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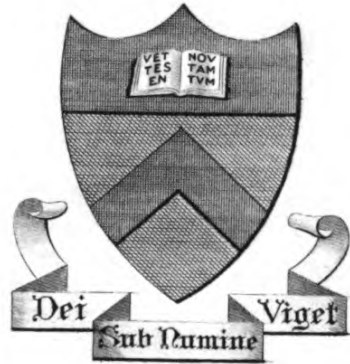
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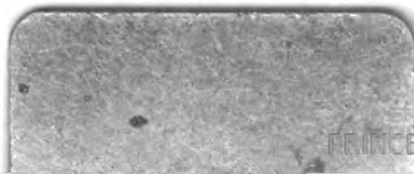
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MACREADY AND FORREST  
AND THEIR CONTEMPORARIES









WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.



ACTORS AND ACTRESSES  
of Great Britain and the United States

MACREADY

PORRIS

AND  
THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

EDITED BY

Brander Mathews and Laurence Hutton

New Edition, 1897



BOSTON

L. G. PAGE & COMPANY

MDCCC



*ACTORS AND ACTRESSES*  
*of Great Britain and the United States*

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AND

FORREST

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*New Illustrated Edition*



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**WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.**

**1793—1873.**

**IV.—I**

**x**

'This is the noblest Roman of them all ;'  
And he shall wear his victor's crown, and stand  
Distinct amidst the genius of the land,  
And lift his head aloft while others fall.  
He hath not bowed him to the vulgar call,  
Nor bid his countenance shine obsequious, bland,  
But let his dark eye keep its high command,  
And gather'd 'from the few' his coronal.  
Yet unassuming hath he won his way!  
And therefore fit to breathe the lines of him  
Who gaily, once, beside the Avon River,  
Shaped the great verse that lives, and shall live for  
ever.

But he now revels in eternal day,  
Peerless amongst the earth-born cherubim.

B. W. PROCTER.

## WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY.

---

William Charles Macready, born in London, March 3, 1793, was not destined by his parents for a player's life, although he was the son of a celebrated country actor and manager, who had conducted one of the great English circuits for several years with varying success, playing important characters himself. William was sent to a preparatory school, and afterwards to Rugby, with the design of giving him the advantages of a university training. Disaster came to the affairs of the father, however, and the education of the son was interrupted just at the moment when he was about to attain a high place in the school. Disappointed at this condition of things, but with much honesty of purpose, he turned to the profession of his father, taking his place in the active management of the circuit, and at last, in 1809, making his appearance as an actor. He had many opportunities for study, although as much work on his hands as he could well perform. He succeeded in placing the family affairs on a more prosperous footing, paid the pressing debts, and after several years of provincial work in such cities as Dublin, Bath and Edinburgh, found a place at last in London, that metropolis towards which the provincial English actor looks with hungry longing. He was engaged at the Covent Garden Theatre for

three years at the rising salary of fifteen, sixteen and eighteen pounds per week, opening there Sept. 16, 1816, as *Orestes* in the 'Distressed Mother.'

Kean was at this time in the full tide of his Drury Lane successes, while Kemble, Young, Abbott and O'Neill were the supports of the rival theatre. Into the latter group Macready entered, and his opening performance was regarded as a fair and promising effort. He was praised by Hazlitt, condemned by lesser writers, but speedily found a useful place by the side of the great men who at that day rendered the English stage illustrious.

It was during his early work in this theatre that Junius Brutus Booth made his bow there, entering upon the rivalry with Edmund Kean which produced so much ill-feeling; and, being placed above Macready in the casts as well as in public esteem causing the latter enduring heartburn.

Macready was the original *Rob Roy* in London, which did much to fix his fame in the minds of the doubting public. He had the good fortune to play with Mrs. Siddons on her reappearance for Charles Kemble's benefit in 1817, and to witness the farewell to the stage of John Kemble in the same year. His vacations were passed in professional visits to the provinces—especially to Newcastle or Bristol, where his father was manager. He spent much of the year 1822 in traveling, visiting France and Italy, where he saw the noted actors of both countries. He had the rare opportunity of witnessing several of the renowned Talma's most finished performances. In 1823, on his return, he played *Othello*, *Romeo*, *King John* and *Shylock*, beside some original parts, in the

then declining days of Covent Garden, and soon after severed his connection with the theatre, an act which caused much bitterness of feeling between the management and himself. He appeared at Drury Lane Oct. 13, 1823, as *Virginus*, following with a round of his other parts. He was married June 24, 1824, and made his first visit to America in 1826, landing in New York on Sept. 27. He opened at the Park Theatre Oct. 2, as *Virginus*, and played a round of his great characters with much success.

Going thence to Boston, Philadelphia and other cities his success was continued, his terms in America being £50 per night. He returned to London the following year, reappearing at Drury Lane Nov. 12, in 'Macbeth.' Taking an English company to Paris in 1828, he began a series of performances at the Salle Favart, opening in 'Macbeth.' It was an artistic success, resulting in pecuniary loss. Soon after his return to England, he became the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, opening there under favorable auspices, and producing many of the original plays with which his fame is identified. After two years of management, seriously hurt in fortune, but with reputation unimpaired, he began again his independent tours and at last assumed the management of Drury Lane Theatre, which he conducted with much success. Sailing for America again in 1843, he opened at the Park Theatre in New York on Sept. 25. His engagements on this occasion extended over one year, and were highly profitable. Returning to Europe in 1844, he repeated the Parisian experiment with an English company with the same result as on his former visit. During the next few years he was busy in his

profession both in London and the provinces. In 1846 Edwin Forrest visited England, and it was during this period that the relations hitherto pleasant between himself and Mr. Macready, by causes real or fancied, became estranged and finally broken. On Sept. 24, 1848, Macready landed at Boston to begin his last American engagement which resulted so disastrously.

On May 23, 1849, Mr. Macready embarked for his own country. After two years more of active service in his profession, on Feb. 26, 1851, Mr. Macready bade farewell to the stage, making his last appearance in Shakspeare's *Macbeth* at the Haymarket Theatre. His severance from the stage was complete. He retired to Sherburne and devoted himself for the remainder of his life almost entirely to labors of devotion and usefulness. His charity was extensive, he himself visited the sick and the poor, but his greatest interest was in the cause of education among the poorer classes. In 1860, leaving Sherburne, he took up his residence at Cheltenham, and on April 3, of that year was married for the second time, his first wife having died Sept. 18, 1852. In the spring of 1871, Macready, in failing health, visited London to consult Sir Henry Thompson. At last, in spite of skill and excellent treatment, after three days of confinement, remaining conscious to the last, on April 27, 1873, he passed away. He was buried in Kensal Green.—These are the facts of a busy life in homely detail.

Macready was a scholar and a worker ; but he had no love for his calling. It had robbed him of the prize which seemed so close to his hand,—a good social position and lettered ease. Diligently he strove to rise from the lower ranks of his own profession,



but the superior qualities of his rivals stood ever in his way. He seemed to possess none of the requisites for an actor save industry. He was gaunt and angular, had an unmusical voice and an awkward manner, possessing none of that magnetic quality which wins the auditor oftentimes before the interest of the character has unfolded itself in the plot; but he was an enormous worker, with a soul boiling against his surroundings. With an ambition which jealousy tintured and made contemptible, he spared no pains, he shunned no task, which could help him on towards the height on which his eyes were fixed. The heavy parts in the play fell to him, and his manner suited them admirably. He contended with such theatrical giants as the last of the Kembles, Charles Young, Junius Brutus Booth, and Edmund Kean. His style was unlike theirs; his work was cold, full of scholarship and of study, but not impulsive or spontaneous. He was compelled to give place for many years to men whose excellence and superiority he never could expect to surpass,—the idols of the public, by whose side Macready never held any other than a subordinate rank. It is said that when the play of the 'Apostate' was brought to the theatre by the author, the elder Booth, who was enamored of Miss O'Neill, then the darling of the London public and the greatest actress of the day, declined the part of *Pescara*, the villain, which he afterwards made so famous, and demanded that of *Hemeya*, the lover of *Florinda*, that he might play the love scenes with the O'Neill. This incident placed the part in Macready's hands; and it was the first great hit he made in London. The

character was soon resumed by Booth, for whom it was intended, and never afterwards acted by Macready. At length, one by one, the great men who had been in the way of his advancement were removed, and he stood in the front rank of his profession. All the harshness of his nature now appeared; he became haughty and offensive to all about him, subservient only to the aristocracy, but still working at his art with the spirit of a slave at the galleys. He was of an economical nature, and soon accumulated moderate wealth. He quarrelled with and left his old manager, and, aided by the wealthy friends whom he had never failed to propitiate, became himself a manager, inaugurating a series of revivals of old plays magnificent beyond the experience of that day. His research and scholarship attracted to the theatre learned men, and he gave a healthy impetus to dramatic taste, which will ever be his crown. He put himself prominently forward in these revivals, but they were none the less creditable and admirable. His career as a manager was marked by tyranny and cruelty. He had no friends in those who served him; he allowed no rivals to stand between him and the public. When Ryder once remonstrated with him upon some occasion of punished insubordination and told him he was a tyrant, Macready replied: "No, sir; I am not a tyrant,—I am a despot." He dearly loved a lord; he dearly hated his profession,—but it gave him all he had; without it he would be nothing. Like Congreve, before him, he had a snob's contempt for his art, and was more proud of his social position than of his reputation as an actor, well meriting

from the Voltaires of his day the rebuke of the old French philosopher who, on the well-known occasion of his visit to the author of the 'Double Dealer' and 'Love for Love,' so pointedly declared that he had called, not upon Congreve, the gentleman, but upon Congreve, the writer, adding, "If you had been no more than a gentleman, sir, I would not have been here."

Macready, however, attracted to the theatre some of the ablest contemporary critics; and the best stage editions of the plays of his time are those which bear the marks of his directing talent. He was the original of more than one hundred characters, and became at last recognized as the great representative English actor. He was the friend of Bulwer, of Dickens, of Forster, and of Talfourd; and was so tenacious of what he considered his dignity that he never permitted his children to see him in any of his characters for fear they might conceive contempt for his authority. He was a despot at home as well as the theatre. He kept a diary which speaks wonders for his diligence and his industry, but shows the violent, impetuous nature that was constantly leading him into difficulties, as constantly, however, to be regretted on bended knees. Some parts of the diary resemble the 'Confessions' of Rousseau. He seemed to bear a scourging monitor within his breast, and the monitor was ever applying the scourge.

His performances were models of mechanism; they lacked the divine spark which is called genius, but were penetrated by an intelligence which gave them unusually attractive power. He was greatest

in such parts as *Richelieu*, *Werner*, and *Cassius*, where a certain regularity of mind and body are not out of place, and where a dry subtlety and a studied declamation are accepted in lieu of magnetic powers. A good illustration of the self-consciousness of Macready is given in one of the pages of his diary. He is going to the first performance of Bulwer's 'Money,' after many rehearsals and much care on his part, and he ingenuously notes that he is certain the play will fail because there are two other good parts in the piece! These are the conflicting elements which form the character of one of the most noted actors of his age, or any age. But when all is said, common justice demands the acknowledgment that the modern theatre owes more to the industry of William C. Macready than to the example of any other actor who preceded or followed him. The stage needed just such a laborer to show to the followers of Edmund Kean that genius alone is not able to advance the highest purpose of any art. By his constant and untiring will he performed a herculean task, and he restored to the stage a more careful and more cultivated study of its aims and ends. With all the elaboration of modern French comedy he united some of the deepest subtleties of the old masters of the dramatic art; and the weird tragedy of 'Macbeth' under his skillful mechanism was endowed with such an amount of faithful detail that the play became almost a new work, and gave his own performance a place beyond the power of any rival. No career is so instructive to the young actor as that of Macready, in spite of the offensive nature of the man.

He occupied a place in the English theatre which at his retirement remained vacant for twenty years, until Henry Irving advanced to fill it with some of the same powerful qualities of his predecessor, much of his industry, but none of his coldness for his fellow-men. Macready's life was that of a scholar, a gentleman, and a good citizen. He fulfilled all the requirements of his social life, and retired at last from an art which he hated, rich in fortune, fame, and friends. True to his principles to the last hour of his professional life, he is said to have told his servant, when he was going to take his leave forever of the public, to "hold the curtain close when he came off, that he might not be annoyed by the adieus of those actors." He never concealed his contempt for Charles Kean, who rivalled him in his last years, and of whom he always spoke as "the son of his father." He was not popular in the United States. His style was not pleasing to the Americans, who were more used to the robust method of Cooper, or to the fiery genius of Booth, although he attracted the notice of scholars and the polite circles generally.

An account of the Astor Place Riot in New York has been reserved to close this brief memoir. The incident of Forrest's latest reception in England had been exaggerated in his favor when reported in his own land, and the cause became an international one,—the quarrel of John Bull and his young offspring, Brother Jonathan. Forrest's reception became a matter of patriotism; the democrats rallied as one man to vindicate his honor and that of the nation insulted in his person. It was well known that, while he had been denied a fair hearing in London, on account, perhaps, of



Macready's secret opposition, he had gained the applause of all the provinces through which he played, immediately after his London failure; but this fact did not weigh in the minds of his ardent friends. A storm was brewing which only awaited the return of Macready to burst and scatter death and destruction in its course.

Upon his reappearance in Sept. 1848, a plan was formed, but defeated by Forrest to whom it was submitted, that Macready should be hissed from the stage. Macready in one of his speeches before the curtain, alluded to this rumored attempt, in order to gain sympathy for himself. On May 7, 1849, he began his engagement at the Astor Place Opera House, in the character of *Macbeth*. The theatre was crowded by his enemies who greeted him with hostile demonstration. The play proceeded amid yells and hisses; at the end of the third act the performance was stopped, and Macready returned to his hotel. He prepared to return to England, but after some deliberation, acting upon the advice of his friends, he decided to hazard a second appearance in order that he might see how the public approved the opposition against him. An invitation to this effect, signed by many of the best citizens of New York was taken as a defiance by the admirers of Forrest, who prepared to meet the issue. On May 10, Macready was announced to reappear as *Macbeth*. The authorities had been called to the aid of the signers of the call, and when the doors were opened the theatre was instantly filled by a crowd of persons favorable to the actor, while the great mass of his enemies were excluded. These filled the streets, however, while the few who did gain admission showed

their opposition upon the appearance of Macready. At the first attempt the assailants were confronted by a body of Macready's friends within the theatre too powerful to be resisted; but the majority without added a threatening reinforcement when the decisive moment for violence should arrive.

