

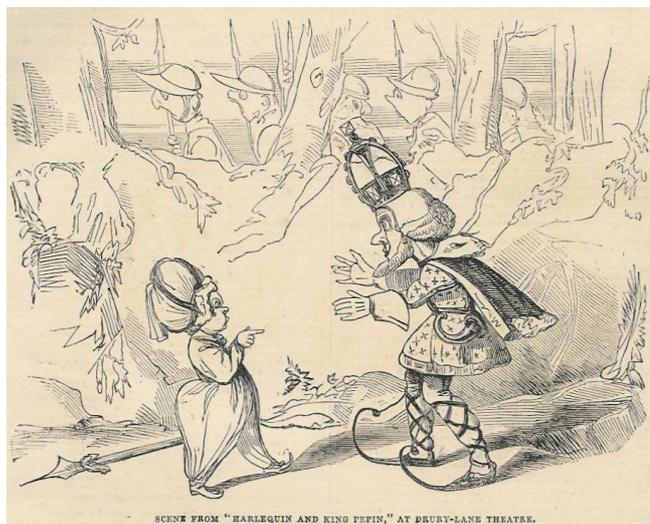
CHRISTMAS 1843: The London Pantomime Season

DRURY LANE:

Harlequin and King Pepin

The evil spirit of Idleness and the good spirit of Industry fight over two babes – Valentine and Orson. Their foolish nursemaid - Mr Blandinian – loses them in the woods and they are separated – one carried off by a bear and raised as a man of the woods, and one rescued by King Pepin and raised as a courtier. Eventually they meet up and fight – but finally realise they are brothers and each redeems the other’s bad points. Highlights included the appearance of a railroad, windmills, a procession of charity children with a Beadle at their head, a chair that became a bed of thorns, a barrel organ that changed into a singing mouse, and a finale including Lord Nelson’s last glories and the erection of his column in Trafalgar Square.

The house was not very full – perhaps because the pantomime was preceded by a full performance of the opera “Der Freischutz”.



SCENE FROM "HARLEQUIN AND KING PEPIN," AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE.

HAYMARKET:

The Fair One with the Golden Locks

In order to win the hand of the golden-haired princess , the suitor has to retrieve a golden ring from a dangerous river, kill a wicked ogre, and fetch the “water of beauty” from the fountain guarded by dragons. Suitor number one cheats: a fish finds the ring for him, a crow pecks out the ogre’s eyes, and an owl gets the water. By the time Prince Graceful, suitor number two, achieves his task he is too late. The Golden Haired Princess has married the cheating one. However, the cheat mistakenly drinks poison and dies – leaving true love to find a way.

The house was full. The effects were lavish. The critic thought, however, it was over-long and could do with some cutting.



SCENE FROM "THE FAIR ONE WITH THE GOLDEN LOCKS," AT THE HAYMARKET THEATRE.

ADELPHI:

Harlequin Blue Beard

The critic thought this one was too clever and complicated to understand. It was full of impressive effects but lacking in humour. Wieland (Harlequin) was a bit tedious; Matthews (Clown) was very good – but nothing like as good as Grimaldi in the old days; Miss Bullen and Mr Johnstone were a gracious Harlequin and Columbine. There was a clever impersonation of Queen Victoria. The house was full.



SCENE FROM "HARLEQUIN BLUE BEARD," AT THE ADELPHI THEATRE.

**SURREY THEATRE:
Harlequin Grammar, or AEIOU**

The Demon King, Indolence, surrounded by his court – Vice, Folly, Envy, etc – sends out an order that all grammar lessons are banned from the nation’s schools. The Fairy Queen, Orthography, will have none of this and determines to “secure upon the earth, Abundance of instructive mirth”. There was lavish praise for the pantomime masks, for Miss Terry as the Good Fairy, and especially for Mr Stilt (as Splinterspine) for his astonishing feats of acrobatic strength and agility. The Harlequinade was just about adequate, but the rest of the performance was one of the best the critic had ever seen.



SCENE FROM "HARLEQUIN GRAMMAR," AT THE SURREY THEATRE.



SCENE FROM "THE MAGIC MIRROR," AT THE PRINCESS'S THEATRE.

**PRINCESS'S :
The Magic Mirror, or the Hall of Statues**

This was not a pantomime, said the critic. It was more a delightful comedy set in China. The Magic mirror and the Statues that come to life in the Imperial Palace were the source of great merriment. The Emperor of China, Sing-Song , was charmingly played by Mrs Grattan; The Prime Minister, Poo-Poo, was portrayed by Mr Bedford; Mr Oxberry was most amusing as the sprite, Hiskhi-Hi, and Mr and Madame Gilbert were responsible for an hilarious ballroom scene. The critic advised “not a little pruning” but felt that thereafter it would be a great success.

**OLYMPIC:
Jack the Giant Killer**

The opening scene in the Golden Palace of the Gnomes and the machinery, tricks and changes were all very spectacular. Mr Hartland’s Pantaloon was excellent and” a bit of the genuine old school”. Although the performance was full of jokes and wordplay and very energetic, it was, nevertheless, nothing out of the ordinary. “The gentlemen before the curtain were certainly a little bit out of order”.



SCENE FROM "HARLEQUIN JACK THE GIANT KILLER," AT THE OLYMPIC THEATRE.

COVENT GARDEN:

Did not stage a pantomime this year. Instead it presented a series of orchestral concerts and an exhibition of many curious shrubs and plants from round the world.