

## The English Warner Brother triumphs over religious hegemony on the road to celebrity and dynasty

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In late Victorian England, music halls were often besieged by fanatical Christians who wanted to shut them down. Evangelicals manipulated justifiable public concerns about alcohol abuse to conflate popular entertainment with social erosion. The complex legislation surrounding places of entertainment began in the 1830s with concerns about limelight and sawdust, but by the 1880s it was firmly focused on morality (*Victorian Music Halls* 63). The music hall wars were an alarming threat for the predominantly Jewish artists and hall managers barely one generation beyond refugee poverty. It was unwise for them to oppose anything rooted in the national religious hegemonies, and they could not find a moral high ground to protect their livelihood.

In this context, the *fin de siècle* Jewish theatrical agent, Dick Warner, began to use networks of men's clubs and newspaper publicity to redefine the industry. The peaceful assimilation of Jews with its concomitant benefits for the pursuit of profit (*Jews of Britain* 77-79) was not a cynical ambition. Warner subscribed to the Victorian Anglo-Jewish world view of judicious assimilation and restrained observance, and he embraced it as the way forward for theatrical entrepreneurs who were losing ground to what Kift refers to as the "sour-faced, austere and ascetic" social reformers (157). The themes of Warner's publicity campaign are recognisable today. Through the promotion of philanthropic activities (*Melodies Linger On* 270), continuous newspaper reports of bonhomie among rival firms, generous testimonials, farewells and benefits and professed social concerns, theatrical managers became celebrities, built dynasties, and launched glittering international careers for themselves and the East End artistes who had once only been famous for dirty fingernails (*Footlight Memories* 66)

Warner was an intimate friend of Edward Ledger, the editor of the nation's most widely read sporting and theatrical newspaper, the *Era*, whose reports seemed to fuel the music hall wars. Prurient attacks by middle class people on the music hall culture were interpreted by the working classes as criticism of their values and way of life, and they turned out in large numbers to the courts, tribunals and the music halls when the temperance wars were at their height (*Victorian Music Halls* 183). Warner never publicly engaged in the music hall wars, but he had influence on those who did.

He had moved from the midlands to set up his international theatrical agency in London in the late 1870s, networking with the city's financiers, publicans and theatre managers, shuffling the best Jewish performers from London's discredited East to the respectable West End long associated with authentic theatre, ballet and music. When Warner married the soprano Lizzie Somers in Liverpool's Old Hebrew Congregation in 1885, he saw her Dutch uncles as potential business partners, if only they could also master the art of public relations. He had worked with the de Frece brothers for a year. They had managed music halls in Liverpool since the 1860s, but they did not enjoy a good reputation. Through bitter personal experiences<sup>1</sup> Warner knew that the uncles needed to reinvent themselves through the same columns in the *Era* that had ruined their reputations.

As Broadbent has shown, the litigious and outspoken de Frece brothers—Henry, Maurice and Isaac—were innovators in theatre in Liverpool, active in the Jewish community and unsinkable business men (*Annals of the Liverpool Stage*). Maurice was a playwright and

performer, and Isaac was drawn to the lithographic printing and publishing side of the business, which was also the trade of the Somers families. In public their personas merged<sup>2</sup> into one negative image, perhaps because the de Frece brothers did not bow down to popular English morals. In 1868 Henry de Frece raised the money to pay for a lease on the *Alhambra* in Liverpool, where he introduced the “two-house principle”, an early matinee, and a late show for discrete audiences. Before the decade was out, while cholera raged in London and typhoid in the Midlands, the *Alhambra* went bankrupt with an insurmountable debt of £650 in a theatre where tickets were thruppence. In the Birmingham bankruptcy court Maurice de Frece, who wrote farces and fancied himself a comedian, was unable to restrain his barbed wit. He brought howls of laughter to the gallery, which was reported in detail in the *Era* (February 13, 1870). Since 1843 the Theatres Act in conjunction with the Disorderly Houses Acts had tended to legitimise premises offering drama while systematically denying licenses to musical taverns. Summerfield (209-210) attributes the closure of hundreds of popular working class premises to a punitive licensing rejection policy between 1860 and 1889. In the brief exchange in court Maurice de Frece expresses his contempt for both the moral and the artistic guardians of the music halls:

Mr Griffin: Did you sell drink?