The noise increased. Stones were hurled against the windows of the building, smashing them to atoms. The theatre was besieged on all sides by the infuriated mob, and its destruction seemed inevitable. At the end of the play Macready, in disguise, was hurried out of the front door, not recognized by the crowd, and barely escaped with his life. The militia was called out, the order was given to disperse, the angry crowd only hooted a reply of derision, the riot act was read amid the yells and oaths of the blood seeking rabble, stones and missiles were hurled at the Seventh Regiment, the police gave way before the overpowering number of the mob, and at last, the soldiers, sore pressed, wounded and nearly demoralized by the assaults which they were not allowed to repulse, were ordered to close column *en masse*, load at will, and fire. Had it not been for this, the mob would have massacred the whole regiment. Their attack was at once furious and determined, but the soldiers responded in like measure. Of the rioters one hundred and thirty-four were killed outright; and over a hundred wounded, the remainder dispersed into the darkness.

Macready returned home full of manly regret for the horror which had clouded his American visit.

LAWRENCE BARRETT.

We reached Birmingham with so reduced a purse that my father had to call upon a friend for a loan to meet our immediate expenses. But the theatre opened; the company, which was still further reinforced, was pronounced very good, and all went on satisfactorily. Conway was the great favorite. My father, to whom I of course deferred, had selected *Romeo* for the character of my *début*, and accordingly I was now in earnest work upon it. Frequently in the course of my solitary attempts the exclamation would escape me, "I cannot do it;" and in some of my private rehearsals I had the discouraging remark of my father, "that will not do," to damp my courage and cast the gloomy shade of doubt on my exertions. Still, however, I persevered; and as the time of making the desperate plunge approached, my hopes were somewhat cheered by the encouragement of the lady who was rehearsing her part of *Juliet* with me (Mrs. Young from Drury Lane Theatre), and my father's admission of "very great improvement." By dint of practice and repeated rehearsals, alone and with the other performers, I had got by rote, as it were, every particular of place, gesture, feeling, and intonation—and well for me I had done so; for it made my heart beat more quickly to read in the street playbills the announcement of "The part of *Romeo* by a young gentleman, his first appearance on any stage," the emotions I experienced, on first crossing the stage, and coming forward in face of the lights and the applauding audience were almost overpowering. There was a mist before my eyes. I seemed to see nothing of the dazzling scene before me, and for some time I was like an automaton moving in certain



defined limits. I went mechanically through the variations in which I had drilled myself, and it was not until the plaudits of the audience awoke me from the kind of waking dream in which I seemed to be moving, that I gained my self-possession, and really entered into the spirit of the character and, I may say, felt the passion I was to represent. Every round of applause acted like inspiration on me: I "trod on air," became another being, or a happier self; and when the curtain fell at the conclusion of the play, and the intimate friends and performers crowded on the stage to raise up the *Juliet* and myself, shaking my hands with fervent congratulations, a lady asked me, "Well, sir, how do you feel now?" my boyish answer was without disguise, "I feel as if I should like to act it all over again."

WM. C. MACREADY: 'Reminiscences,' *chap. 2*, 1808-11.

Went to Covent Garden where I saw 'Virgilius.' Macready very much pleased me. The truth of his performance is admirable. His rich mellow tones are delightful, and did he combine the expressive face of Kean with his own voice he would far surpass Kean, for in judgment I think him equal. The scene in which he betrothes his daughter is delightfully tender.

HENRY CRABB ROBINSON: 'Reminiscences,' *vol. i.*, *chap. 25*, January 1, 1821.

His successful impersonation of *Richard III.*, and his masterly delineation of *Virgilius*, at once determined his position as an actor of the first class—second to none. All the parts in which I ever saw

him, such as *Orestes*, *Mirandola*, *William Tell*, *Rob Roy*, and *Claude Melnotte*, he certainly had made his own. He was a man of more reading and cultivation than Young; and while the latter amused himself in the hunting-field or the drawing-rooms of his aristocratic patrons, the former gave himself heart and soul to the study of his art, and greatly improved his powers by intellectual friction with such minds as those of Bulwer, Forster, Dickens, Knowles, and Albany Fonblanque. Moreover, he was what is called an original actor.

JULIAN CHARLES YOUNG: 'Memoir of Charles Mayne Young,' *chap. 4, pp. 63-4.*

Macready's performance of *Tell* (in Knowles' 'William Tell') is first rate. No actor ever affected me more than Macready did in some scenes of that play.

'Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers.'

In Edmund Kean and Rachel we recognize types of genius; in Macready I see only a man of talent, but of talent so marked and individual that it approaches very near to genius; and indeed in justification of those admirers who would claim for him the higher title; I may say that Tieck, whose opinion on such a matter will be received with great respect, told me that Macready seemed to him a greater actor than either Kean or John Kemble; and he only saw Macready in the early part of his long and arduous career. . . . . Macready had a voice powerful, extensive in compass, capable of delicate modulation in quiet passages (though with a tendency to scream in violent passages), and having tones that thrilled and

tones that stirred tears. His declamation was mannered and unmusical ; yet his intelligence always made him follow the winding meanings through the inventions of the verse, and never allowed you to feel as you feel in the declamation of Charles Kean and many other actors that he was speaking words which he did not thoroughly understand. . . . . Compared with any one we have seen since upon the stage Macready stands at such an immeasurable height that there must needs be a strange perplexity in the minds of his admirers on learning that while Kean and Young were still upon the stage Macready was very frequently called a mere melo-dramatic actor. In any sense which I can affix to this word it is absurd. He was by nature unsuited for some great tragic parts ; but by his intelligence he was fitted to conceive, and by his organization fitted to express *characters*, and was not like a melo-dramatic actor limited to *situations*. Surely *King Lear*, *King John*, *Richard II.*, *Cassius*, and *Iago* are tragic parts ! In them he was great, nor could he be surpassed in certain aspects of *Macbeth* and *Coriolanus*, although he wanted the heroic thew and sinew to represent these characters as wholes.

GEORGE HENRY LEWES : 'On Actors and the Art of Acting,' *chap.* 4, *pp.* 39, 40, 42, 43.

Macready's style was an amalgam of John Kemble and Edmund Kean. He tried to blend the classic art of the one with the impulsive intensity of the other ; and he overlaid both with an outer plating of his own, highly artificial and elaborately formal. He had, too, a mania for inoculating every one from his own system :

he was a Narcissus in love with his own form-alities ; and he compelled, as far as he could, all with his influence to pay him the worship of his imitation. It was, I believe, Mrs. W. Clifford, mother-in-law of Harrison the singer, who well rebuked this tyrannic egotism. He had been remorselessly hammering a speech into his ears at rehearsal in his *staccato*, extra-syllabic manner, when she coolly, but decidedly, told him that she much preferred her own style, and declined to change it for his, adding as she opened her eyes and expanded her hand and mouth, with a strong crescendo emphasis on the word *all*: "If this goes on, we shall be *ALL* Macreadys !"

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' *chap. I ., p. 18.*

Macready was never a favorite of ours, and is, in our opinion, indebted more to circumstances and to a cultivated talent for his reputation and success than to any inherent genius. His acting, though evincing the scholar and the artist, was too cold and mechanical for our taste. No one who witnessed him could for a moment divest himself of the knowledge that it was Mr. Macready who was on the stage instead of the imaginary creation of the poet. No matter who or what the character might be, still the *actor* was visible and the *art* apparent. His *Hamlet* was a soulless, automatic-like performance. His voice, like Kemble's, was exceedingly disagreeable—a deep, husky, guttural sound of which he never could rid himself, and which at times rendered his reading almost ludicrous.

'The Actor,' *chap. 6, p. 68.*

It was in general by his management of his physical powers rather than by their natural qualities that Macready compelled admiration and swayed the sympathies. But this effect would have been impossible if all the details had not been suggested and continuously enlivened by a real and profound sensibility. He was, in fact, the only actor I have ever seen who was always under the apparent influence of the emotion he was depicting, and never gave the impression that he was seeking to represent what, at the time, at least, he was not actually feeling. It was this sensibility, controlled and guided by the technical skill so laboriously acquired, that lent a varied and attractive play of expression to features not naturally flexible, and to vocal organs that were, perhaps, better adapted to oratory than to acting. Booth's voice might have been compared to a violin, while Macready's had properties that more resembled those of a piano. There were rich tones in the middle register; there were deep notes employed occasionally with great effect; there was a clear, ringing resonance in the excitement of passion, and a peculiar capacity for purely intellectual expression. But there was no fine mellowness or sweetness; you were more often startled by a staccato than subdued by a melting *sostenuto*; and the highest notes were sometimes shrill and habitually tremulous. The musical flow of the verse was almost utterly lost; the sense alone directed the elocution, leading sometimes to abrupt changes of intonation that had the effect on the ear of a sudden change of key without modulation in a musical composition. On the other hand, no false note was ever struck, no shade of meaning was left



undiscriminated, no measured or monotonous recitation ever wearied the ear. In the "Never—never—never!" of the 'Stranger' the voice descended by octaves to a depth that reminded one of a great basso. In *Werner's* imploring cry,—

*Ulric! Ulric!* there are crimes  
Made venial by the occasion,—

the utterance of the name, first, with a falling and then with a rising inflection, had the effect of the chromatic scale, descending and ascending, under the hand of a virtuoso. Even the defects of the intonation, the tremulous tones, the spasmodic jerks, seemed to aid the effect in the broken utterances of intense and struggling passion.

JOHN FOSTER KIRK: *Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1884.

You will readily understand from this that to the actor the well-worn maxim that art is long and life is short has a constant significance. The older we grow the more acutely alive we are to the difficulties of our craft. I cannot give you a better illustration of this fact than a story which is told of Macready. A friend of mine, once a dear friend of his, was with him when he played *Hamlet* for the last time. The curtain had fallen, and the great actor was sadly thinking that the part he loved so much would never be his again. And as he took off his velvet mantle and laid it aside, he muttered almost unconsciously the words of *Horatio*, "Good night, sweet Prince;" then, turning to his friend, "Ah," said he, "I am just beginning to realize the sweetness, the

tenderness, the gentleness of this dear *Hamlet*." Believe me, the true artist never lingers fondly upon what he has done. He is ever thinking of what remains undone; ever striving toward an ideal it may never be his fortune to attain.

HENRY IRVING: 'Harvard Address,' reported in the *Critic*, April 4, 1885.

Now let us look into old Drury Lane in the Macready days. Macready was notoriously one of the most violent tempered men in England, and in his 'Life' it is recorded that he prayed earnestly to be delivered from his violent fits of passion. Macready was a scholar and a gentleman, and most conscientious in his endeavors to make the stage what it ought to be,—a school of dramatic art to his audience. Naturally he had a very fine voice, susceptible of great modulation, especially in the representation of pathos. But, from an over-anxiety to make everything that he said reach every one of his audience, he had fallen into a painful habit of breaking up his sentences, which not only marred the rhythm of the verse he had to speak, but gave a "jerky" unevenness to his elocution that became at times irritating. Another drawback that he created for himself was this: he made the most horrible faces when his passions were aroused, insomuch that I was once nearly put out of the theatre for bursting out laughing in 'King Lear,' when the mad king *shrieked* out, "Look! look! a mouse," and he made such a tremendous face and rolled his eyes in such a supernatural manner at so small an animal, in his imagination, that if it had been at the end of the world

I could not have kept my countenance. Nevertheless, on looking back I feel fully convinced that a Shakspearean performance at Macready's theatre gave one a great zest for reading and trying to understand Shakspeare.

*Cornhill Magazine*, September, 1885.

Though they usually got on very well together, my father [Henry Compton] and Macready did not always, in the words of the former, "hit the mark," especially when Macready would try to give my father, amongst others, a lesson in acting. I remember hearing him allude once or twice to a slight discussion that took place during the rehearsal of some piece in which my father was to play a Jack Tar. Macready sat watching one of the scenes for some time, and then stopped the rehearsal. Getting up very solemnly and deliberately, he delivered himself most impressively as follows: "Mr. Compton, I do not speak without due consideration and thought on the subject, and you must therefore excuse my saying that you have never been still for more than a minute at a time the whole of this scene." The answer was delivered just as impressively but not exactly in the measured tones of the tragedian: "Mr. Macready, I do not speak without due consideration and thought on the subject, and you will therefore excuse my saying, Did you ever know a British sailor just come on shore after a long voyage who *could* keep still for more than a moment at a time?" The tragedian fell back, and the rehearsal continued.

EDWARD COMPTON: 'Memoir of Henry Compton,'  
*chap. 4.*



Mr. Macready was a great actor, and a distinguished man in many ways ; but you will, I dare say, remember that he would never, if he could help it, allow any one to stand on the same level with himself. I read once in *Punch* that they supposed Mr. Macready thought Miss Helen Faucit had a very handsome back, for, when on the stage with her, he always managed that the audience should see it and little else.

HELEN FAUCIT (Lady Martin): 'On some of Shakspeare's Female Characters,' *p.* 293.

