

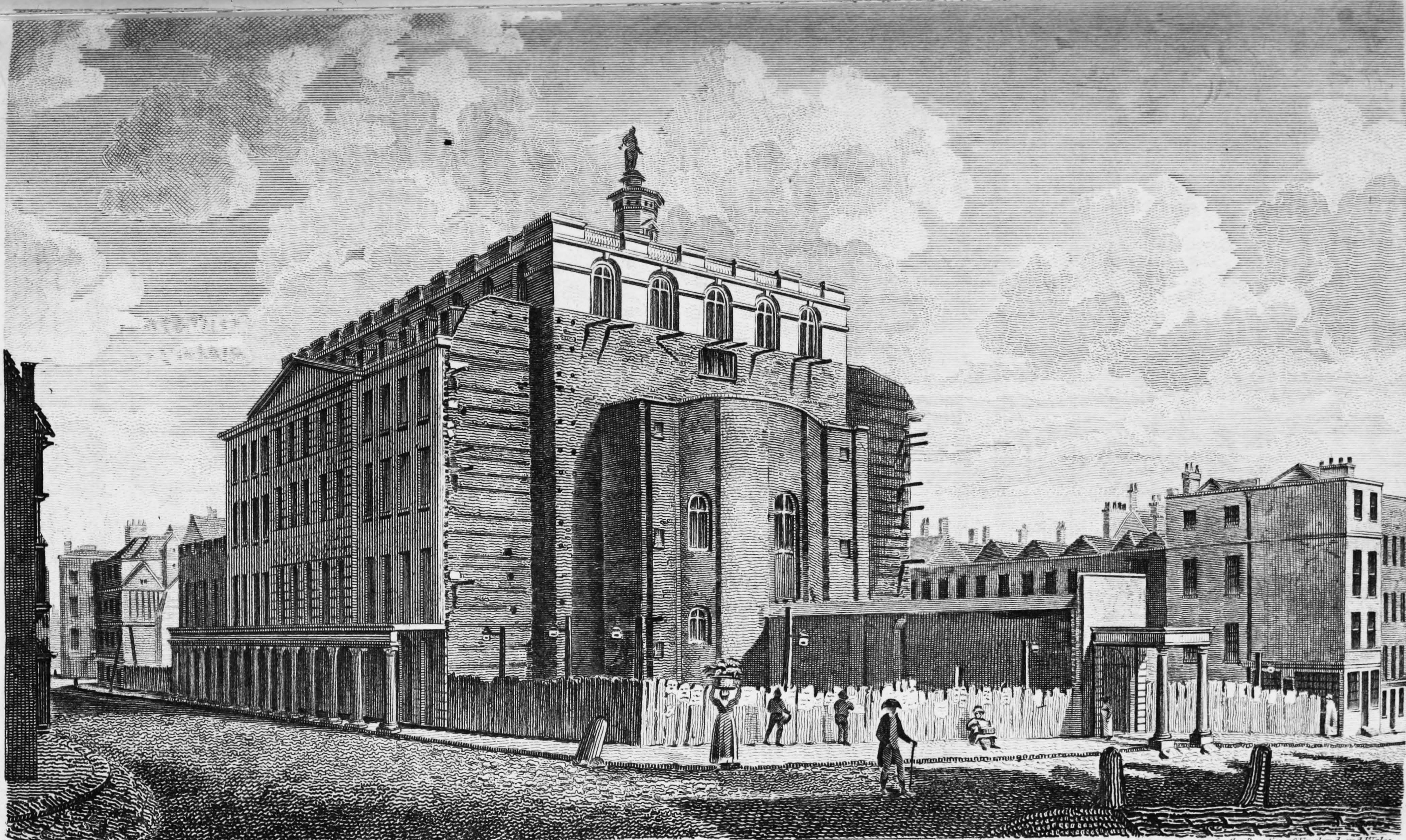
Two most commanding and interesting objects in this neighbourhood next attract our attention : they are the two *Theatres Royal of Drury Lane and Covent Garden*. The destruction of these edifices by fire has already been detailed in an earlier part of this work ; but as we have given a view of the late Theatre of Drury Lane, it will be proper to give a description of it as it appeared before that dreadful calamity.

The plan of that Theatre included an area of 320 feet in breadth, and, measuring from the substratum to the roof, was 122 feet.

It was raised on the site of the old house, and opened in the year 1794. There were four tiers of boxes, a pit, and two galleries, with a number of private boxes, ranged on each side the pit, and constructed so as to command a perfect view of the stage, and yet conceal the occupiers from observation.

The stage was 105 feet in length, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet between the stage doors.

Under the pit was a large range of lofty vaults, and immediately



Engraved by W. J. White, from a drawing by J. Capon

for the Beauties of England and Wales.

DRURY LANE THEATRE,  
Westminster.  
Burnt down in 1809.

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ately over it a spacious-room, and one for painting scenery, about 75 feet wide, and 53 long: above the galleries was another painting-room, about 75 feet by 40.

There were two green-rooms: one for the use of chorus-singers and figurantes; the other for the principal performers: the latter of these apartments was elegantly fitted up. The scenery, under the direction of Mr. Greenwood, whose abilities rank very high in his profession, was always bold, effective, and impressive, and had frequently been aided by the chaste and humorous pencil of Marienari.

