bunce was a self-made man, with an excellent grasp of literature, which served him well in his various literary ventures. His mind was cast in channels of originality, and the history of book publishing in New York must needs consider the numerous suggestions, which, as literary adviser at different times for the houses of Harper and Appleton, he saw to successful fruition. In 1872, he became Editor of *Appleton's Journal*, and it is to the files of this magazine we must turn to extract his frank reaction to the theatre of his day. He wrote novels, stories, essays, editorials, everything to win him the name of journalist; once he had a publishing house of his own, doing business under the firm name of Bunce & Co. He was always cordial toward every move to further the literary interest of the country, and was among the first to welcome the founding of the Authors Club. It may be that his "Love in '76" was a by-product of a book written by him, in 1852, and called "Romance of the Revolution."

Bunce wrote well on theatrical matters; he is much more vivid and human than many a better-known critic. Here, for instance, is an impression of the old Park Theatre, New York, in 1846.

"That was the time," he writes in "The Editor's Table" of *Appleton's Journal* for October, 1880, "when the theatre had a pit, where critics and wiseacres were wont to assemble and utter oracular things about the plays and the performers. The actors were in those days afraid of the Pit, especially at the Park, of the fourth bench from the orchestra, where the magnates of the pen sat watchful, and where old Nestors of the drama delivered their verdicts in terms that no one dared to gainsay. The Pit was entered by cellar steps, and

through a half-lighted, subterranean passage. Decorative art, as we see it now in the full bloom of the Madison Square auditorium and Mr. Daly's lobby, had not even given a hint of its coming."

In *The Galaxy* for February, 1868, Bunce ventures to survey "Some of Our Actors" from the standpoint of deploring the pre-Raphaelite realism of the modern school. He scored the attempted "truth" and "fidelity" of Matilda Heron, and, in considering Maggie Mitchell's *Fanchon*, he bespoke the cause of ideality, as necessary in *Fanchon* as in *Juliet*. "Modern comedy acting," he declares, "is usually a bright, brisk touch-and-go affair, suited to modern plays; but to the mellow and artistic style of a former generation, it is as the light claret wines, now so much in use, to crusty old port."

Except in the instances of our comedians, like Murdoch, with his "lightness of manner, that grace, which I have described elsewhere as snuffing a candle in a way to make you feel that snuffing candles is the poetry of life;" Harry Placide, with whose retirement went the retirement of *Sir Peter Teazle* and *Sir Harcourt Courtley*, ("When Placide and Gilbert are gone," he writes, "Sheridan will have to be shelved"); Holland, with his intense fun in eccentric bits; Brougham, without whom "The Rivals" is difficult to endure—apart from these the stage of the time, to Bunce, was not all it should be. He valued at their worth the romantic extravagances of the Wallack family; he applauded the sound judgment, and deplored the hard manner of Davenport; he viewed calmly what he regarded to be an overestimation of Edwin Booth—one of the first criticisms of an avowedly negative character I have seen aimed directly at this actor. In other words, Bunce fought hard against the encroachment of the new times upon the acting of his early theatre days. The epitome of his old-time attitude is to be found in *Appleton's Journal* for April 3, 1869. His better mood was to be met with in his discussion of the players of Ellen Tree's type. Here are his words of censure against the new order:

"If we old files are to be believed, the art of acting is dying out, and the very tradition of the stage disappearing.... Very likely the spirit, which in painting we call pre-Raphaelism, is obtaining its influence on the stage, and that some of the actors are turning out of doors the traditions and formal mannerisms of the schools, and

going back to nature and truth for their inspiration.... There were very artificial methods, no doubt, among the old actors, but there was also a very consummate knowledge of the art, a great deal of breadth, force and skill, and a finished training, which the new schools do not exhibit. In aiming to be natural, some of our actors seem to have concluded that their profession is not an art. They grow heedless in the delivery of language, weakening or obscuring its meaning, and missing its significance; and in some way lose that rich and mellow colouring that characterized the bygone performers. So marked is this, that some of the old dramatic characters are abandoned altogether, because in the hands of the Realists they fade away into ineffective and colourless forms. The *Sir Peter Teazles* and *Sir Anthony Absolutes* of the old comedy require indispensably the resources of the old art, and no thin, water-gruel realism, so-called, can personate them. In avoiding the declamatory Kembletonianism of the old school, our actors are right enough; but they cannot safely disregard the skill which sharpens and chisels, as it were, the sentences; nor forego the care, study, precision and stern adherence to rules of art, that marked the old stage."

Steeped in such belief, it is small wonder that two of Bunce's plays had characteristics in them to suit a member of the Wallack family. And being such a lover of old English Comedy accounts for some of the spirit of "Love in '76."