Macready came to Philadelphia in the season of 1826-27, to act at the Chestnut, and on the day of his arrival was entertained at dinner by the manager, Wood,—Jefferson being one of the guests. The next morning a rehearsal of 'Macbeth' occurred, and Jefferson, who was lame with gout, appeared with a cane in his hand. This was an infraction of the well-known rule, but it was understood in the company that Mr. Jefferson was ill, and therefore the breach of stage etiquette was not regarded. The comedian was to enact the *First Witch*. Macready immediately observed the cane, and, with his customary arrogance, determined to assert himself. "Tell that person," he said, "to put down his cane." The prompter, thus commanded, delivered his message. "Tell Mr. Macready," said Jefferson, "that I shall not act with him during his engagement;" and he left the stage. "Mr. Macready had a right," he afterwards remarked, "to object to the carrying of a cane at rehearsal; but it was obvious to me that this was not his point. He chose to disregard the fact that we were, and

had met as, social equals, and to omit the civility of a word of inquiry which would have procured immediate explanation. His purpose was to overbear and humiliate me, so as to discipline and subjugate the rest of the company. It was a rude exercise of authority, and its manner was impertinent."

WILLIAM WINTER: 'The Jeffersons,' pp. 76-77.

For his benefit, at New Orleans, Mr. Macready produced (as an after-piece!) the 'School for Scandal,' in three acts! cutting out the great scandal scene, the picture scene, and several other scenes; so as to confine it as much as possible to the development of the 'Plots of Joseph Surface' which character he played, (so far as as he remembered the words—for he was very imperfect,) and which consequently became, of course, the feature; and as far as he could make it so—the only feature of the comedy. He insisted, too, (to save himself trouble in dressing, I suppose,) on wearing his own modern clothes; black coat and pantaloons. I played *Charles Surface*, but of course did not follow his example in this gross anachronism of costume.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF: 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' p. 231.

In rehearsing the play of 'Virginius,' an occurrence took place which caused a hearty laugh at the expense of Mr. William Forrest (brother to the tragedian), who was the  *Icilius* . Caught by the natural tone and manner of Macready, who, turning suddenly, said: "Will you lead *Virginia* in, or do you wait for me to do it?" "Which ever you please, Mr. Macready," was the ready

answer, followed by such a laugh as only actors can enjoy.

F. C. WEMYSS : 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' p. 118.

He was naturally an amiable man, with a most passionate temper, and subject to terrible ebullitions on the slightest and most trivial occasions. I'll mention a little incident which I very well recall, to illustrate this. Macready always came to the theatre about two hours before the curtain went up, and he would sit down and chat, and talk, and grumble about the things which had displeased him the day before, and make all sorts of trivial complaints. On one occasion he started up suddenly and called to his man, Thompson by name—"Thompson, Great Heavens! what a beast you are! Thompson, I don't know why in thunder I should be bothered and annoyed and pestered by such an infernal scoundrel!" "What—what—is the matter?" gasped the frightened Thompson. "Look round and see, you scoundrel; don't you see you have forgotten something?" "I don't know, indeed, what I have forgotten," said Thompson. "*My book of beards*," roared Macready. Thompson rushed out into the street and across to the Revere House for the book, and then Macready turned to me and said, "Brougham, did you ever know such a wretch? Did you ever see such a consummate scoundrel? I ask you how can I preserve the equilibrium of mind I require, for the arduous labors I have to undergo, with such a villain?" At last Thompson rushed in and laid the book of beards, before him. Again Macready eyed him and flew at him in a violent rage

once more. "Thompson," he said, "when I took you out with me I promised your people I would take as much care of you, confound you, as I could, as much as your brutal nature would permit anybody to do, and yet of such a night as this, with the snow on the ground, you go out *without an overcoat.*" That was a characteristic scene between Macready and his man, and well illustrates his tendency to get into a terrible rage about nothing.

JOHN BROUGHAM: reported in *Boston Times*, Oct. 25, 1874.

Macready's sensitiveness shrouded itself within an artificial manner; but a more delightful companion could not be,—not only on account of his learning and accomplishment, but of his uncompromising liberality of opinion, and his noble strain of meditative thought. He enjoyed playing *Jacques*—thinking that character singularly like himself; and it was so, in one part of his character: but there was, besides the moralizing tendency, a chivalrous spirit of rare vigilance, and an unsleeping tenderness and social beneficence, which accounted for and justified the idolatry with which he was regarded, through all trials occasioned by the inevitable temper with which he manfully struggled.

HARRIET MARTINEAU: 'Autobiography,' *vol. i., period 6, section 2.*

Poor dear William! I never thought him more interesting, however. To see a man who is exhibiting himself every night on the stage, blushing like a young girl in a private room is a beautiful phenomenon to me. His wife whispered into my ear, as we sat on the

sofa together : "Do you know poor William is in a perfect agony to-day at having been brought here in that great coat. It is a stage great coat, but was only worn by him twice ; the piece it was bought for did not succeed, but it was such an expensive coat, I would not let him give it away ; and doesn't he look well in it?" I wish Jeannie had seen him in the coat—magnificent fur neck and sleeves, and such frogs on the front. He did look well, but so heartily ashamed of himself.

JANE WELSH CARLYLE: 'Letters and Memorial,' vol. i., Letter 42, March, 1843.

He speaks in his diary of the ugliness which went against him at his first appearance. Perhaps in his youth he was somewhat puffy—I have heard so—but when I first saw him in his middle age, his face and figure showed little flesh, his jaw was square, there was a singular intensity in his eyes, he looked like a passionate, thinking man, and his presence was commanding : you would hardly pass him in the street without saying, "Who can that be?" His first aspect was perhaps severe, but what a charm there is in a grave countenance when it breaks into a pleasant smile—a smile of humor or of kindness!

LADY POLLOCK : 'Macready as I Knew Him,' p. 5.

Therefore it was that the great audience which was gathered together to listen to his last farewell at Drury Lane were moved to an unusual degree. . . . . When he came on the stage after his performance of *Macbeth*, in his daily dress, and alone, they bent eagerly forward. Their agitation was evident ; but it



was dominated by the desire to hear every syllable he uttered. He spoke as suited the occasion, simply and briefly ; his accents were tender yet quite distinct. At the end his voice faltered, and tears, which he quietly wiped away, fell from his eyes. The tears of his hearers flowed fast ; and a voice from the gallery shouted out in lamentation, "The Last of the Mohicans !" Then arose a cheer loud and long, pausing for an instant, only to be renewed again and again with increasing power. Of the large numbers who failed to gain admittance, many were gathered outside the walls and echoed the applause from within.

*Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

On one occasion he [the elder Booth] took every member of his family to witness Macready's *Werner*. The writer can remember only a sombre man with peculiar brows and guttural voice, dragging through what seemed to her a very dismal tragedy ; but Mr. Booth pronounced it " a most exquisite performance."

ASIA BOOTH CLARKE : ' The Elder and the Younger Booth,' *vol. i.*, p. 113.

February 22, 1833.—Yesterday I omitted to rebuke myself for the petulance with which I rated the man who carries my clothes. If we examine our relations with mankind we have no right to show anger to any man ; it is the right only of the tyrant over his slave, and there is first the right of tyranny in the abstract to be established. To be angry with any one is to assume a pretension to superiority that men are least disposed to allow. Why cannot I reflect, before I commit myself in word or action? . . . . .

EXETER, March 30, 1835.—I begin to despair of obtaining that mastery over myself, which I owe to myself, to my children, and to society. It is no excuse nor plea that I suffer so keenly as I do from regret and shame at my own intemperance. I feel the folly, the madness, the provoking extravagance of my behavior, treating men like slaves, and assuming a power over them which is most unjustifiable and most dangerous, and yet contrition and stinging reflection seem to have no power in the punishment they inflict or of producing amendment. I do not wish to harbor one ungrateful thought, for though my public life is far, far from happy, yet my domestic happiness is more than an equipoise to its annoyances; yet I cannot think of my education, and the ills derived from the counsel and example afforded me, without heartfelt repinings. To God Almighty I lift my prayer, that I may be enabled to subdue this hateful and degrading vice of temper, so as to help my blessed children in the first best worldly endeavor of governing their own words.

January 5, 1839.—Read my strange note from some woman threatening to destroy herself for love of me! The ugly never need despair after this.

February 3, 1851.—My theatrical engagement is concluded. My professional life may be said to be ended. I have only to act one night more for my own benefit, in regard to which I am bound to no man; I have acquitted myself of my dues—I am free! Nearly fifty-eight years of my life are numbered: that life was begun in a very mediocre position—mere respectability; my father maintained a good character as an honest and a liberal man; my mother was a woman of good family, of superior intellect, excellent

heart, and of high character, but at ten years of age I lost her counsel and example. My heart's thanks are constantly offered to God Almighty for the share of good he has permitted to be allotted to me in this life. I have attained the loftiest position in the art to which my destiny directed me, have gained the respect of the honored and respected, and the friendship of the highly-gifted, amiable, and distinguished. My education, my habits, my turn of mind did not suggest to me the thought of amassing wealth, or I might have been rich ; I have what I trust will prove competence, and most grateful am I for its possession. My home is one of comfort and of love, and I look towards it with cheerfulness and delightful security of heart, and most gratefully and earnestly do I bless the name and thank the bounty of Almighty God, Who has vouchsafed such an indulgence to me, undeserving as I have been, and sinner as I am. Blessed be His name ? Amen.

WM. C. MACREADY : 'Diary.'

Charles Sumner (Dec. 10, 1850) wrote from Boston (United States) : " You will stand out hereafter as the last great actor of the English stage. It must be so ; and I rejoice that associated with that position will be so much of private worth and general culture as we admire in you. Of you we may say what Cicero said in his oration for Sextius, of the great Roman actor *Æsopus*, that he chose the noblest parts both as an actor and a citizen. '*Mehercule, semper partium inrepublicâ, tanquam inscendâ, optimarum.*' I cannot do more than to wish for you the success in future fame which attended *Æsopus*.

*Ibid.*



Farewell, Macready, since to-night we part ;  
Full-handed thunders often have confessed  
Thy power well used to move the public breast.  
We thank thee with our voice and from our heart.  
Farewell, Macready, since this night we part ;  
Go, take thine honors home ; rank with the best,  
Garrick and statelier Kemble and the rest  
Who made a nation purer through their art.  
Thine is it that our drama did not die,  
Nor flicker down to brainless pantomime.  
And those gilt gauds men-children swarm to see.  
Farewell, Macready ; moral, grave, sublime ;  
Our Shakspeare's bland and universal eye  
Dwells pleased, through twice a hundred years,  
on thee.

ALFRED TENNYSON.



# EDWIN FORREST.

1806-1872.

IV.—3

33

No fading laurels did his genius reap ;  
With Shakspeare's best interpreters full high  
His name is graven on Fame's temple-front,  
With Kean's and Kemble's,—names that will  
not die  
While memory venerates the poet's shrine,  
And holds his music more than half divine.

FRANCIS A. DURIVAGE.



EDWIN FORREST  
As Rolla in "Pizarro."



## EDWIN FORREST.

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Edwin Forrest was born in the city of Philadelphia, March 9, 1806, his father, a Scotchman, having emigrated to America during the last year of the preceding century. The boy, like many others of his profession was designed for the ministry, and before the age of eleven the future Channing had attracted admiring listeners by the music of his voice and the aptness of his mimicry. His memory was remarkable, and he would recite whole passages of his preceptor's sermons. Perched upon a chair or stool, and crowned with the proud approval of family and friends, the young mimic filled the hearts of his listeners with fervent hopes of his coming success in the fold of their beloved church. These hopes were destined to be met with disappointment. The bias of the future leader of the American stage was only faintly outlined as yet : his hour of development was still to come.

He must have learned early the road to the theatre, permitted to go by the family, or going, perhaps, without the knowledge or consent of his seniors in the overworked household ; for, before he had passed his tenth year, our young sermonizer was a member of a Thespian club, and before he was eleven he had made his appearance at one of the regular theatres in

a female character, but with most disastrous results. He soon outgrew the ignominy of his first failure, however, and again and again sought to overcome its disgrace by a fresh appearance. To his appeals the irate manager lent a deaf ear. The sacred portal that leads to the enchanted ground of the stage was closed against young Forrest, the warden being instructed not to let the importunate boy pass the door. At last, in desperation, he resolved to storm the citadel, to beat down the faithful guard, and to carry the war into the enemy's camp. One night he dashed past the astonished guardian of the stage entrance just as the curtain fell upon one of the acts of a play. He emerged before the footlights, eluding all pursuit, dressed as a harlequin, and before the audience had recovered from its astonishment at this scene not set down in the bills, the baffled, but not subdued, aspirant had delivered the lines of an epilogue in rhyme with so much effect that, before he could be seized by the astounded stage manager and hurled from the theatre, he had attracted public notice, successfully won his surprised audience, and not only secured immunity from punishment for his temerity, but actually gained that respect in the manager's estimation which he had so long and so vainly striven to acquire.

At last Forrest was promised an appearance at the Walnut-street house, then one of the leading theatres of the country. He selected *Young Norval* in Home's tragedy of 'Douglas,' and on Nov. 27, 1820, the future master of the American stage, then fourteen years of age,—a boy in years, a man in character,—announced as "A young Gentleman of this City," surrounded by



a group of veteran actors who had for many years shared the favor of the public, began a career which was as auspicious at its opening as it was splendid in its maturity. At his entrance he won the vast audience at once by the grace of his figure and the modest bearing that was natural to him. Something of that magnetism which he exercised so effectively in late years now attracted all who heard him, and made friends even before he spoke.

He was allowed to reappear as *Frederick* in 'Lover's Vows,' repeating his first success; and on Jan. 8, 1821, he benefited as *Octavian* in the 'Mountaineers,' a play associated with the early glories of Edmund Kean. In this year, also, he made his first and only venture as a manager, boldly taking the Prune Street Theatre, Philadelphia, and giving a successful performance of *Richard III.*, which not only pleased the audience but brought him a few dollars of profit. He made many attempts to secure a regular engagement in one of the Western circuits, where experience could be gained, and at last, after many denials, he was employed by Collins and Jones to play leading juvenile parts in their theatres in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and Lexington. Thus at the age of sixteen or eighteen Edwin Forrest enrolled himself as a regular member of a theatrical company, and broke loose from trade forever.