The pit was 54 feet in length, and 46 in breadth; had 25 rows of benches, and was so well constructed, that those next the orchestra commanded an uninterrupted view of the whole stage; and the avenues to it were commodious and safe.

The interior of the Theatre resembled the shape of a horse-shoe, and the spectator was forcibly struck with the grandeur of the design, elegant execution, and splendid effect of this once superb edifice.

The prevailing colours of the boxes were blue and white, relieved with richly fancied embellishments of decorative ornament. The compartments in which the front of each tier was divided had centrally a highly finished cameo, the ground of cornelian colour, with exquisitely drawn figures raised in white, the objects chiefly from Ovid; the stage boxes projected two feet, and had a raised silver-lattice work, of excellent taste and workmanship.

The boxes were supported by cast-iron candalabras, fluted, and silver lackered, resting on elegantly executed feet. From the top of each pillar a branch projected three feet, from which was suspended a brilliant cut-glass chandelier; a circular mirror of five feet diameter was placed on each side the dress-boxes next the stage, that produced a pleasing reflected view of the audience.

On the nights when the Theatre was honoured with their Majesties' presence the partitions of the stage-box were taken down, and it was brought forward nearly two feet; a canopy

was erected, superbly decorated with crimson velvet, richly embroidered with gold, and adjoining them sat the princesses. Their box was usually lined with light blue satin, fancifully festooned and elegantly decorated with silver fringe and rich tassels.

There were three entrances to the boxes, and two to the pit and galleries. The one in Brydges Street led to a saloon seventy-five feet by twenty-one, called the Egyptian Hall. Sixteen pillars of the Doric Order, beautifully painted in imitation of porphyry, were at once a splendid ornament, and supported the back boxes, to which a flight of stairs at each end led.

Such was the interior of the late Drury Lane Theatre before the conflagration already mentioned laid the whole in ashes.

The exterior of this edifice requires little description; the annexed view will convey an adequate idea of its appearance, which it must be confessed, had but little to recommend it to notice: it had a sombre gloomy aspect, but ill suited to the purposes for which such buildings are erected.

The architect was Mr. Henry Holland, who constructed the whole upon an immense and magnificent plan, as the account of the interior just given, shews. It was capable of holding in the pit 800 persons; the whole range of boxes, 828; the two-shilling gallery, 308; the total 3611 persons.

The whole of this extensive building was surrounded by a stone balustrade, and on the top a colossal figure of Apollo.

Of Drury House, whence this Theatre, and the street in which it partly stands derive their names I have before spoken; but the following facts are worthy of notice.

Early in the last century there was a theatre in this place, which was sometimes called The Phoenix, and sometimes The Cockpit. Mr. Malone says, "This theatre had been originally a cockpit. It was built, or re-built, not very long before the year 1617, in which year we learn from Camden's Annals of King James I. it was pulled down by the mob, 1617, Marti 4,

Theatrum Ludionum nuper erectum in Drury Lane à furienta multitudine direitur, et apparatus dilacerator." It was some time called The Phoenix from that fabulous bird being its sign, and was situated opposite the Castle Tavern, in Drury Lane; it was standing some time after the Restoration. The players who performed at this theatre in the time of King James I. were called the Queen's servants till the death of Queen Anne, in 1618. After her death they were for some time denominated the Lady Elizabeth's servants; and after the marriage of King Charles the First, they regained their former title of the Queen's players.

How soon the demolished theatres was rebuilt, we are uncertain; but the first play in print expressly said to have been acted at Drury Lane, is "The Wedding," by James Shirley, printed in the year 1629, from which time until the silencing the theatres by the fanatics a regular series of dramas acted there may be produced. On the revival of the stage Sir William Davenant, in the year 1658, took possession of it, and performed such pieces as the times would admit, until the Restoration. At that period Mr. Rhodes, a bookseller, who had formerly been ward-robe keeper to the company at the Blackfriars playhouse, fitted up the Cockpit, and began to act plays there with such performers (of which two, Betterton and Kynaston, had been his apprentices) as he could procure. Soon afterwards two patents being obtained by Sir William Davenant and Thomas Killgrew, Rhodes's company were taken under the protection of the former, and with him went to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and were stiled servants of the Duke of York.

The company collected by Killgrew were called the King's servants, and acted first in a house near Clare-market. But this theatre not being well adapted for the use to which it was appropriated, a more convenient one was erected on the site of the present theatre, which was opened the 8th of April, 1662.

This theatre lasted but a short time. In January 1671-2, it took fire, and was entirely demolished. The violence of the conflagration was so great, that between fifty and sixty adjoining houses were burnt or blown up. After the consternation occasioned by this accident had subsided, the proprietors resolved to rebuild the theatre, with such improvements as might be suggested, and for that purpose employed Sir Christopher Wren, to design and superintend the execution of it. The plan which he produced, in the opinion of those who were well able to judge of it, was such a one as was alike calculated for the advantage of the performers and spectators: and the several alterations afterwards made in it, so far from being improvements, contributed only to defeat the intention of the architect, and to spoil the building.