De Frece: Only penny bottles of ginger beer. We tried to improve the morals of the people (Laughter)

Mr Griffin: Had you any operatic music?

De Frece: No, except a verse or two from *Il Travatore*: but the audience never brought their opera books (Laughter)

Mr Griffin: I suppose you had some good singers in Liverpool

De Frece: Yes we had one lady who could go as high as a C sharp. And others who could go to the very bottom – so low you could not hear them (Loud laughter)

Mr Griffin: Then you had some good bass singers?

De Frece: O, I don't know about the bass. I know we had some beastly ones (Laughter)

In 1870 Isaac de Frece leased the *Adelphi* and his brother Henry served as his manager. There was a method in their shared enterprises: only one brother took the fall in a bankruptcy, while the other was free to go on trading and employ the bankrupt. In fact Henry de Frece was a serious man intent on developing a less offensive form of music hall in an age of confused standards. In 1871 Henry launched variety as a new brand of entertainment and opened the *Theatre Royal Palace of Varieties* in Liverpool (*Annals of the Liverpool Stage*). A Liverpool correspondent of the *Era* (September 10, 1871) wrote cynically that this was merely another music hall, and although there was no smoking or liquor in the auditorium: “it was certainly there in the foyer”. The correspondent suggested that as the theatre's licensing prevented it from being a music hall, it was nonsense to argue that it had not become one, when it was identical to theatres in Liverpool that were in fact music halls. He wrote facetiously:

I saw in your columns that I had incurred the wrath of those three influential, dignified and (of course) intelligent and impartial gentlemen the Manager, Stage Manager and leader of the band in what was once the Theatre Royal of this town... indignantly, unitedly rush forward to explain this is something new exquisite and altogether superior to the music hall. It is the Theatre Royal Palace of Varieties.

In time Henry de Frece's concept of variety was a watershed in music hall innovation, but in the short term bad publicity bankrupted his reputation. He moved away from the serio-comics and bawdy singers to acts he believed were more suitable for women and children. He invested heavily in a season's performance by a celebrated dancing company led by Madame Colonna, an actress and ballet dancer who had played the fairy queen in the East End pantomime *Aladdin*. In pursuit of the fantastic she abandoned her English name, Amelia Rogers, and partnered with three other women, two of whom were male impersonators, and they had mastered the *Can Can*. In reporting the performance the *Liverpool Leader* lacerated the performers as "without a shred of reputation and scandalously indecent" (*Reynolds Newspaper*, November 19, 1871).

The editor of the *Liverpool Leader*, John Collinson, seemed less concerned with the morality of the dancing than his own theme that de Frece was not doing something new in entertainment, but merely creating a ruse to run old time music hall with the attendant evils of alcohol and prostitution. The reports reached London (*Pall Mall Gazette*, October 16, 1871):

We have been told on what seems unquestionable authority, that while the door of the theatre – in which 'no drinking' is allowed – are closed by midnight – the green room remains open til four in the morning, and the Colonna girls stay there to drink and flirt with such gay sparks as have unemptied purses.

This time de Frece acted immediately through his barrister, a Mr Potter, and at the Liverpool Police Court Collinson was charged with "having maliciously and unlawfully contrived and intended to injure Amelia Rogers...to bring her into contempt, hatred, infamy and disgrace" (*Liverpool Leader* October 21, 1871). Collinson was committed for trial and accepted bail of £100. The matter was settled with a published apology in the *Era* as well as the *Leader*, although when Madame took her now infamous troupe to London the moralists appealed to the Middlesex justices against the licences of every music hall where she appeared (*Acresses as Working Women*).

