

## CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN AT ROME.

**An Interesting Reminiscence of the Great  
Artiste, Twenty Years Ago.**

“J. S. H.” contributes to the columns of The Boston Sunday Courier, the following interesting story of Charlotte Cushman at Rome: I spent the winter of 1852-53 in Rome. It chanced that many Americans wintered there. I remember that seventy-two sat down together at a National dinner on Feb. 22, of the latter year. But of all who gave light and life to that season, Charlotte Cushman was most notable. With Miss Hosmer, the sculptor, Grace Greenwood, Miss Vaughan, and a lady who spoke all known tongues (some one of whose ancestors must have been at the dispersion of speech at the Tower of Babel, and laid in a huge supply of every kind). Charlotte Cushman lived upon a flat, just off the Corso. They were known as the five wise virgins. Every Wednesday evening they gave a reception, and all that was brightest and best of so-

tion, and all that was brightest and best of society gathered in their pleasant rooms. You can imagine how five minds instinct with the associations which gather around old and Modern Rome—animated by contact with every form and kind of art—quickenened by the peculiar eagerness of all who are in a far and strange land to mingle in a common and homely happiness, gave zest and hearty joy to these meetings. No one who sat down to these Apician feasts but bears the rich flavor of them on his lips to day. But I specially recall with a saddened pleasure, the otherwise dark and dreary mornings (for the weather was for the most part miserable that winter) I spent with Charlotte Cushman. I was then just out of boyhood—fresh, eager, alive in every fiber—and she was in the zenith of her power. She was to me like a great elder sister. Her keen insight, her chastened taste, her dramatic perception and enjoyment of life and art, her sweet sympathy and self-forgetfulness of manner, drew me very near her, and I felt she liked the boy. "Come just when you please," was her invitation to me early that winter, and when not wandering about St. Peter's or the studios of Crawford and Story I was sure

and when not wandering about the studios of Crawford and Story, I was sure to find my way on a dull morning to the ever bright and cheerful little parlor of Charlotte Cushman. You know she was educated for the operatic stage, and that as she lost the melody of her voice she turned her life to the drama. Yet the old musical taste was very strong in her, and music had high dominion over her. Hearing her one day, as I entered, humming a stray verse, I begged her to sing to me. She laughingly said: "You know I lost my voice years ago and have never been able to find it." But yielding to my entreaty she sat down to the piano, and just touching keys so as to give a background to the picture, painted on the air the old ballad of "Chevy Chase" with such marvelous dramatic power that the whole story became real, and Lord Percy and the doughty Douglas fought again their doleful fight "in the hills at Chevoit." Ballad after ballad she sang that morning—or rather acted, for her tongue vivified scene and hero. At last, after a silence I could not break, she lifted up her voice in that grand, most reverential old Russian hymn, and as she sang so bravely yet so humbly the tears began to fall down her face and she bowed down her head and wept.

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