Of his professional progress here we have but poor accounts. He seems to have been very popular, and to have had an experience larger than he had heretofore enjoyed. He played with the elder Conway, and was affected by the grandeur of that actor's *Othello*, a

study which served Forrest well when in late years he inherited the character.

Jane Placide, who inspired the first love of Edwin Forrest, was an actress who combined talent, beauty and goodness. Her character would have softened the asperities of his, and led him by a calmer path to those grand elevations towards which Providence had directed his footsteps. Baffled in his love, however, and believing Caldwell to be his rival and enemy, he challenged him, but was rebuked by the silent contempt of his manager, whom the impulsive and disappointed lover "posted."

The hard novitiate of Edwin Forrest was now drawing near its close. Securing a stock engagement with Charles Gilfert, manager of the Albany Theatre, he opened there in the early fall, and played for the first time with Edmund Kean, then on his second visit to America. The meeting with this extraordinary man, and the attention he received from him were foremost among the directing influences of Forrest's life. To his last hour he never wearied of singing the praises of Kean, whose genius filled the English speaking world with admiration. Two men more unlike in mind and body can scarcely be imagined. Until now Forrest had seen no actor who represented in perfection the impassioned school of which Kean was the master. He could not have known Cooke even in the decline of that great tragedian's power, and the little giant was indeed a revelation. He played *Iago* to Kean's *Othello*, *Titus* to his *Brutus*, and *Richmond* to his *Richard III*.

In the interval which preceded the opening of the **Bowery Theatre**, New York, Forrest appeared at the

Park for the benefit of Woodhull, playing *Othello*. He made a pronounced success, his old manager, sitting in front, profanely exclaiming, "By God, the boy has made a hit!" This was a great event, as the Park was then the leading theatre of America, and its actors were the most famous and exclusive.

He opened at the Bowery Theatre in November, 1826, as *Othello*, and made a brilliant impression. His salary was raised from twenty-eight to forty dollars per week. From this success may be traced the first absolute hold made by Edwin Forrest upon the attention of cultivated auditors and intelligent critics. The Bowery was then a very different theatre from what it afterwards became, when the newsboys took forcible possession of its pit and the fire-laddies were the arbiters of public taste in its neighborhood.

An instance of Forrest's moral integrity may be told here. He had been approached by a rival manager, after his first success, and urged to secede from the Bowery and join the other house at a much larger salary. He scornfully refused to break his word, although his own interests he knew must suffer. His popularity at this time was so great that, when his contract for the season had expired, he was instantly engaged for eighty nights, at a salary of two hundred dollars a night.

The success which had greeted Forrest on his first appearance in New York, was renewed in every city in the land. Fortune attended fame, and filled his pockets, as the breath of adulation filled his heart. He had paid the last penny of debt left by his father, and had seen a firm shelter raised over the head of his living family. With a patriotic feeling for all things

American, Forrest, about this time, formed a plan for the encouragement or development of an American drama, which resulted in heavy money losses to himself, but produced such contributions to our stage literature as the 'Gladiator,' 'Jack Cade' and 'Metamora.' After five years of constant labor he felt that he had earned the right to a holiday, and he formed his plans for a two years' absence in Europe. A farewell banquet was tendered him by the citizens of New York, and a medal was struck in honor of the occasion. Bryant, Halleck, Leggett, Ingraham and other distinguished men were present. This was an honor which had never before been paid to an American actor.

He had been absent about two years when he landed in New York in September, 1836. On his appearance at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia, he was received with unprecedented enthusiasm. He gave six performances only, on this occasion, and each saw a repetition at the scene of the beginning of the engagement. The receipts were the largest ever known in that house.

On Sept. 19, 1836, Forrest embarked once more for the mother country, this time with serious purpose. After a speedy and uneventful passage he reached England, and at once set about the preliminary business of his British engagement, which began Oct. 17, 1836. He was the first really great American actor who had appeared in London as a rival of the English tragedians; for Cooper was born in England, though always regarded as belonging to the younger country. His opening part was *Spartacus* in the 'Gladiator.' The play was condemned, the actor applauded. In *Othello*,

in *Lear*, and in *Macbeth* he achieved instant success. He began his engagement Oct. 17 and closed Dec. 19, having acted *Macbeth* seven times, *Othello* nine, and *King Lear* eight. A dinner at the Garrick Club was offered and accepted. Here he sat down with Charles Kemble and Macready; Sergeant Talfourd was in the chair.

It was during this engagement he met his future wife, Miss Catherine Sinclair. In the latter part of June, 1837, the marriage took place in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden. Mr. and Mrs. Forrest soon after embarked for America. The tragedian resumed his American engagements Nov. 15, 1837, at the old Chestnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. Presented to his friends, his wife at once made a deep and lasting impression. Her native delicacy of mind and refinement of manners enchanted those who hoped for some such influence to be exerted in softening the rough vigor and democratic downrightness of the man. Domestic discord came too soon, however, and in an evil hour for himself, in an evil hour for his art and for the struggling drama in America, Edwin Forrest threw open the doors of his home to the scrutiny of the world, and appealed to the courts to remove the skeleton which was hidden in his closet. With the proceedings of that trial, which resulted in divorce, alimony, and separation, this memoir has nothing to do.

Edwin Forrest leaving the court room a defeated man, was instantly raised to a popularity with the masses beyond anything even he had before experienced. He began an engagement soon after at the Broadway Theatre, opening as *Damon*. The house was crowded to suffocation. The engagement of sixty nights was



unparalleled in the history of the American drama for length and profit. But despite the flattering applause of the multitude, life never again had for him the smiling aspect it had so often worn before. The applause which filled his ears, the wealth which flowed in upon him could not improve that temper which had never been amiable and all the hard stories of his life belong to this period.

On Sept. 20, 1852, he reappeared at the Broadway Theatre, New York. In February, 1853, 'Macbeth' was produced in grand style, with new scenery and appointments. The tragedy was played on twenty consecutive nights, then by far the longest run of any Shakspearean play in America. The cast was very strong: it included Conway, Duff, Davenport, Pope, Davidge, Barry and Madame Ponisi.

On Sept. 17, 1860, after an absence of nearly four years, Edwin Forrest appeared again on the stage. He was engaged by James Nixon, and began his contract of one hundred nights at Niblo's Garden, New York, in the character of *Hamlet*. The long retirement only increased the curious interest which centred round his historic name. Upon his opening night the seats were sold at auction. His success in Philadelphia rivalled that of New York. In Boston the vast auditorium of the grandest theatre in America was found too small to contain the crowds he drew.

Severe attacks of gout were beginning to tell upon that herculean form, sapping and undermining it; and in 1865, while playing *Damon* at the Holiday Street Theatre, in Baltimore, the weather being very cold and the theatre open to draughts, he was seized with a sudden illness, which was followed



by very serious results. Suffering the most intense agony, he was able to get to the end of the part; but when his robes were laid aside and physicians summoned, it was found to his horror that he had suffered a partial paralysis of the sciatic nerve. In an instant the sturdy gait, the proud tread of the herculean actor were forever gone; for he never regained complete control of his limb, a perceptible hobble being the legacy of the dreadful visitation. His right hand was almost powerless and he could not hold his sword.

In 1866 he went to California, urged by the manager in San Francisco. His last engagement in New York took place in February, 1871. He played *Lear* and *Richelieu*,—his two greatest parts. On the night of March 25, 1872, Forrest opened in *Lear* at the Globe Theatre, Boston. 'Lear' was played six nights. During the second week he was announced for *Richelieu* and *Virginius*; but he caught a violent cold on Sunday, and labored sorely on Monday evening through the part of *Richelieu*. On Tuesday he repeated the performance, against the advice of friends and physicians. Rare bursts of his old power lighted up the play, but he labored piteously on against his increasing illness and threatened pneumonia. When stimulants were offered he rejected them, declaring "that if he died to-night he should still be his old royal self."

Announced for *Virginius* the following evening, he was unable to appear. A severe attack of pneumonia developed itself. He was carried to his hotel, and his last engagement was brought to an abrupt and melancholy end. As soon as he was able to move he left Boston for his home in Philadelphia, resting on his way only a day in New York. As the summer passed away,

the desire for work grew stronger and stronger, and he decided to re-enter public life, but simply as a reader of the great plays in which he had as an actor been so successful. The result was a disappointment. On Dec. 11, 1872, he wrote to Oakes his last letter, saying sadly, but fondly, "God bless you ever, my dear and much beloved friend."

When the morning of Dec. 12 came, his servant, hearing no sound in his chamber at his general hour of rising, became alarmed, opened his master's door, and found there, cold in death upon his bed, the form of the great tragedian. His arms were crossed upon his bosom, and he seemed to be at rest. The stroke had come suddenly. With little warning, and without pain, he had passed away.

The dead man's will was found to contain several bequests to old friends and servants, and an elaborate scheme by which his fortune, in the hands of trustees, was to be applied to the erection and support of a retreat for aged actors, to be called "The Edwin Forrest Home." The idea had been long in his mind, and careful directions were drawn up for its practical working; but the trustees found themselves powerless to realize fully the hopes and wishes of the testator. A settlement had to be made to the divorced wife, who acted liberally towards the estate; but the amount withdrawn seriously crippled it, as it was deprived at once of a large sum of ready money. An informality in the drawing of the will involved the trustees in trouble, under the laws of the State of New York, in which much of the property lay. Large fees to lawyers still further hampered them, and their income at present is insufficient without aid to further

the testator's purpose, while a claimant has arisen to demand possession of the estate on the ground of propinquity of blood. And thus the great ambition of the tragedian to be a benefactor to his profession was destined to come almost to naught. No sooner had the giant frame been laid in the grave than it was shown to the world how utterly vain and useless had been his accumulation of wealth for the laudable purposes for which he had designed it. Of this happily little he recks now. He has parted with all the cares of life and has at last found rest.

Forrest's greatest Shakspearean parts were *Lear*, *Othello*, and *Coriolanus*. The first grew mellow and rich as the actor grew in years while it still retained much of its earlier force. His *Othello* suffered with the decline of his faculties, although his clear conception of all he did was apparent to the end in the acting of every one of his parts. *Coriolanus* died with him, the last of all the Romans. He was greatest, however, in such parts as *Virginius*, *William Tell*, and *Spartacus*. Here his mannerisms of gait and utterance were less noticeable than in his Shakspearean characters, or were overlooked in the rugged massiveness of the creation. *Hamlet*, *Richard* and *Macbeth* were out of his temperament, and added nothing to his fame ; but *Richelieu* is said to have been one of his noblest and most impressive performances. He was in all things marked and distinctive. His obtrusive personality often destroyed the harmony of the portrait he was painting, but in his inspired moments, which were many, his touches were sublime. He passed over quiet scenes with little elaboration, and dwelt strongly upon the grand features of the characters he repre-

sented. His *Lear*, in the great scenes, rose to a majestic height, but fell in places almost to mediocrity. His art was unequal to his natural gifts. He was totally unlike his great contemporary and rival, Macready, whose attention to detail gave to every performance the harmony of perfect work.

This memoir may fitly close with an illustrative anecdote of the great actor. Toward the end of his professional career he was playing an engagement at St. Louis. He was very feeble in health, and his lameness was a source of great anxiety to him. Sitting at a late supper in his hotel one evening, after a performance of *King Lear*, with his friend J. B. McCullough, of the *Globe-Democrat*, that gentleman remarked to him, "Mr. Forrest, I never in my life saw you play *Lear* so well as you did to-night." Whereupon the veteran almost indignantly replied, rising slowly, and laboriously from his chair to his full height. "Play *Lear*! What do you mean, sir? I do not play *Lear*! I play *Hamlet*, *Richard*, *Shylock*, *Virginius*, if you please, but by God, sir, I am *Lear*!"

Nor was this wholly imaginative. Ingratitude of the basest kind had rent his soul. Old friends were gone from him; new friends were but half-hearted. His hearthstone was desolate. The public, to whom he had given his best years, was becoming impatient of his infirmities. The royalty of his powers he saw by degrees torn from his decaying form. Other kings had arisen on the stage, to whom his old subjects now showed a reverence once all his own. The mockery of his diadem only remained. A wreck of the once proud man who had despised all weakness, and had ruled his kingdom with imperial sway, he now stood

alone. Broken in health, and in spirit, deserted, forgotten, unkinged, he might well exclaim, "I am *Lear!*"

LAWRENCE BARRETT.

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In 1817, Mr. Durang tells us, that, as a mere boy, for the lack of female performers, young Forrest played girls' characters frequently. He was then eleven years old. When in Louisville, in 1820, Forrest and James M. Scott, known as "Long Tom Coffin," played a pair of dandies with *éclat*; and in a piece called the 'Tailor in Distress,' Forrest took a negro part with so much African nature that he seemed the very incarnation of the race.

H. D. STONE: 'Theatrical Reminiscences,' *chap.* 14, *p.* 77.

It has been doubted by some if Forrest ever performed feats of agility in the circus, but there is no mistake about it. He performed at the North Pearl-street Amphitheatre [Albany, N. Y.] for Bill Gates's benefit, on a wager, in a still vaulting act, creating shouts of laughter and applause from those present who knew it was Ned. The dress he wore on that occasion was from the wardrobe of the establishment, and consisted of an enormous pair of Turkish trousers, breastplate and fly, his feet were adorned by a pair of sheepskin pumps,—the kind worn by a numerous train of auxiliaries. But few knew him, and much fun was in vogue at Ned's expense. For Charley Young's benefit he also made a flying leap through a



barrel of *red fire*, singeing his eyebrows all off. This was his last "big leap" in the show business.

*Ibid*, chap. 27, p. 148.

Foremost among a host of tyros stood Edwin Forrest. He had the advantage of some useful practice, and had already achieved a trifling reputation in the South and West. . . . He possessed [1826] a fine, untaught face and good manly figure, and, though unpolished in his deportment, his manners were frank and honest, and his uncultivated taste, speaking the language of truth and nature, could be readily understood.

JOE COWELL: 'Thirty Years Among the Players,' *part ii.*, chap. 7.