Henry de Frece turned to the perennial love of English families, the pantomime. He worked with T.F. Doyle who created *Aladdin*, which ran throughout the provinces for about twenty years. The cost of pantomime costumes, sets and special effects was high, but pantomime drew crowds of respectable families. The de Frece brothers' renewed efforts were clear recognition that survival depended on compromise. As if to labour the point, the new lessees of *The Palace of Varieties* added *Temperance* to the overwrought title of the hall. Temperance was the real issue when the morality wars escalated at the end of the nineteenth century as small but strategic and militaristic groups intensified their campaigns (*Victorian Music Hall* 115).

### **Generosity to "eschew bigotry"**

It seems that social rejection of the de Frece brothers in Liverpool was more personal than anti-Semitic. Liverpool's port was frequented by Jewish traders and it was the landing and transit point for refugees and immigrants from Eastern Europe. The community was comfortably cosmopolitan.

One of Warner's new in-laws was Phoebe Schwersensky Somers, whose father was a devout Prussian working for the assimilation of the new Jewish populations in Liverpool. Isaac Schwersensky was characterised by the newspapers as a bridge builder and peace maker

between Christian and Jews. An aggressive advertising campaign in the local newspapers had built his clothing business, despite fires, thefts and bankruptcy. His unpronounceable name was at least visually recognised in Liverpool. When Schwersensky spoke at the dedication of Liverpool's second synagogue in Hope Place he seemed to be a man of zeal and vision (*Liverpool Mercury*, July 23, 1856). Building a second synagogue in Liverpool at that time could have been interpreted as divisive. The older Jewish communities of England met in synagogues that resembled sedate English churches with organ music, paid pews and choirs. The waves of Jews from Eastern Europe had a more vibrant, inclusive and unstructured way of worshipping. Schwersensky persuaded the public to encourage freedom of worship, claiming it would lead to greater social cohesion. Christians gave generously to the building of the synagogue, and Schwersensky publicly urged Jews to continue to support Christian charities, "to eschew bigotry" (*Liverpool Mercury*, July 23, 1856).

As a young man Issac Schwersensky had made his own connections to ancient British Jewry. He had married into the Isaac and Solomon families whose roots were deep in the Chatham and Canterbury congregations, the oldest communities in England. The celebrated Reverend Professor Judah Isaacs who laid the foundation stone and preached at the opening of the new Liverpool synagogue, was Issac Schwersensky's wife's uncle. These men were part of a religious network that had a public agenda to resist anti-Semitism in England, upholding its institutions and doing *mitzvah*<sup>3</sup> to prevent the refugees becoming a strain on the British purse (*Jews of Britain* 81-90, 156, 70). The next generation was in danger of forgetting that England's welcome mat could easily be pulled away.

### ***The London band of brothers***

After his marriage Warner began to bring the creative genius of the Northern Jews into alliance with the political and media strengths of his London coterie, mostly gentiles. The intimacy of Warner's networks was evidenced by the way his friends in business were included in the heart of his own family's synagogue weddings. Edward Ledger, the editor of the *Era*, wine importer Henri Gros, who was chairman of the Licensed Victualler's Association, Charles Mitchell a financier attached to London Stock Exchange, appeared as witnesses in the marriages, wills and deaths of Warner family members. These opinionated men, whose lives and businesses were large in their own right, became the voices of dissent in the market that Warner needed.

Warner's gift of friendship is the outstanding characteristic his few biographers mention (*Footlight Memories* 40, *Great Farini* 299). One of those closest associates was Henri Gros, whose career as a champagne importer made him anathema to the temperance crusaders. He had nothing to lose by making fearless public speeches against the moralists, and these were reported in the *Era*. He presided over the demise of one of London's most successful halls, the *Argyll*, when in 1882 for the fourth successive year its license renewal was refused. At a dinner in honour of the bankrupt *Argyll*'s proprietor R.R. Bignell, Gros said the licensing laws were:

curious commentary upon the boasted freedom of Englishmen that a man like Mr Bignell, who had a large property at stake, who had conducted his business in a proper manner, should have to go every twelve months before these gentlemen with bated breath and whispered humbleness and with his hat in his hand, to beg for his licence ... from those persons possessed with a desire to remodel London, to abolish all pleasure, and to make everybody go to bed early. (*Era*, January 28, 1882)

Bignell lost more than £12,000 in four years of appeals against the judgements. It was a sobering moment that propelled many managers to rethink their own future, and for the first time seriously consider collaboration in place of the old rivalries and independence.