His plea, sound in its fundamental championing of the best that has been on our stage, might well be heeded at this time (1920). It is a strong valuation of tradition—the jade who is looked at askance by the amateur players of the "little theatres," and too exacting for the average player on the professional stage.

Bunce was a New Yorker, born in that city, February 8, 1828, and dying there on May 15, 1890.

LAURA KEENE'S NEW THEATRE,

624 BROADWAY. NEAR HOUSTON STREET.

**MISS LAURA KEENE SOLE LESSEE AND DIRECTRESS MR.
THOMAS BAKER MUSICAL DIRECTOR**

Change of Time. Doors open at half past Six. The performance will commence with the Overture at a quarter past Seven.

* * * * *

BENEFIT OF THE SHIRT-SEWERS' UNION

Sixth time of the Dramatic Poem, in three acts, entitled

FAUST AND MARGUERITE

The Drama having been misapprehended by one or two critics, it is respectfully stated that the translation has not been made by a resident dramatist, as inferred, but by the celebrated European scholar and linguist, Jonathan Birch, whose translation has been recognized by Frederick William, of Prussia, as the best rendition of the original of Goethe's Faust ever given in English to the public.

The play has been taken bodily from this translation, published by Black & Armstrong, London, and F.A. Brockhaus, Leipsig, without any alteration other than is necessary to bring it within the bounds of an evening's performance. To produce the poem as written by Goethe, would require at least three nights in performance. By reference to the edition mentioned, it will be seen that there has been no deviation from the original, except as above specified.

The fall of Marguerite, in the poem, is much more sudden than in the play, and, indeed, the exceptions taken generally to the drama concern the original author, Goethe, rather than the translation. Great care has been taken to produce the play with strict fidelity to the author, following in the architecture, costumes and groupings the celebrated *chefs d' oeuvres* of REIZSCH, who devoted the best

years of his life to illustrate this great work; and it should be added, also, that every note of the music in this piece is from SPOHR.

Music by Spohr, arranged by Mr. Thomas Baker
New Scenery by Messrs. Hawthorne and Almay
New Wardrobe by Mr. Bullock and Assistants
Machinery by Mr. Smart and Assistants
Properties and Appointments by Mr. W. Duverna

Under the personal supervision of

MISS LAURA KEENE.

First time of a New American Comedietta, In two acts, by a Citizen of New York, entitled

LOVE IN '76

SATURDAY EVENING, FEB. 28th, 1857

Will be presented the great Dramatic Poem by Goethe, translated by Jonathan Birch, Esq., and produced for the SIXTH TIME, as now adapted and arranged for this artistic work under the title of

FAUST AND MARGUERITE

DISTRIBUTION OF CHARACTERS:

Faust, an aged scholar Mr. C. Wheatleigh
Mephistophilies Mr. George Jordan
Wagner, a student, friend to Faust Mr. Stoddart
Valentine, a soldier, brother to Marguerite Mr. Lingham
Brandor, a soldier, friend to Valentine Mr. Alleyne
Frosh Mr. Hayes
Siebel Mr. Reeve
Fritz Mr. Harcourt

Students Messers. Carpenter, Jackson, Carter, Kellogg
Altmayer Mr. McDonall
Beggar Mr. Beneon
Marguerite, a young peasant girl Miss Laura Keene
Martha, her confidante Mrs. H.P. Grattan
Lizzie { Companions } Miss Alleyne
Barbara { of Marguerite } Miss Howell
Witch, creature of Mephistophiles Mrs. Attwood
Spirits of Good Miss Howell, Miss Wall, Miss Berkowitz,
and Miss Rosa Berkowitz
Peasantry, Chorus of Demons, etc., etc.,

SCENERY IN THE DRAMA:

**ACT I. Scene 1st—Faust's Laboratory By Almy Scene 2nd—Street
in Wittenburg By Hawthorne**

**ACT II. Scene 1st—Pavillion and Garden of Marguerite By Haw-
thorne**

**ACT III. Scene 1st—Street and Cathedral in Wittenburg By
Howthorne Scene 2nd—Rocky Glen By Hawthorne Scene 3rd—
Prison By Almy Scene 4th—Street and Cathedral—Apotheosis of
Marguerite By Hawthorne**

To conclude for the **FIRST TIME** with a New American Comedietta,
in **TWO**

ACTS, by a Gentleman of this city, called

LOVE IN '76

Mr. Elsworth Mr. Stoddart
Lieutenant Harry Elsworth Mr. Ringgold
Captain Walter Armstrong Mr. Lingham
Major Cleveland Mr. Burnett
Captain Arbald Mr. Benson
Lieutenant Marvin Mr. Hayes
Apollo Metcalf Mr. Johnston

John Mr. Harcourt
Corporal Mr. Leslie
Soldiers Messers Jackson and Kellog
Rose Ellsworth Miss Laura Keene
Kate Ellsworth Miss Alleyne
Bridget Miss Howell

A Grand Scenic Drama, called THE SONS OF NIGHT, has been in rehearsal and will be produced immediately.