A new theatre in the Bowery, a low quarter of the city, was opened during my sojourn in New York. It was handsome and commodious; but its locality was an objection insuperable to the fashion of the place. Messieurs Conway and Forrest were members of the *corps dramatique*, which was composed of some of the best actors in the country. I was very anxious for poor Conway's success in the States, holding him in great esteem as a thoroughly gentlemanly man, and entitled to credit for considerable talent. The part he acted on the night I saw him was *Brutus*, in 'Julius Cæsar.' The performance was even, perhaps too tame; unrelieved by any start of enthusiasm, and correctly described by that chilling word "respectable." Forrest was the *Mark Antony*. He was a very young man; not more, I believe, than one or two and twenty. The "Bowery Lads," as they



were termed, made great account of him, and he certainly was possessed of remarkable qualifications. His figure was good, though perhaps a little too heavy; his face might be considered handsome, his voice excellent. He was gifted with extraordinary strength of limb, to which he omitted no opportunity of giving prominence. He had received only the commonest education, but in his reading of the text he showed the discernment and good sense of an intellect much upon a level with that of Conway; but he had more energy, and was altogether distinguished by powers that, under proper direction, might be productive of great effect. I saw him again in 'William Tell.' His performance was marked by vehemence and rude force that told upon his hearers; but of pathos in the affecting interview with his son there was not the slightest touch, and it was evident that he had not rightly understood some passages in his text. My observation upon him was not hastily pronounced. My impression was that, possessed of natural requisites in no ordinary degree, he might, under careful discipline, confidently look forward to eminence in his profession. If he would give himself up to a severe study of his art, and improve himself by the practice he could obtain before the audiences of the principal theatres of Great Britain, those of Edinburgh, Liverpool, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, etc. (then good dramatic schools), he might make himself a first-rate actor. But to such a course of self-denying training I was certain he never would submit, as its necessity would not be made apparent to him. The injudicious and ignorant flattery, and the factious

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applause of his supporters in low-priced theatres, would fill his purse, would blind him to his deficiency in taste and judgment, and satisfy his vanity, confirming his self opinion of attained perfection. I spoke of him constantly as a young man of unquestionable promise, but I doubted his submission to the inexorable conditions for reaching excellence. The event has been as I anticipated. His robustious style gains applause in the coarse melodramas of 'Spartacus' and 'Metamora;' but the traits of character in Shakspeare and the poetry of the legitimate drama are beyond his grasp. My forebodings were prophetic.

W. C. MACREADY: 'Reminiscences,' *chap.* 21, 1826.

OCTOBER 3, 1843.—Dined with Forrest; met a very large party, too large for comfort, but it was most kindly intended. Bryant, with whom I talked very little, Halleck, and Inman, the artist, were of the party. Our day was very cheerful. I like all I see of Forrest very much. He appears a clear-headed, honest, kind man; what can be better?

*Ibid.*: 'Diary.'

EDINBURGH, March 2, 1846.—Acted *Hamlet* really with particular care, energy, and discrimination. The audience gave less applause to the first soliloquy than I am in the habit of receiving, but I was bent on acting the part, and I felt, if I can feel at all, that I had strongly excited them, and that their sympathies were cordially, indeed, enthusiastically, with me. On reviewing the performance, I can conscientiously pronounce it one of the very best I have given of *Hamlet*.

At the waving of the handkerchief before the play, and "I must be idle," a man on the right side of the stage—upper boxes or gallery, but said to be upper boxes—hissed! The audience took it up, and I waved the more, and bowed derisively and contemptuously to the individual. The audience carried it, though he was very staunch to his purpose. It discomposed me, and, alas! might have ruined many; but I bore it down. I thought of speaking to the audience, if called on, and spoke to Murray about it, but he very discreetly dissuaded me. Was called for, and very warmly greeted. Ryder came and spoke to me, and told me that the hisser was observed, and said to be a Mr. W—, who was in company with Mr. Forrest! The man writes in the *Journal*, a paper depreciating me, and eulogizing Mr. F., sent to me from this place.

MARCH 3.—Fifty-three years have I lived to-day. Both Mr. Murray and Mr. Ryder are possessed with the belief that Mr. Forrest was the man who hissed last night. I begin to think he was the man.

*Ibid.*

On October 17 he made his bow to the British public. Old Drury was crowded from pit to ceiling with an eager and excited audience. All the friends of the popular actors of the day congregated in force. The American minister, and all the fellow-countrymen of Forrest, were likewise present. There was silence until *Spartacus, the Gladiator*, came forward, when a hearty shout of welcome broke forth from all parts of the house. His magnificent person astonished those who had never seen him. His rich and powerful

voice thrilled all who had not heard it. His earnest, impassioned acting quite electrified the audience. At the end he was overwhelmed with applause, and it was plain he had secured a hold on British sympathies, which he never lost. There was a clique present who were disappointed by his success, and when he appeared, at the general demand, to make his acknowledgments, they raised the cry of "Shakspeare, Shakspeare!" Their object was evident. The partisans of the popular actors of the time knew it would be easier to arouse opposition to a foreigner should he attempt a *rôle* the public were accustomed to see played according to the idiosyncrasies of the tragedians who had successfully assumed them, and which only proved my judgment was correct in suggesting an original part for Forrest's *début*.

HENRY WYCKOFF: 'Reminiscences of an Idler,' chap. 37, pp. 376-7.

I was taken by one of his great admirers to see him as *Metamora*, and was surprised to find the house [the old Chatham Theatre] more than three-fourths empty. He, however, acted with his accustomed vigor; and I freely acknowledge that, for power of destructive energy, I never heard anything on the stage so tremendous in its sustained *crescendo* swell, and crushing force of utterance, as his defiance of the Council in that play. His voice surged and roared like the angry sea lashed into fury by a storm, till, as it reached its boiling, seething climax, in which the serpent hiss of hate was heard at intervals amidst its louder, deeper, hoarser tones, it was like the Falls of Niagara, in its

tremendous down-sweeping cadence : it was a whirlwind, a tornado, a cataract of illimitable rage.

GEORGE VANDENHOFF : 'Leaves from an Actor's Note Book,' *chap.* 12, *pp.* 200-1, 1842.

The acting of Forrest was natural, impulsive, and ardent, because he was not so well trained as his English rivals in what may be termed a false refinement. . . . Forrest was not considered as polished an actor as Macready, and was often charged with rudeness and violence in his impersonations, and even ridiculed for muscularity of manner : and yet I never knew a tragedian who did not use all his physical power in reaching the climax of his most impassioned delineations. It must be remembered that Mr. Forrest was a strong man, and when excited his passions appeared more extreme than those of one more delicately organized ; and unqualified condemnation was only heard from those who were either unable or unwilling to perceive that the traits which distinguished our then young actor were really more natural than the elaborate presentations and precise mannerisms of Macready. Hence the *people* loved Forrest and followed him, while those who claimed to be the *élite* admired and applauded Macready, who came endorsed by a metropolis which in those days, in matters of art, assumed the direction of American judgment. . . . Although Forrest in his youth had only received what was then called a good school training, he furnished in his manhood an example of what might have been profitably imitated by the young men of his time who, with all of the advantages of collegiate education, failed to exhibit the progressive intellectual improve-



ment which steadily marked his course from year to year. Many who did not admire his earlier dramatic performances were greatly impressed with his manner in the later parts of his career, his impersonation of *Lear* being generally considered the crowning point of his excellence. Mr. Longfellow, who did not admire Mr. Forrest in 'Jack Cade' or the 'Gladiátor,' speaking of his *Lear*, said it was a noble performance, well worthy the admiration of the lovers of good acting.

JAMES E. MURDOCH: 'The Stage,' *chap.* 15, *pp.* 295-6.

It was at my desk he perused the letter refusing the nomination of the Democratic party of the City of New York to run for Member of Congress. When I asked him why the honor conferred upon his profession, by his election, was not sufficient inducement to run the hazard of the die, the reply was characteristic of the man—"I want no further honor, and can't afford to give my time for eight dollars a day, when I can make two hundred out of it. The day may come when I shall make the game of politics my study; and then it will be time enough to present myself to the suffrages of my fellow-countrymen."

F. C. WEMYSS: 'Twenty-six Years of the Life of an Actor,' *p.* 324.

However much Macready moves one at a time by the subtle intellect of his personification, I never am much the better for it afterwards—never find a word, a look, an attitude written on my heart. There are certain points of Mr. Forrest's playing that I shall never





**EDWIN FORREST**  
As King Lear.



forget to my dying day. There is a force, without violence, in his passionate parts, which he owes much to his physical conformation ; but which, thrown into the body of an infirm old king (his *Lear* was very kingly), is most awful and withering ; as, for instance, where he slides down upon his knees, with—

For, as I am a man, I think this lady  
To be my child, *Cordelia*.

HENRY F. CHORLEY : 'Memoirs,' *vol. i., chap. 4.*

Of the actors whom I have seen, Salvini not excepted, Forrest alone possessed a physique such as one conceives to have been moulded expressly for the assumption of heroic rôles. His figure, though its bulk would certainly have seemed excessive in these days, when even the athlete is fain to submit himself to the restrictive code of æstheticism, was symmetrically proportioned, and suggestive not only of perfect health and herculean strength, but of a certain kind of grandeur. His countenance was very handsome, and capable of taking on a rich glow. His voice was so powerful and clear that its lightest tones fell upon the distant ear as if there were no intervening space, and, when unrestrained, it had the fulness and mellowness that belong only to the finest organs. It would have seemed ridiculous that he should be cast for any parts except the greatest : the other actors, even those who were taller, looked insignificant beside him, and their voices, when strongest, seemed thin, and, if I may so apply the word, juiceless, in the comparison.

JOHN FOSTER KIRK, in *Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1884.

Mr. Forrest has one great merit. If he sometimes tears "a passion to tatters" he never allows it to "come tardy off," and the spectator is interested however much he may find to censure. As John Philip Kemble said of Edmund Kean, he is "terribly in earnest." In Roman characters his lofty and dignified bearing cannot but challenge admiration, and in his delineation of the noble virtues of *Damon* and *Brutus*, his contempt for tyranny and oppression seems but the echo of his own individual feelings. The friends of Forrest have already blended with his name many of the virtues of his Roman characters, and we are inclined to the opinion that he is not undeserving of them.

'The Actor,' *chap. 9, pp. 84-5.*

What especially I find to admire in Mr. Forrest is his power to move me. He has great faults; he rants undoubtedly; he roars and bellows at times in the most unpleasant manner; he conceives some parts very differently from my idea of them; and I never see him without disapproving of many things that he does. But I never see him without confessing his ability. He possesses the true dramatic talent—the power to make you weep and shudder at his will. *He himself feels what he represents.*

ADAM BADEAU: 'The Vagabond,' Edwin Forrest.

But the first actor who made a profound and lasting impression upon me was Edwin Forrest. Had this man learnt his art in an old country, amid cultured surroundings, had he enjoyed the advantages of acting only before refined and intellectual audiences, a means

of education of inestimable value, he would have gone down to posterity on a footing with Garrick, Mrs. Siddons, Talma, and Edmund Kean. But the audiences he attracted were not the most refined, and their wild enthusiasm only confirmed in him faults which sometimes dimmed, but were powerless to quench the lustre of his genius. Physically, he was endowed beyond any actor I have ever seen. He might have stood to a sculptor as a model for Hercules. His form was massive, but beautifully proportioned. His Roman head was well set upon a neck like the trunk of a tree. His face expressed the perfection of manly strength of mind, and harmonized well with the power of his limbs, and lastly his voice was in perfect keeping with the rest of his physique. In volume, resonance, melody, and compass, it was phenomenal, while its power of endurance was such, that no amount of ill-usage seemed to affect its purity. I have seen him play two tragedy parts in one night, and to the last his tones were clear as a bell. Add to these qualities the fact that he was endowed with dramatic genius of equal fibre, and you will ask, "What then did he lack?" He lacked the high polish of art. . . . .

Amusing stories were told of the abuse of his great physical strength, from which his brother actors occasionally suffered. For instance, when *Lucullus* tells his master *Damon*, that, by killing his horse, he has prevented *Damon* from returning in time, to save the life of *Pythias*, who has remained with *Dionysius* as hostage for his friend, Forrest, after a terrible scream, waited for the Gods to execute his prayer upon *Lucullus*, then springing upon him with the words, "I'll tear thee into pieces," proceeded to carry out his threat as

nearly as the law would allow. He lifted him from the ground, dashed him down, mopped the stage with him, and dragging him off the stage, left him to recover as best he might. Some one seeing the pale and trembling fellow gasping for breath, and bleeding, asked him what was the matter. *Lucullus* stammered out, with a piteous pride in the honor of the thing, "I have been playing with Forrest." "Indeed," returned the other, "by the look of you I should have thought that Forrest had been playing with you."

Forrest, however, could be intense without violence, as he proved in 'Theresa ; or, The Orphan of Geneva,' in which, as *Carwin*, he was never loud till the last speech, and yet contrived to fascinate his audience by his Satanic wickedness. On the other hand, his "Curse your Senate," as *Pierre*, in 'Venice Preserved,' was like the explosion of a bombshell, that made the audience fairly jump from their seats. From such an actor little could be learnt. His merits were born with him, and could not be imitated. Those who have tried to model themselves upon him have ruined their own voices without acquiring his, and generally have shared the fate of the frog in the fable, who tried to swell himself out to the size of the ox.

HERMAN VEZIN, in the *Dramatic Review*, Feb. 22, 1885.