The concept of syndicates emerged from the de Frece's first small efforts to protect their interests in the North (*Victorian Music Hall* 32). Henri Gros agreed to become the first chairman of *The Syndicate* in London with the stated purpose of buying up small halls and leasing them back to the owners to increase control over the content and management. If a specific hall lost its licence, the operations still had options to keep its program running. Syndicates also created a circuit for agents' stables of artists. Up until 1875 theatre agents were regarded with suspicion by artists who preferred to control their own careers. Theatre managers contracted artists for stock companies, and they recycled these artists in their own hall until the audience wearied of them (*Sixty Years* 145). Agents were regarded as charlatans did not deliver on promises, good only for caretaking a valuable animal or dwarf. Through the columns of the *Era* the role of the agent in providing fresh talent, sober and reliable, was validated until it became a matter of prestige to belong to the stable of an agent such as Warner's. Warner's signature advertisement in the *Era* snaked down an entire centre column, listing his artists and international partnerships. The advertisement inspired ambition in many artistes who wanted the credibility of belonging to a high profile agency (*Footlight Memories* 40-43).

Two other significant London allies were Warner's business partner G.A. "The Great" Farini and the theatrical entrepreneur G.A. Payne. In 1883 the three men went to Europe together to look for talent. According to Warner's own memories shared in an interview in the *Era* in 1893, he was not doing well in business at that point. Both of the other men had troubles of their own. Farini was a tough impresario with dubious credibility. Almost 50, his entire career had been built on sensational showmanship that belied his genius.

### ***Farini the tragic funambulist***

It was Farini who taught Warner the art of creating celebrity. He had started life in Canada in 1838 as plain William Hunt, the eldest son in a big, poor farming family. To escape a repressive father he taught himself to walk the tightrope to gain fame by crossing Niagara Falls. He publicised his own skills as a *funambulist* by challenging high wire artists such as the Frenchman Blondin, to increasingly bizarre contests. On one occasion he carried the newly invented washing machine on his back across the Falls, and stopped halfway to demonstrate its use. Catastrophe came upon him in Havana in 1862 when he lost his grip of his wife on the flying trapeze and she plunged to her death at *Plaza de Toro* (*Great Farini* 43-113). Not surprisingly, one of Farini's earliest inventions was the safety net, so often derided by his rivals.

Havana was where Farini adopted his stage name, affected an impressive Napoleonic moustache, converted to Roman Catholicism, and lived off a sympathetic and generous community while grieving his young wife for some time. Although he eventually returned to the high wire he began to develop as an impresario. He trained circus gymnasts, and wrote about the science of acrobatics and physical development. His 100 patented inventions in the USA were as diverse as folding theatre seats, and the human canon, but he did not achieve the 1000 patents he claimed in an interview in the *Era*<sup>4</sup>. Farini's contraptions of propulsion enabled him to launch *The Flying Farinis* featuring his adopted son El Nino, his most mysterious acquisition. El Nino appeared firstly as a pretty female named Lulu. Farini

advertised *Lulu* on the continent by having an Indian rubber stamp made and printing her name on walls all over the cities and towns. Those who saw the sign took it as a political slur on a French prince and the resulting furore gave Farini what he regarded as £500 worth of free advertising. The ambiguous sexuality of *Lulu* fascinated audiences. *Lulu* rarely appeared alone in public and on stage she was scantily dressed which intensified the sexual innuendo. This child possession of Farini's was shot from canons, launched from a platform as a human projectile, dangled from a trapeze where she held herself in place only by powerful neck muscles. London audiences were astonished by El Nino's apparent acrobatic prowess, able to leap thirty feet into the air from a standing start to seize the trapeze. However, the mechanical mystery of human projection was lodged at the patent offices in 1871. Typical of his showmanship, Farini advertised El Nino as the eighth wonder of the world. The titillation came to an abrupt end in 1878 when the child appeared with a full beard.

