

Charlotte Cushman — The Story of Her Love as Told by Celia Logan.

Perhaps the very last actress that any one would suppose ever experienced the tender passion — much less suffered from the pangs of unrequited love — was Charlotte Cushman, and yet twice in her life she was ready to sacrifice everything for the man of her heart.

Miss Cushman received a common school education in Boston; her deskmate was the daughter of an actor, which led to frequent conversations upon theatrical matters, and to an interest in them of such extent that Miss Cushman determined, as a child, that should fate compel her to be her own bread-winner, it would be in some walk of public life. She had barely reached the age of sixteen before she was deeply enamored of a young gentleman who had his way to make in the world, and a speedy marriage being thereby prevented, she had little thought or hope but to do away with the obstacles which separated them.

Circumstances soon compelled her to cast about for some means of self-support, her mother being a widow with several children to provide for. Miss Cushman had a pretty, sympathetic, singing voice, and no great power, but much sweetness.

Mrs. Wood was an English ballad singer, among the first of that class to make a great sensation in this country, and during her engagement in Boston, Miss Cushman managed to be introduced to her; and finally, under Mrs. Wood's auspices, she made her appearance in the concert room, being announced simply as a "young lady."

Her success was sufficiently pronounced to determine her to continue in that mode of life, or at least until her betrothed should have become able to marry her; but he took great umbrage at what he stigmatized as an "unwomanly proceeding," and declared she had disgraced him. Hot words followed on her side, and after much altercation and mutual pain, the engagement was broken off, and Charlotte Cushman was free to follow out her destiny as a great artiste.

She went her way, and he went his. After much hard struggling, it led him into the establishing of a store—a sort of trimming store, combined with ready-made underclothing for ladies and children—in

underclothing for ladies and children—in which he prospered. He is now one of the foremost merchants of the kind in Boston.

Long years elapsed before the two met again. Charlotte was famous, and he affluent and influential. They met as strangers meet, were introduced, and ever afterward maintained amicable, but not amatory relations, for he had married in the meantime.

A few years ago I was in Boston, and dropped into his store to make some purchases. It happened that Miss Cushman preceded me by a few steps. As soon as the floor-walker caught sight of her he hurried off and returned with the proprietor, a hale, ruddy-faced, white haired gentleman, of quiet and dignified bearing. They took, rather than shook hands, he holding hers for a moment, and then side by side they walked to the back of the store.

To see those two calm, self-contained, old, silver-haired people, one would have little suspected the heart-rending romance which hung over their youth. It is all very fine to despise money, but the lack of it frequently changes the destinies of entire lives. Had Miss Cushman's lover been only sufficiently well off to have married her at the bloom of their love, in all probability the stage would never have known her brilliant genius.

She once remarked to a friend, who was cognizant of the circumstances: "When I see him now, rich, and respected, but not great, and think what a good husband he has made, I sigh for what I've lost, and rejoice for what I've gained. Nevertheless, fame and fortune only can compensate a woman for the life-long absence of a husband's affection, children's love, the peace and happiness of private life. When I returned from New Orleans with my voice all gone and in despair, if he had come forward then and offered me a home I would gladly have accepted, and would have lived my life untroubled by ambitious dreams, unsuspecting of the divine afflatus within me. I have had a thousand times over in my hand more than the money which would have secured me happiness when a girl, and always think for what a paltry sum my whole domestic happiness was sacrificed."

After Miss Cushman had achieved fame in England she made a tour of this country. She was then a woman of middle age, with a remarkably ugly face, but tall and

with a remarkably ugly face, but tall and well moulded frame. She played an engagement at the National Theatre, Cincinnati. Conrad B. Clarke was the leading man, many years her junior. He had been brought up as a gentleman, being the son of a Quaker in Philadelphia. He soon evinced a liking for the stage, and nothing could keep him from it. As far as theatrical talent went he had not mistaken his vocation. Miss Cashman was struck with his polish and wit, his talent and cultured tone. From conversations on acting in the theatre, Clarke soon began to call at her hotel to receive particular instructions in the part he was to play with her; then he escorted her home from the theatre at night, and it was plainly to be seen that she looked with marked favor on the young actor. One evening she was at the wing, ready to go on as "Meg Merrilles," I playing the boy in "Guy Mannering." I was standing by her side, and Mr. Clarke was a few steps off flirting desperately with a lovely young actress who had been christened "The Poodle Dog," from the way she dressed her hair, which was just as they wear it now a days, but then thought a wild, crazy style.

The star had been giving me a few stage directions, and, impelled by some impulse, I inquired :

"What of all things in this world, Miss Cushman, would you rather be?"

She replied, as impulsively, glancing at Mr. Clarke and sighing :

"I would rather be a pretty woman than anything else in this wide, wide world," and on the stage she rushed to shriek through Meg Merrilles. After this he assumed a bolder front, flirted no more about the scenes, and became obsequiously attentive to her. He travelled with her a short time to support her; it became a recognized fact that he was the great star's protege, and next it transpired that she had engaged him to go to England with her.

This was a happy period for them both. Frankness being one of her chief characteristics, she made no secret of her admiration for his talents and liking for him personally, and of her intention to forward his interests as far as lay within her power. Whether she loved as she loved another in her girlhood days it is difficult to determine, but her manners became more gentle and wo-

manly, she was less imperious with her underlings, and gave a great deal of time to teaching him his parts. His feelings were easier probed ; Conrad Clarke did not love Charlotte Cushman. His nature was too selfish to permit him to feel so pure and disinterested a passion as love in its highest sense.

Matters had stood thus for months. One evening Miss Cushman was going to the theatre, when a weak, haggard looking woman approached her, with a baby in her arms. She was a small, red-haired, fragile creature. Laying her hand on Miss Cushman's arm she said :

“ Miss Cushman, I think a woman of your genius and position might have many admirers without taking up with the hus-

admirers without taking up "with the husband of a poor woman like me."

The tragedienne paused in blank amazement.

"Are you talking to me?" she asked.

"I am."

"And you say I have taken your husband from you?"

"Yes—you—Charlotte Cushman."

"I don't know you; may I ask the name of this precious husband of yours?"

"Conrad Clarke," was the reply.

The great actress hurried away. She had received a blow, but she met it with as grave a front as she had many others in her not altogether smooth path in life.

All smiles, bows, and honeyed words, Clarke greeted her that night. She gave a death blow to all his hopes, not tenderly as many a woman so situated might have done.

could blow to all his hopes, not tenderly as many a woman so situated might have done, but with characteristic decision.

On learning from his wife what she had done he became furious at what he declared to be a malicious scheme to ruin him, and leaving her he swore never to live with her again. Annie Clarke easily obtained a divorce from him, and shortly after married an actor named Forest of Cleveland.

By a strange concatenation of circumstances, Clarke's child was adopted and most tenderly reared by one of our brightest wits — the only one of his peculiarly caustic kind left—a man who wields a powerful weapon in his pen, who has two parties for and against him, one who hate and fear him, the other who love and praise him — Don Piatt.

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