Forrest had extraordinary physical advantages, and though he failed to make them properly responsive to the calls of deep or wild emotion (had he succeeded in this, his rightful eminence would have been as little disputed as was that of Talma or Mrs. Siddons), he displayed them intelligently, and with a very pleasing



effect in many scenes and passages of a less exacting nature. He acted best when he acted least,—when he was content to let his fine face, his imposing figure, and the full, pure tones of his unforced voice exert their natural charm. There were speeches with a tincture of poetry or sentiment—in the ‘Lady of Lyons,’ for example—which flowed from his lips like a strain of simple melody. There are lines in ‘Othello’ which seem to demand such a voice as his more than any other gift. One of them is—

Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them,  
in which, though he left the delicate irony unexpressed, the calm, deep sound seemed to suspend the clashing weapons by some inherent irresistible sway. Another is—

Silence that dreadful bell, it frights the isle  
From her propriety?

of which the utterance was itself bell-like, but without harshness or clangor. In the last act,

It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!

if not equally impressive, is recalled to my memory in strong contrast with the delivery of “’Twas I that did it?” with the exaggerated emphasis on the first word and the exaggerated prolongation of the second, accompanied by a vigorous thumping on the breast, like some barbarian chief boasting of his warlike exploits.

JOHN FOSTER KIRK, in *Lippincott's Magazine*, June, 1884.

Old Mr. Burke, the father of the youthful dramatic and musical prodigy so popular half a century ago,



when he heard of Mr. Forrest as a distinguished performer, said, "Does he draw big houses?" and being told that he did, he exclaimed "Thus, by the powers! he's a great actor!"

JAMES E. MURDOCH: 'The Stage,' *chap.* 15, *p.* 297, *foot note.*

Forney tells a good story about a visit which he paid with Forrest to Henry Clay, soon after the passage of the compromise measure. The colonel unguardedly complimented a speech made by Senator Soulé, which made Mr. Clay's eyes flash, and he proceeded to criticise him very severely, ending by saying, "He is nothing but an actor, sir,—a mere actor!" Then, suddenly recollecting the presence of the tragedian, he dropped his tone, and turning towards Mr. Forrest said, with a graceful gesture, "I mean, my dear sir, a mere French actor!" The visitors soon afterward took their leave, and as they descended the stairs Forrest turned towards Forney and said, "Mr. Clay has proved by the skill with which he can change his manner, and the grace with which he can make an apology, that he is a better actor than Soulé."

*Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1881.

The unfortunate being who chanced to cut him out of a scene, as the theatrical phrase has it, would, during the remainder of the great man's engagement, find his life a burden. Mr. Gilbert is not alone in believing that Forrest was not only a truly wonderful actor, but a bully and a coward. It is a matter of record that on one occasion, in the Tremont Theatre, he tormented a little fellow one-third his size almost to madness,

but when the young man at last turned upon him with a Roman's sword from "the property-room," swearing to take his life, he fled to his dressing-room in the wildest alarm, and did not come out again until the danger, if there was any, was passed.

Upon another occasion, while Mr. Gilbert was stage manager of the Tremont Theatre, one of the stock company, a sensitive young man, during a rehearsal, became so frightened and confused by Forrest's bullying directions and abuse that he forgot his lines. When the rehearsal was over Forrest went to Mr. Gilbert and complained bitterly of the young man; asked why in the name of hades he could not have better support.

"Mr. Smith knows his part well, and can play it well," replied Gilbert coolly.

"Knows his part, Sir; knows his part! Damn it, Sir, he can't remember a line of it," thundered Forrest.

"You frightened it out of his head."

"I frighten him? How, Sir, how?"

"By abusing and badgering him," answered Gilbert, his blood getting warmer. "If you had not interfered with him there would have been no trouble. Let him alone and he will play the part to-night as well as it can be played." This proved to be the case, and from that time forward Mr. Forrest had no more complaints to make to Stage-manager Gilbert.

In money matters, the great actor is said to have been close and grasping to a degree which thoroughly disgusted the warm-hearted, open-handed men and women who were his associates on the stage. At the end of one short engagement at the Tremont Theatre

his share of the receipts amounted to \$4,000; and though the managers lost by their contract with him, and for the moment were unable to pay the stock company, he exacted the prompt payment of the last penny which was his due. The money was handed over to him, a few odd dollars being in rolls of twenty-five cent pieces, and he left the box-office. Half an hour afterward he returned with one of these rolls, and, taking a piece of silver from it, said to the treasurer, in his own peculiarly pompous manner, "This quarter, Sir, which you have given me, is not good."

"What's the matter with it?" asked the treasurer, curtly.

"It has worn smooth, Sir, and the people at the bank refuse to take it. You must give me another for it."

The treasurer, who was a good deal of a wag, handed Mr. Forrest a bright new quarter, took the worn piece, and, with the words, "I wouldn't sell these two shillings for five dollars," slipped it into his pocket. That night the story of Forrest and the smooth quarter was known all over Boston.

HOWARD CARROLL : 'Twelve Famous Americans.'  
John Gilbert.

It is told that Forrest, the tragedian, coming among the list of stars, Phillips was assigned the part of *Horatio*, in 'Hamlet.' At rehearsal, during the first act, a difficulty arose from Phillips being unable to give the emphasis Forrest wished conveyed to *Horatio's* line, "I warrant it will." The progress of the rehearsal was interrupted, and many times

the following dialogue repeated, without producing the desired effect :

*Hamlet.*—"I will watch to-night,  
Perchance 'twill walk again."

*Horatio.*—"I warrant it will."

"No, no, no," roared Forrest ; "deliver it in this way, Mr., Mr., Mr.—Phillips." Forrest repeated the instruction a dozen times. Finally, Phillips, looking at the stage-manager with a very serious countenance, remarked, "My salary is eight dollars per week, and—" Forrest, enraged, interrupted him, exclaiming, "Sir, we are not here to discuss salaries ; can you or can you not speak that line in this way?" Then, giving the line with the required force and expression, he paused and glared at Phillips, who very coolly and deliberately answered, "No, sir ; if I could deliver it in that way, my salary would be five hundred dollars per night." The humor of the remark was too much for Forrest's gravity even. With a characteristic grunt, (such as only Forrest could utter,) the tragedian walked to the "prompt table" and, with a smile, said to the manager, "Let Mr. Phillips' salary be doubled at my expense during my engagement." Night came, and poor Phillips, elated with good fortune, and over-anxious to please Forrest, ruined everything.

"I will watch to-night,"

said *Hamlet*,

"Perchance 'twill walk again,"

quickly replied *Horatio*, taking the sentence out of *Hamlet's* mouth. Forrest with difficulty restrained his passion, and when he came off the stage, fuming

with rage, roared, "I will give one hundred dollars per week for life to any one who will kill Mr. Phillips."

JOHN S. CLARKE: 'Era Almanack,' 1874, p. 69.

On one occasion, Mr. Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian, then a young man, and more famous for his muscle than his genius, gave a most tremendous display of really powerful acting. He was supposed to represent a Roman warrior, and to be attacked by six minions of a detested tyrant. At the rehearsals, Mr. Forrest found a great deal of fault with the supers who condescended to play the minions. They were too tame. They didn't lay hold of him. They didn't go in as if it were a real fight. Mr. Forrest stormed and threatened; the supers sulked and consulted. At length the captain of the supers inquired, in his local slang, "Yer want this to be a bully fight, eh!" "I do," replied Mr. Forrest. "All right," rejoined the captain, and the rehearsal quietly proceeded. In the evening the little theatre was crowded, and Mr. Forrest was enthusiastically received. When the fighting scene occurred, the great tragedian took the centre of the stage, and the six minions entered rapidly and deployed in skirmishing order. At the cue, "Seize him!" one minion assumed a pugilistic attitude and struck a blow straight from the shoulder upon the prominent nose of the Roman hero; another raised him about six inches from the stage by a well-directed kick, and others made ready to rush in for a decided tussle. For a moment Mr. Forrest stood astounded, his broad chest heaving with rage, his great eyes flashing with



fire, his legs planted like columns upon the stage. Then came a few minutes of powerful acting, at the end of which one super was found sticking head foremost in a bass-drum in the orchestra, four were having their wounds dressed in the greenroom, and one, finding himself in the flies, rushed out upon the roof of the theatre and shouted "Fire!" at the top of his voice; while Mr. Forrest, called before the curtain, bowed his thanks pantingly to the applauding audience, who looked upon the whole affair as part of the piece, and "had never seen Forrest act so splendidly."

STEPHEN FISKE: 'Era Almanack,' 1873, *p.* 57.

In one of his later traveling experiences Forrest reached a small town where the stage appliances were beneath contempt, and where this theory of his might find a test. His manager feared to tell him how meagre were the scenes which must represent Elsinore; but as night approached he was forced, of course, to speak. He had hung two American flags at the stage openings, and these represented drop curtains as well as palace, platform, chamber and castle. Instead of anger and annoyance, Forrest only smiled as he saw these preparations, and he declared that nothing could be better. He would show the audience that 'Hamlet' could be played in that foreign frame with none of its powers shorn or weakened, while his own patriotism would stimulate his energies, as his eyes rested on the banners of his native land.

LAWRENCE BARRETT: 'Life of Forrest,' Prologue, *p.* 6.

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It will no longer be possible for any one to think of the actor as a burly ruffian, whose legs and lungs were more powerful than his brain. Mr. Alger shows him to us as a lover of his art, a student of Shakspeare, a man with a tender heart and an open purse. At the age of twenty-one he was able to command a salary of two hundred dollars a night. Ignorant, conceited, and successful, he educated himself; he worked hard at his profession; he traveled and studied; he neglected no opportunity of self-improvement. As an actor, he aimed at the best; his execution, always direct, became at last more and more refined; the boy at nineteen had dared to play *King Lear*; at sixty there was but little lacking in the awful picture the man then presented of that majestic ruin. Side by side with his good points his biographer shows the bad—his pride, his prejudice, his profanity, his brooking of no contradiction, his brooding over an insult or an injury. In his career there was something characteristically American, and even in the man himself Mr. Alger sees something typical of his nationality: "If occasionally in some things he practised the American vice—self-will, unconscious bigotry entrenched in a shedding conceit,—he prevailingly exemplified the American virtue: tolerance, frankness, generosity."

BRANDER MATTHEWS, in the *Nation*, April, 23, 1877.

Edwin Forrest is a grate acter. I thot I saw *Otheller* before me all the time he was actin'; and when the curtin fell I found my spectacles was still mistened with salt-water which had run from my eyes while poor *Desdemony* was a-dyin'. Betsy Jane, Betsy

Jane ! let us pray that our domestic bliss may never be busted by a *Iago*. Edwin Forrest makes money actin' out on the stage. He gits five hundred dollars a nite, and his board and washin'. I wish I had such a Forrest in my Garding !

ARTEMUS WARD ; 'His Book, Edwin Forrest as *Othello*.'



# CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.

1816—1876.

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For thee of earnest spirit and great heart,  
In a fair time a fair and kindly death  
Rounds a life nobly consecrate to art,  
Nor lacking praiseful tribute of men's breath.  
For us, like music ended ; a dead voice  
That sounded sweet in our ears but yesternight,  
The passion and power wherein men's souls rejoice  
Are with the player buried out of sight.  
Within our ears an unreturning tone  
Of calm, majestic dignity still rings :  
A reverent memory remains alone,  
Sad sense of loss in sorrowful words that sings.  
Yet, even as Art to Death her daughter gives,  
Death bows to Art, for Art eternal lives.

H. C. BUNNER.



**CHARLOTTE AND SUSAN CUSHMAN**  
As Romeo and Juliet.





## CHARLOTTE SAUNDERS CUSHMAN.

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[CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN.—Born Boston, July 23, 1816. First professional appearance, as a singer, in Boston, April, 1835. First appeared as an actress in the part of *Lady Macbeth* in New Orleans in the same year. First appeared in New York, and in the same part, Sept. 12, 1836. First visited England in 1844. First London appearance, as *Bianca*, Feb. 14, 1845. Returned to America, 1850. Again played in England in the summer of 1853. Played American engagements in 1857-8, 1860-1. First public reading, October, 1870. Last appearance in New York, Nov. 7, 1874. Last appearance in Boston, May 15, 1875. Last public appearance, as a reader, at Easton, Pa., June 2, 1875. Died in Boston, Feb. 18, 1876.

B. M.

L. H.]

Charlotte Saunders Cushman was born in Boston, July 23, 1816. She was descended from two families of honorable reputation in the early history of New England. Her father, Elkanah Cushman, was seventh in descent from Robert Cushman, who is famous as the preacher of the first sermon ever delivered in New England. Her mother, whose maiden name was Mary Eliza Babbit, was also of good Puritan stock.

The house in which Charlotte was born, on Richmond

Street, was on the same spot now occupied by the Cushman School, erected in 1867. The fact that this school was named after her gave Miss Cushman much satisfaction. After speaking of the honor of it, and of the proof it afforded of the esteem in which she was held in Boston, where never before had a school been named after a woman, she said, "Nothing in all my life has so pleased me as this."

Charlotte Cushman made her *début* on the stage as a Young Lady, in 1835, on the occasion of a concert, when she sang 'Take this Rose,' and other songs. At that time she intended to study for the operatic stage, but after a short experience as a singer, in New Orleans, she determined to become an actress rather than to strive to be a *prima donna*. When but nineteen years old she took the part of *Lady Macbeth*, and from this time devoted herself zealously to the study of the dramatic profession. At first she had no decided preference for any particular line of dramatic business, and in her earlier impersonations took a great variety of parts. She studied her comedy characters conscientiously, and rendered them with a certain charm, but it was as a tragic actress, and especially in Shakspearean tragedy that she won her highest fame, and will be longest remembered. In her representations of *Queen Katherine* and *Lady Macbeth* she took her place as the greatest American actress that has yet lived. Her impersonations of *Meg Merrilies*, *Nancy Sikes*, and other melodramatic parts were also rich in striking effects.

Miss Cushman was accorded a high position as an actress in England. Macready fully recognized, and generously acknowledged her power. He even

declared that when playing *Macbeth* to her *Lady Macbeth* he felt himself to be "less than of secondary importance—in truth, a mere thing of naught."

Her career as an actress extended over forty years, and she made her last appearance, as she had made the first, in her native city, and in the midst of those, who, as she herself said, "from the beginning to the end of my career, from my first appearance on the stage to my last appearance, have been truly 'Brothers, friends and countrymen.'"