Farini represented the dubious tastes of a dying age. By 1882 he was severing his connections with the large American circuses although he retained an interest in the profitable Zulus and pygmies of Africa who made his reputation at London's Aquarium, a venue that veiled prurience in its claim to educate (*Africans on the Stage*). Alongside the furore over alcohol, social reformers were increasingly concerned about the use of children in theatre, and some were alarmed by animals and peculiar human exhibits.

Although Farini seemed to be the antithesis of suave Dick Warner, the partnership that began in 1883 lasted more than a decade. Both men were gifted linguists and they had a genuine interest in fine art and music. They saw the opportunity to reshape English music hall with quality performers from Vienna, Prague, Leipzig and the Rhine. The recruitment of foreign performers also outwitted the music hall managers who were still resisting agencies. Farini's biographer attributes deep shifts in his character to Warner's influence. However, Farini also met Anna Muller on his European travels. A classical pianist and student of Liszt, the daughter of an aide de camp in the court of Kaiser Wilhelm I, she became the companion for his transformed life (*Great Farini* 300). They travelled together, wrote popular songs which were published by the celebrated Frances Day and Hunter, they cultivated begonias in London and made money on the stock exchange. Farini also painted and wrote. Late in life they returned to Dresden, to bask in the rich musical life of Leipzig and Bayreuth, and to study art. However Farini's major occupation for the decade of his partnership with Warner, was the acquisition and promotion of brilliant performers who would not offend.

### ***The hapless prey of a rigid puritan***

The third man on the European tour with Warner and Farini was George Adney Payne, the most controversial music hall manager in London in his day, but a thoroughly beaten man. The problem Payne took to Europe was revenge. He needed a strategy to defeat a rival theatre manager, J.J. Poole, of the *South London Music Hall*, who had locked London's best artists into exclusive contracts with himself at a time when Payne wanted to move away from dubious East End serio-comics and singers, who depended on political or sexual innuendo. Farini and Warner as theatrical agents were also locked-out of representing the artists employed directly by Poole.

There was also a deeper anguish. Payne's long-term business partner, G. A. Crowder, had died, worn out by a decade of persecution at the hands of the most rigid puritan of the day, Frederick Charrington. Payne had always wanted a West End venue, so he was surprised when Crowder asked him to join him in a rundown hall popularly known as *Lusby's Summer and Winter Palace*. In 1867 at a cost of £25,000 Crowder and Payne took over the license of

Lusby's in Mile End Road. It had previously been known as the *Eagle Tavern Tea Gardens*, a popular venue with an undeservedly poor reputation whose licenses had been under perpetual threat. Crowder and Payne followed the example of Charles Morton who in 1861 had opened *Oxford Hall* in the West End and introduced a diverse program of entertainment that became a serious rival to genuine theatre. Lusby's was soon transformed into a venue able to accommodate 5,000 people. As the *Era* noted, its 100 foot long hall included fire proof stairs, graduated seating, a forty foot horseshoe balcony, private boxes and a substantial orchestra pit, folding doors that opened into the gardens, gas chandeliers by the de Fries (sic) company of Whitechapel Road, lounges, mechanical devices and papier mache decorations (*Era*, April 8, 1877).

Despite their stature in London, Crowder's and Payne's business suffered for the legal attacks and the public ferment on the street outside their premises every night as the ferocious evangelical Frederick Charrington orchestrated a belligerent campaign. Kift speculates that Lusby's was targeted because it had been the venue for Charrington's religious rallies a decade earlier, and the appearance of a music hall on the site was "a symbolic triumph of evil over good" (156). The devout Charrington was undoubtedly conflicted because his personal fortune was derived from the family brewery. His language was so inflammatory that it offended the patrons and even police officers whom he urged to turn back from the portal of hell. There were assaults and police on regular duty at the doors at Lusby's could not contain the scuffles which led to litigation and counter-claims of slander and libel. Finally, Lusby's burned down in 1884 with a total loss of £40,000, only partially insured. Although it was rebuilt and renamed *The Paragon*, Crowder had lost heart and died.