ADMISSION

Drama Circle and Parquette 50 Cents
Balcony Seats 75 Cents
Family Circle 25 Cents
Orchestra Stalls One Dollar
Private Boxes Six and Eight Dollars

Box Office open from 8 in the morning throughout the day.

Children in Arms not admitted. This regulation will be rigidly enforced.

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Box Bookkeeper Mr. F.N. Cartland

LOVE IN '76

AN INCIDENT OF THE REVOLUTION

A COMEDIETTA IN TWO ACTS

By OLIVER BUNCE

**AS PERFORMED AT LAURA KEENE'S THEATRE NEW YORK,
FEB. 28, 1857**

[The acting edition of this play, with the relative positions of the performers on the stage, is published by Samuel French.]

COSTUMES.

MR. ELSWORTH.—*Shad-cut brown coat, brown or black breeches, shoe-buckles.*

LIEUTENANT HARRY ELSWORTH.—*Red, turned up with blue, buff breeches, high boots.*

CAPTAIN ARMSTRONG.—*Blue, turned up with buff, white top boots.*

MAJOR CLEVELAND.—*Red, turned up with white, breeches, high boots.*

CAPTAIN ARBALD.—*The Same.*

LIEUTENANT MARVIN.—*The Same.*

APOLLO METCALF.—*Gray shad, square-cut suit.*

THE LADIES.—*The costumes of the period of '76.*

LOVE IN '76.

ACT I.

SCENE. *The drawing-room in the residence of MR. EDWARD ELSWORTH. Garden seen through doors. ROSE ELSWORTH occupied at a small table, stitching. KATE ELSWORTH stretched languidly upon a sofa, with a book in hand. MR. EDWARD ELSWORTH in an easy chair, with newspaper in his lap. Writing materials on table.*

KATE. Oh, dullness! dullness! I do wish Harry was at home, or Sir William would march some of his troops this way! What's the use of an army in the country, if one can't have a dance once in a while?

ROSE. What, indeed! All I desire is, sister, that they should be [*Enter SERVANT with letters for MR. ELSWORTH.*] left to the dance! That much they do very well.

KATE. I'm sure, Rose, I can't see what you find in these rebels to admire. As far as my observation has gone, they are only so many boors. There was Captain Arthur. Was there ever such a dunce? He had no manner whatever. He attempted once to walk a minuet with me, and I really thought he was a bear accidentally stumbled into coat and slippers.

ROSE. You're quite right! he never should have got his appointment until he had served a campaign in the drawing-room. If I were the Congress, I'd appoint none who could not bring diplomas from their dancing-masters.

ELSWORTH. Ha? 'pon my word! Very extraordinary news.

[*All coming forward.*]

ROSE. What is it, papa?

ELSWORTH. There has been a battle.

ROSE. Is it possible? Oh, where, sir?

ELSWORTH. On Long Island. [*Reading.*] Washington has been defeated—has evacuated the city—is retiring northward. [*Speaking.*] I feel, my daughters, that our situation is becoming here unsafe. We shall be continually exposed to the assaults of marauders. It would be wiser, in the present aspect of affairs, for us to seek a securer residence in New York, now so fortunately in possession of Sir William Howe.

ROSE. I should prefer remaining here.

ELSWORTH. Would it be safe, Rose?

ROSE. Yes, for we neutralize each other. Your loyalty will secure you with the Tories, and my Whiggism will protect us with the other faction.

ELSWORTH. Your Whiggism, Rose? You shock me by such an avowal; and your brother, too, an officer of the King.

KATE. I don't think there is much danger, if Mr. Armstrong is near to protect us.

ELSWORTH. Mr. Armstrong?

KATE. Oh, yes, papa! He's got to be a captain.

ELSWORTH. Not a rebel, I trust.

ROSE. Not a traitor, I thank heaven.

ELSWORTH. You confound terms strangely. A traitor is one false to his king.

ROSE. False to his country, sir. A king is a creature of to-day—your country a thing of immortality.

ELSWORTH. Your King is your sovereign, by divine right and true succession.

ROSE. Then, sir, serve the Stuarts. How came the house of Hanover upon the throne? You see, sir, that if you zealous loyalists could shift off James, we, with less belief in the divine right of kings, can shift off George.