Charlotte Cushman was an ardent patriot, and during the War of the Rebellion she proved this in many ways; she contributed to the Sanitary Commission \$8,267, the result of her earnings when she acted especially for the benefit of this charity.

In her private life she was affectionate, even tender, having a singular fondness for children; she was also strong, and her friends turned to her for support and sympathy. She had a deep religious trust, and bore the sufferings of a long and painful illness with wonderful fortitude. In short, under all circumstances, as she expressed it, she "tried always to keep her prow turned towards good."

Miss Cushman died, at the Parker House, in Boston, Feb. 18, 1876. Three days later her funeral took place at King's Chapel, and was conducted according to her own minute directions. She was buried at Mount Auburn in a spot which she had selected for her resting-place, because it commanded a view of Boston. Her grave is marked by a plain granite shaft, which bears no inscription save the name of "Charlotte Cushman."

CLARA ERSKINE CLEMENT.

So enraptured was I with the idea of acting this part [*Lady Macbeth*, in New Orleans], and so fearful of anything preventing me, that I did not tell the manager I had no dresses, until it was too late for me to be prevented from acting it; and the day before the performance, after rehearsal, I told him. He immediately sat down and wrote a note of introduction for me to the *tragedienne* of the French Theatre, which then employed some of the best among French artists for its company. This note was to ask her to help me to costumes for the *rôle* of *Lady Macbeth*. I was a tall, thin, lanky girl at that time, about five feet six inches in height. The French woman, Madame Closel, was a short, fat person of not more than four feet ten inches, waist full twice the size of mine, with a very large bust; but her shape did not prevent her being a very great actress. The ludicrousness of her clothes being made to fit me struck her at once. She roared with laughter; but she was very good-natured, saw my distress, and set to work to see how she could help it. By dint of piecing out the skirt of one dress it was made to answer for an underskirt, and then another dress was taken in in every direction to do duty as an overdress, and so make up the costume. And thus I essayed for the first time the part of *Lady Macbeth*, fortunately to the satisfaction of the audience, the manager, and all the members of the company.

CHARLOTTE CUSHMAN, in Miss Stebbins's 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap. I, pp. 22-3.*

The Miss Cushman who acted *Lady Macbeth* interested me much. She has to learn her art, but she

showed mind and sympathy with me,—a novelty so refreshing to me on the stage.

WM. C. MACREADY : 'Diary,' Boston, Oct. 23, 1843.

Miss Cushman's style of acting, while it lacked imagination, possessed in a remarkable degree the elements of force. She grasped the intellectual body of the poet's conception without mastering its more subtle spirit ; she caught the facts of a character, but its conceits were beyond her reach. Her understanding was never at fault ; it was keen and penetrating, but that glow of feeling which springs from the centre of emotional elements was not a prominent constituent of her organization. She was intensely prosaic, definitely practical ; and hence her perfect identity with what may be termed the materialism of *Lady Macbeth*, and the still more fierce personality of that dramatic nondescript, *Meg Merrilies*, neither of which characters was of 'imagination all compact,' but rather of imperious wilfulness.

JAMES E. MURDOCH : 'The Stage,' *chap.* 12, *p.* 240.

It was in consequence of Mrs. Chippendale's illness that she was called upon on the very day of the performance to assume the part. Study, dress, etc., had to be an inspiration of the moment. She had never especially noticed the part ; as it had been heretofore performed there was not probably much to attract her ; but as she stood at the side-scene, book in hand, awaiting her moment of entrance, her ear caught the dialogue going on upon the stage between two of the gypsies, in which one says to the other, alluding to her, "*Meg*,—why, she is no longer what she was ; she



doats," etc., evidently giving the impression that she is no longer to be feared or respected, that she is no longer in her right mind. With the words a vivid flash of insight struck upon her brain. She saw and felt, by the powerful dramatic instinct with which she was endowed, the whole meaning and intention of the character ; and no doubt from that moment it became what it never ceased to be, a powerful, original, and consistent conception in her mind. She gave herself with her usual concentrated energy of purpose to this conception, and flashed at once upon the stage in the startling, weird and terrible manner which we all so well remember. On this occasion it so astonished and confounded Mr. Braham—little accustomed heretofore to such manifestations—that he went to her after the play to express his surprise and his admiration.

"I had not thought that I had done anything remarkable," she says, "and when the knock came at my dressing-room door, and I heard Braham's voice, my first thought was, Now what have I done? He is surely displeased with me about something,—for in those days I was only the utility actress, and had no prestige of position to carry me through. Imagine my gratification when Mr. Braham said : 'Miss Cushman, I have come to thank you for the most veritable sensation I have experienced for a long time. I give you my word, when I turned and saw you in that first scene I felt a cold chill run all over me. Where have you learned to do anything like that?'"

MISS STEBBINS'S 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap. 7, pp.*  
147-9.

'Guy Mannering' is very nicely produced at the

Haymarket. The scenery is new, the cast is tolerably good, and there is one piece of acting in it of an excellent and very striking kind. Miss Cushman's melodramatic *Meg Merrilies* has quite as indisputably the attributes of genius about it as any piece of poetry or tragedy could have. Such is her power over the intention and feeling of the part that the mere words of it become a secondary matter. It is the figure, the gait, the look, the gesture, the tone, by which she puts beauty and passion into language the most indifferent. When these mere artifices are continued through a series of scenes, a certain strain becomes apparent, and the effect is not wholly agreeable. Nevertheless, it is something to see what the unassisted resources of acting may achieve with the mere idea of a fine part, stripped of fine language, unclothed, as it were, in words. The human tenderness blending with that Eastern picturesqueness of gesture, the refined sentiment breaking out from beneath that heavy feebleness and clumsiness of rude old age, are wonderfully startling.

HENRY MORLEY: 'Journal of a London Playgoer,'  
Feb. 11, 1884.

It is necessary that the actor should learn to think before he speaks. Let him remember first, that every sentence expresses a new thought, and therefore frequently demands a change of intonation; secondly, that the thought precedes the word. Of course, there are passages in which thought and language are borne along by the stream of emotion and completely intermingled. But more often it will be found that the most natural, the most seemingly accidental, effects

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are obtained when the working of the mind is seen before the tongue gives it words. This lesson was enjoined on me when I was a very young man by that remarkable actress, Charlotte Cushman. I remember that when she played *Meg Merrilies*, I was cast for *Henry Bertram*, on the principle seemingly that an actor with no singing voice is admirably fitted for a singing part. It was my duty to give *Meg Merrilies* a piece of money, and I did it after the traditional fashion by handing her a large purse full of coin of the realm, in the shape of broken crockery, which was generally used in financial transactions on the stage, because when the virtuous maiden rejected with scorn the advances of the lordly libertine, and threw his pernicious bribe upon the ground, the clatter of the broken crockery suggested fabulous wealth. But after the play, Miss Cushman, in the course of some kindly advice, said to me, "Instead of giving me that purse, don't you think it would have been much more natural if you had taken a number of coins from your pocket and given me the smallest? That is the way one gives alms to a beggar, and it would have added greatly to the realism of the scene." I have never forgotten that lesson, for simple as it was, it contained many elements of dramatic truth.

HENRY IRVING : Harvard Address, reported in the *Critic*, April 4, 1885.

Her marvelous talent for what is technically called "making up," presents us with the picture that lives so indelibly in our memory; her exquisite elocution enables her to accommodate her voice to the necessities of the unusual situations of the play, to break it with

age, to thicken it with the choking sensation of death, to loosen it in the cry of agony, to repress it in the hollow murmur of despair; while the genius that makes her feel so acutely the proprieties of the character is only equalled by the consummate art that dictates and accomplishes such touches as her sliding, sidelong gait; her frantic but significant gestures; her attitudes, so ungainly, but so widely expressive, that they speak more forcibly than words. I can conceive of no more exact, no more effective picture, than that afforded by Miss Cushman's performance of *Meg Merrilies*.

ADAM BADEAU : 'The Vagabond,' Charlotte Cushman.

Of her *Nancy Sikes*, Mr. Lawrence Barrett, who had appeared with her as *Fagin*, spoke to me, in substance, as follows : It was an astonishing thing, as well to those of the profession as to the public,—but the death scene was simply superlative in effect; she dragged herself on to the stage in a wonderful manner, and, keeping her face away from her audience, produced a feeling of chilly horror by the management of her voice as she called for *Bill*, and begged of him to kiss her. Mr. Barrett said, "it sounded as if she *spoke through blood*, and the whole effect was far greater than that which any other actress has ever made, with the sight of the face and all the horrors which can be added." This part was eminently her own creation, conceived at a time when she had had small opportunity for any good training.

CLARA ERSKINE CLEMENT : 'Life of Charlotte Cushman,' *chap. 3, p. 25*.

Had I not found your note on coming home from the theatre, I *must* have written to you after the *Queen Katherine*, which I went to see quietly. You are wholly wrong *to fancy that the part does not do you good, and you good to the part*. What will you say when I tell you that it has given me a higher idea of your power than any I have yet seen you act? I like it all,—conception, execution, everything. I like the plainness, the simplicity, and the utter absence of all strain or solemnity.

You know I am difficult, and little given to praising any one. Most of all was I delighted to hear how your level voice, when not forced, tells, and tells thoroughly. Now believe I don't say this to put you in good humor, or for any other reason than because it is honest and *must* come!

As for the critics, remember that from time immemorial they have been always, at first, unjust to new and natural readings. The *house* shows how little harm or good they do, and of *its* humor there was no doubt; though people who have been wiping their eyes on apricot-colored bonnet-strings, as I saw one young lady of nature doing, can't find time or coolness to applaud anything as they ought. In short, I was pleased, *much* pleased, and shall tell you yet more about the same when I see you; and I am truly glad for your own sake that you have played the part.

HENRY F. CHORLEY, quoted in Miss Stebbins's 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap.* 4, *pp.* 71-2.

*Romeo, Claude Melnotte, Cardinal Wolsey, and Hamlet*, are among the most prominent of the male parts she has played. Her *Cardinal Wolsey* was a most



remarkable performance. She is no doubt the only woman who has had the courage and the ability to undertake it. Another marvelous assumption of hers was *Romeo*. She was earnest, intense, and natural. The constitutional susceptibility of *Romeo's* character was depicted by her in its boldest relief,—a particular phase of the nature of the young *Montague*, which no male actor, unless he were a mere youth, could efficiently and satisfactorily portray.

In the 'Lady of Lyons' she has played the *Widow Melnotte*,—she was the original *Widow Melnotte* in New York,—*Pauline* and *Claude*. She acquired high repute for her *Claude* in England, and drew crowded houses at the Old Broadway, in 1850, when she first assumed it, the public seemingly greatly to relish the earnest and truthful manner in which she played the familiar character.

LAURENCE HUTTON : 'Plays and Players,' *chap.* 27.

She is the finest American actress I have ever seen. I have played an engagement with her at the Lyceum, and I have altered pieces for her in which she has made great successes. I remember that I first saw her at the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia. She was directress of that house then, and quite young, with a fine spice of fun in her composition, the influence of which I remember feeling on one occasion in particular. It was the custom there to ring down the curtain on Saturday night exactly as the clock struck the hour of eleven. I was ignorant of that, and just as I sat down before my audience and got half through a conversation over a table in my character of the 'Irish Lion,' the curtain went suddenly down,



to my intense astonishment. "Is the house on fire?" I asked; and just then I saw the face of our directress, laughing heartily in one of the wings of the stage. I was prepared for another occasion, and she never laughed at me again on the same score.

JOHN BROUGHAM, reported in *The Times*, Boston, Oct. 25, 1874.

The following anecdote illustrates Miss Cushman's decision and nerve. At the National Theatre, Boston, during the season of 1851-52, as she was playing *Romeo* to the *Juliet* of Miss Anderton, in the midst of one of the most romantic passages between the lovers, some person in the house sneezed in such a manner as to attract the attention of the whole audience, and every one new that the sneeze was artificial and derisive. Miss Cushman instantly stopped the dialogue, and led Miss Anderton off the stage, as a cavalier might lead a lady from the place where an insult had been offered her. She then returned to the footlights and said in a clear, firm voice, "Some man must put that person out, or I shall be obliged to do it myself." The fellow was taken away; the audience rose *en masse* and gave three cheers for Miss Cushman, who recalled her companion and proceeded with the play as if nothing had happened. . . . .

CLARA ERSKINE CLEMENT: 'Charlotte Cushman,' *chap. 6, pp. 67-69.*

The younger generation of playgoers are only familiar with Miss Cushman's histrionic interpretations of *Meg Merrilies*, *Lady Macbeth*, and *Queen Katharine*. The recollection of these renderings will

suffice to illustrate the foregoing summary, without further elaboration of detail. Miss Cushman is now mainly confining herself to the reading-desk. There can be no question that her peculiar intellectualism in art is shown even more in her readings than in her acting, notably so in the Shakspearean readings. In the dramas of Shakspeare, the characters have so essential a play of relation, and are so subtle in their bearings on one another, that, unless they are all justly apprehended, the totality of the drama is maimed and marred. No genius on the part of Charlotte Cushman could prevent this on the stage. In the reading-desk she reigns as the sole magician, with the perfect opportunity to express the finest attainments of her thinking and culture. She has but to wave her wand to unlock from the prison-house of Shakspeare's pages all the immortal phantoms that brood within them. It is for her alone to invest them with a splendid and subtle life.

Miss Cushman's devotion to art remains unchanged. For many years she has been among those

Who live to be the show and gaze of the time.

That she may remain so for many years to come, and continue to illustrate her great dramatic conceptions, as none but she can, is the hope of thousands of admirers on both sides of the Atlantic.

GEORGE T. FERRIS, in *Appleton's Journal*, March 21, 1874.