For Payne it was shameful to be publicised as an immoral man with a shallow interest in money making. He came from Scots Puritan stock, and he was quick to concede the evils of alcohol. Although he was a wine merchant by trade, he shared Farini's interest in horticulture. During his management of Lusby's the Mile End and Stepney Floricultural Society held its annual exhibition there, and Crowder and Payne provided the prizes.

### ***Going west to save the halls***

By 1885, Warner, Farini, Payne and Henri Gros and some of their contemporaries were ready to act. While theatre historians note the appearance of theatrical syndicates firstly in the North of England, with structural changes to the content, organisation and style, what is not recorded is the move south of the de Frece and Somers men to join Warners International. Warner's agents moved North with their artists, often renamed or mystified, with new contractual terms that guaranteed genuine variety in the halls.

Warner's friends and employee developed reputations that outlived his own, and among his cronies—Sir Augustus Harris, Sir Oswald Stoll, Sir Edward Moss, Sir Alfred Butt and Sir Herbert Tree—he had no knighthood. Walter de Frece, who was knighted much later, was a son of Henry who joined Warner as a junior clerk. By 1899 Walter de Frece had married the darling of the halls, male impersonator Vesta Tilly, and he was the managing director of Warner's. Vesta Tilley was typical of the reinvented Warner clients, along with Marie Lloyd, and Lily Langtry. Vesta was a frail girl from a Nottingham family of performers, and she had been touted through the Northern music halls for a pittance by her father Harry Ball. After de Frece took over her management, Warners founds contracts in New York on her behalf for hundreds of dollars a night.

By the end of the century Walter de Frece had grown the de Frece Circuit from a cluster of small northern halls, into a powerful syndicate known as the De Frece Variety Theatres

Controlling Company which had 19 halls. Later in life he was a millionaire and Member of Parliament. Another brother-in-law, J.I. Somers, joined Warner's and transformed himself from a struggling stage manager to a successful provincial agent with a stately Brixton house named after himself, *Somerville*<sup>5</sup>. Somers ran annual sporting events to raise funds for the Music Hall Benevolent Fund which Warner founded in 1888, supported by Sir Augustus Harris, for whom Warner managed all of the artists for his Drury Lane theatre (*Melodies Linger On* 275).

Not all of the Somers and de Frece family moved comfortably within Warner's orbit. In 1894 Jack Somers abruptly left Warner's and started an agency in Tottenham with Warner's younger brother, Manny. It was a step back into the East because Somers married into the Abrahams family which managed memorable singing saloons and Jewish theatres for generations. Manny Warner soon returned to his brother's agency, while Somers joined the actor and journalist Ben Nathan. It was Manny Warner who forged links to Broadway in the 1890s. According to Robert Grau, Manny was feted in theatrical circles in the USA because he was associated with the success of Koster's and Bial's vaudeville which opened in New York in 1892 (*Forty Years Observation*). He crossed the Atlantic regularly before moving on to theatrical interests in South Africa and Australia. In 1901 he worked with Grau, to manage the Cecilia Loftus world tour which had been underwritten by Rothschilds. Grau referred to Manny Warner as a conspicuous agent in New York who had represented thousands of artists, negotiating long and lucrative contracts for them on both sides of the Atlantic.

At the end of the century the music hall wars were forgotten and variety had won its place. Gone were the music hall ghettos. Historians struggle to explain the end of morality campaigns (*Victorian Music Hall* 183) although the *Era* itself was no longer castigating moralists but giving its columns to depth critique of drama, dance and music. In fact the new syndicates had changed theatre architecture and practice in their struggle for survival by isolating the service of alcohol, separating audiences in timeslots, ensuring consistency and quality of performers, and becoming their own moral guardians. East End sweetheart Marie Lloyd, was famous for her suggestive lyrics as a serio-comic, but when she achieved international status she developed a preference for performing in the colonies, because there, "Marie did not have to constantly look over her shoulder for the disapproving syndicate owners or licensing inspectors" (*Marie Lloyd* 115). Kift suggests this packaging of entertainment was the death of unique cultural content, particularly the Northern vernacular. It was good for business, however, as most of those attached to Henri Gros's first initiative soon developed their own syndicates of halls based on the principles of management developed largely by Henry de Frece and Sir Oswald Stoll.

### **A very humble celebrity**

Warner slipped from history at a tragically convenient moment. In *Footlight Memories*, Alltree claims he was holding his hand as he died on New Year's Eve 1914, a couple of months into the war. There is no further information about this sudden death, which went unreported by the theatrical newspapers and the *Jewish Chronicle*. Overnight Dick Warner had become an enemy alien, and it is not difficult to imagine the emotional cost for a man who had spent a lifetime seeking allies. In a bizarre and dreadful twist of fate, the gregarious Manny Warner, the only Warner brother born on English soil, was in Germany on business when war was declared and he was interned. He was released at the end of the war, critically ill, and he passed away alone in a hotel in Switzerland.

The business of Warner Brothers International went on until about 1928 under the direction of his daughter, Miriam, his cousin, the Hungarian journalist Harry Lanyi, Adolf Braff, a Russian who managed continental bookings, Alltree, and a changing cast of other employees. The spirit of Warner lived on through Miriam who spent the entire war conducting benefit concerts. The Warner's office in Paris was known as GHQ for the welcome it gave servicemen (*Footlight Memories* 68)

Insights into Warner's religion and his emotional connection to people, emerge almost accidentally from the accounts of journalists such as Chance Newton, and Macqueen Pope. Newton claims he spent many nights with "Quaint Old Dick Warner" who "had a yearning for me to tell him all I could, of all I had read, and all I had experienced both of the theatrical and variety stage" (*Cues and Curtain Calls* 267). Warner's patient listening must have flattered him, particularly when Newton was "able to hold forth to him a great deal on ... the study of comparative religions [which] has always blended with my studies of the stage". Newton believed Warner's religious interests eclipsed his theatrical concerns. Macqueen-Pope has been called a "wistful remembrance" by Davis and Emeljanow for his often inaccurate anecdotes. However, given the unflattering accounts he published of other agents, such as Didcott, who was a spendthrift, and Sir Oswald Stoll, a wowser, it seems unlikely that he inflated his estimation of Dick Warner. Warner he said, was a man who was welcome in the room when there was a crisis. He was the only agent invited to attend the Proprietors of Entertainments Association (*Melodies Linger On* 273). Warner wept openly at funerals (*Era*, January 15, 1898), at his own annual birthday parties and testimonial dinners, and on one occasion he took home the entire *Eccentrics Club* rather than see a theatre party come to an end. His name appeared regularly alongside Rothschilds as a contributor to Jewish schools, he celebrated the anniversary of his agency each year in a public place and his new offices were opened with three days of celebrations flowing with alcohol. The *Era* reported it all, and in so doing, constructed a figure, a series of networks, and a set of theatrical institutions no longer to be despised.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> His brother Hugo Warner became a fugitive bankrupt in Manchester in the 1870's, caught up in archetypal Jewish fraud that was closely followed by the newspapers.

<sup>2</sup> Inferring the three de Frece Brothers

<sup>3</sup> Moral good including benevolence or charitable work

<sup>4</sup> *A chat with G.A. Farini*, in *The Era*. 1894, E. Ledger: London.

<sup>5</sup> The family produced some distinguished performers such as actor Lauri de Frece, who was married briefly to Fay Compton, and the actress Florence Somers, who was the darling of her generation, as well as lesser known comediennes and musicians.

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