Charlotte Cushman is dead. Before the shock of this news has passed away it cannot be improper to recall to her professional brethren the great loss we

sustain by this sudden departure. After a long life of toil, laden with years and honors, she sleeps at last. That crown which she has worn for so many years undisputed now lies upon a coffin beside which a whole nation will mourn. The world contained no greater spirit, no nobler woman. Her genius filled the world with admiration, and the profession which she adorned and ruled must long await her successor. This is not the place, nor is mine the pen, to write her history; larger space and abler hands will see that duty performed. These lines are traced by one who loved her living, and weeps for her now dead. Her career is an incentive and an example to all the workers in our noble art. A woman of genius, industrious and religious, her best education was obtained within the circle of her calling. Almost masculine in manner, there was yet a gentleness in her which only her intimates could know. The voice which crooned the lullaby of the *Bertram's* so touchingly came from a heart as gentle as infancy. To all who labor in the realms of art, and to my profession most especially, the loss of this day will be a severe one. Bigotry itself must stand abashed before the life of our dead Queen, whose every thought and act were given for years to an art which ignorance and envy have battled against in vain for centuries. To her, our Queen, we say: "Peace and farewell! We shall not look upon her like again."

LAWRENCE BARRETT, in the *New York Herald*, Feb. 19, 1876.

As a tragic actress, Charlotte Cushman held an unsurpassed position. Of her greatness in her own art, there is no question. Shakspeare in our day has

had no grander exponent than she. Generally, the actor who appears in Shakspeare is lifted upon the mighty wings of his passion and borne aloft to heights which, to his own powers, were inaccessible. Why do the clouds fly so fast and the birds shoot through the air? Their speed is not their own; they are carried in the invisible arms of irresistible storms. Often Ariel wins the credit which is due to his master, Prospero, who has broken his staff, drowned his book, and lies sleeping on the banks of Avon. But this was not entirely true of Miss Cushman. She frequently rose to the level of the Shakspearean mind, was kindled with the Shakspearean fire, so that in her inspired moments she realized the character. It was not always thus, for the greatest of actors can only effect by supreme effort that which Shakspeare did with apparently unconscious ease. But it is enough glory for an actress when she can cause her auditors to forget, even if only for a moment, the difference between the *Lady Macbeth* of the stage and the *Lady Macbeth* of the book; that she, too, has something of that magic which deludes men to delight, and is able to re-create with no unworthy hand creations which are unrivaled in imagination. In relation to her own art, Charlotte Cushman stood easily upon its topmost height, as compared with other famous actresses of her time. But were this all that could be said of her, there would be room for misapprehension of her true position among the intellectual women of this century who have worked in other professions. She rendered an inestimable service to her sex by demonstrating the most brilliant methods, and, with conclusive force, the extent of its intellectual capacity. To judge that high

service rightly, the relation of the drama to the other arts must be remembered. The disadvantages of the stage, as a lasting proof of individual genius, have been already pointed out, and, because of these, there is danger that Charlotte Cushman may be undervalued.

JOHN D. STOCKTON, in the *Century Magazine*, June, 1876.

# ANNA CORA MOWATT.

1819—1870.

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**MRS. MOWATT.**

A being young and fair,  
In purest white arrayed,  
With timid grace tripped down the stair,  
Half eager, half afraid !

As on the misty height  
Soft blushes young Aurora,  
She dawned upon our dazzled sight,  
Our graceful modest Cora !

FRANCES S. OSGOOD.



ANNA CORA MOWATT  
As Rosalind in "As You Like It."



## ANNA CORA MOWATT.

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Mrs. Mowatt's career upon the stage was very remarkable in many ways. She was an actress and a star, born not made. Taking a leading part in her profession without training or experience, she was never behind the scenes of a theatre until she was carried to witness a rehearsal of her 'Fashion' on the day of its first production, at the Park Theatre, New York, March 24, 1845. She had but one rehearsal of the 'Lady of Lyons' before she made her *début*, and she became an actress, and a triumphant one, three weeks after her determination to follow the profession was formed. Her reasons for taking this step were as remarkable as the result of it. Her success as a playwright, she says, determined her to attempt and to achieve like success as a player. Every one familiar with the history of the theatre since it has had a history, knows how great is the difference between production and performance, how few the actors who have written clever plays, how few the authors who have become distinguished on the stage. The popularity of Mrs. Elizabeth Thompson Butler's battle pictures would hardly encourage her to lead armies into the field, nor would Von Bülow succeed were he to attempt the construction of a grand piano. Gunmakers are proverbially bad marksmen,

and critics are the men who fail to make salable books.

Mrs. Mowatt, however, had several things in her favor not always to be found in cases like hers. She was possessed of uncommon intelligence and grace, she was a gentle woman, refined and earnest, and she had a good cause, the support of a husband unfortunate in business, and too feeble in health to support himself. Her first appearance was at the Park Theatre, New York, June 13, 1845, less than three months after the production of her comedy; and the occasion was the benefit of W. H. Crisp, who had given her the little instruction her limited time permitted her to receive and who played *Claude Melnotte* to her *Pauline*, Mrs. Vernon representing *Madam Deschappelles*. The house was crowded, the applause genuine and discriminating; and unprejudiced and experienced critics pronounced her a complete success.

On July 13 of the same year (1845) she appeared at Niblo's Garden, New York, as *Juliana* in the 'Honeymoon,' her second part, supported by Mr. Crisp, Wm. Chippendale, E. L. Davenport, Thomas Placide, John Sefton, and Mrs. Watts (afterwards Mrs. Sefton). During the first year she was upon the stage she acted more than two hundred nights, and in almost every important city in the United States, playing *Lady Teazle*, *Mrs. Haller*, *Lucy Ashton*, *Katherine* (the Shrew,) *Julia*, *Juliet*, and all the leading characters in the same line. The amount of labor, physical and mental, she performed during this period must have been enormous, and the intellectual strain alone was enough to have destroyed the strongest constitution. In the annals of the stage in all countries there is no

single instance of a mere novice playing so many important parts so many times before so many different audiences and winning so much merited praise as did Mrs. Mowatt during the first twelve months of her career as an actress.

In the autumn of 1847, Mrs. Mowatt sailed for England, where her success was as marked as in her own country, and much more, unquestionably, to her professional credit. She had to contend against a certain international prejudice, which has now entirely disappeared on both sides of the Atlantic, she was compared, in their own familiar parts, with the leading English actresses of long experience, and she could not depend upon the social popularity and personal goodwill which aided her so powerfully at home. She made her English *début* in Manchester shortly after her arrival, and her first appearance in London at the Princess's Theatre, Jan. 5, 1848, in the 'Hunchback,' Mr. E. L. Davenport, who had played with her on her American tour, giving her excellent support during her English engagement. She returned to New York in the summer of 1851 greatly improved in health, in personal appearance, and in her art; and her subsequent career was marked with uniform success.

She took her farewell of the stage at Niblo's Garden on June 3, 1854. As her 'Autobiography' was published previously, her reason for retirement is not known, unless it was on account of her marriage to Mr. Wm. F. Ritchie, a few days later. She selected her maiden part, *Pauline*. A testimonial, signed by many prominent persons, and highly eulogistic, was presented to her; and her last appearance created as



great an excitement in the social and dramatic world as did her first.

Anna Cora Ogden was born in 1819 in Bordeaux, France, during a short visit of her parents to that country. When she was fifteen years of age she married James Mowatt, a lawyer of New York. She made her first appearance in public as a reader in the Masonic Temple, Boston, in 1841. During the same year she gave readings in the hall of the old Stuyvesant Institute, New York. In 1845, as has been shown, she went upon the stage. Mr. Mowatt died in London in the spring of 1851. She became Mrs. Ritchie on June 7, 1854. She lived in retirement in France, Italy, and England for some years, and she died at Henley-on-Thames in 1870. Mrs. Mowatt is described by those who remember her in the first flush of her youth as a fascinating actress and accomplished woman: "in person, fragile and exquisitely delicate, with a face in whose calm depths the beautiful and fine alone were mirror'd" — "a voice ever soft, gentle, and low, a subdued earnestness of manner, a winning witchery of enunciation, and a grace and refinement in every action."

She was an industrious contributor to the periodical press before and after her retirement, devoting much of her time to her pen. Her more elaborate works include 'Fashion: a Comedy' (1845); an epic poem in five acts called 'Pelayo, or the Cavern of Covadonga'; 'Armand: a Drama,' first played at the Broadway Theatre, Sept. 27, 1847; the 'Autobiography of an Actress' (1854); the 'Fortune Hunter,' a novel of New York Society; 'Mimic Life, or Before and Behind the Curtain' (1856); and 'Gulzara, or

the Persian Slave,' an early production which was remarkable simply for the fact that it was a play without a hero, the only male character in the *dramatis personæ* being a boy of ten years.

While Mrs. Mowatt's easy and sudden success has turned many a head, and inspired scores of her sex to attempt to follow in her footsteps, only to make as easy and sudden failure, bringing distress to themselves and the patient public, the stage owes much to her for her example and influence as a woman, while her sisters in the profession owe much more to her for the kind words she has spoken of them in her 'Autobiography' and 'Mimic Life,' and the encouragement she has extended to the humble actresses who contribute in their small way so much to the public amusement, and who by the public are so often misrepresented and ignored.

LAURENCE HUTTON.

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Her first reading was given at the Masonic Temple on Thursday evening, Oct. 28, 1841. She carried with her the heart of every listener, for she exhibited the most beautiful moral spectacle of which human nature is capable, that of a wife turning her accomplishments to account, to relieve the necessities of her husband. Her youth and beauty though sufficient in themselves to command attention were lost sight of when she began to speak, and one had leisure only to regard the exquisite tones of her voice as it gave utterance to her admirable conceptions of poetical genius. Her stay in this city was brief, but the judgment then pronounced upon her abilities was final, for having passed

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through the ordeal of Boston criticism and met with approval, she fearlessly went forth to fascinate by the loveliness of her person, and to captivate by genuineness of her talent.

W. W. CLAPP : 'Boston Stage,' *chap.* 31.

The day of my *début* was fixed. It was in the month of June, 1854. I had three weeks only for preparation. Incessant study, training—discipline of a kind which the actor-student alone can appreciate—were indispensable to perfect success. I took fencing lessons to gain firmness of position and freedom of limb. I used dumb-bells, to overcome the constitutional weakness of arms and chest. I exercised my voice during four hours every day, to increase its power. I wore a voluminous train for as many hours daily, to learn the graceful management of queenly or classic robes. . . . The day before my *début* it was necessary that I should rehearse with the company. I found this a severer ordeal than performing before the public. Once more I stood upon the dimly-lighted gloomy stage not now in the position of an author to observe, to criticise, to suggest, but to be observed, to be criticised, very possibly—nay, very probably—to be ridiculed if I betrayed the slightest ignorance of what I attempted. . . . The play ended, the curtain fell. It would be impossible to describe my sensations of relief as I watched that welcome screen of coarse green baize, slowly unrolling itself and dropping between the audience and the stage. Then came the call before the curtain—the crossing of the stage in front of the footlights. Mr. C—— led me out. The whole house rose—even the ladies, a compliment seldom paid. I

think it must have *rained* flowers; for bouquets, wreaths of silver and wreaths of laurel fell in showers around us. Cheer followed cheer as they were gathered up and laid in my arms. The hats of gentlemen and handkerchiefs of ladies waved on every side. I courtesied my thanks, and the welcome green curtain once more shut out the brilliant assemblage. Then came the deeper, truer sense of thankfulness. The trial was over; the *débutante* had stood the test; she had not mistaken the career which had been clearly pointed out as the one for which she was destined.

ANNA CORA MOWATT: 'Autobiography of an Actress,' *chap.* 12.

When I made my *début* I was only prepared in one part; yet before the close of the year, I had enacted all the most popular characters in juvenile comedy and tragedy. From this fact some estimate may be found of the amount of study requisite. Often after a protracted rehearsal in the morning and an arduous performance at night, I returned home from the theatre, wearied out in mind and body; yet I dared not rest. The character to be represented on the succeeding night still required several hours of reflection and application. Sometimes I kept myself awake by bathing my heavy eyes and throbbing temples with iced water, as I committed the words to memory. Sometimes I could only battle with the angel who

Knits up the ravelled sleeve of care.

by rapidly pacing the room, while I studied. Now

and then I was fairly conquered and fell asleep over my books.

*Ibid.*, chap. 13.

One evening the property man. . . . . forgot the bottle containing *Juliet's* sleeping potion. The omission was only discovered at the moment the vial was needed. Some bottle must be furnished to the *Friar*, or he cannot utter the solemn charge with which he confides the drug to the perplexed scion of the Capulets. The property man, confused at his discovering his own neglect, and fearful of the fine to which it would subject him, caught up the first small bottle at hand, and gave it to the *Friar*. The vial was the prompter's, and contained *ink*. When *Juliet* snatched the fatal potion from the *Friar's* hand, he whispered something in an undertone. I caught the words, "so take care," but was too absorbed in my part to comprehend the warning. *Juliet* returns home—meets her parents—retires to her own chamber—dismisses her nurse—and finally drinks the potion. At the words,—

*Romeo!* this do I drink to thee!

I placed the bottle to my lips, and unsuspectingly swallowed the inky draught. The dark stain upon my hands and lips might have been mistaken for the quick workings of the poison, for the audience remained ignorant of the mishap, which I only half comprehended. When the scene closed, the prompter rushed up to me exclaiming, "Good gracious! you have been drinking from my bottle of ink!" I could not resist the temptation of quoting the remark of the



dying wit under similar circumstances—"Let me swallow a piece of blotting paper."

*Ibid.*, chap. 13.

Her American success might have been attributed to the sympathy deeply felt for a countrywoman so fair and unfortunate ; but when, in after years, a career of equal brilliancy was accorded her in the more fastidious theatrical circles of our fatherland it could scarcely be doubted as the result of appreciated skill and merit.

JOSEPH N. IRELAND: 'Annals of the New York Stage,' vol. ii., chap. 24.

Of her career through the country her own narrative affords sufficient details. Her friends watched her progress with almost painful interest. They feared that injudicious flattery might prevent her from pursuing that course of close study and earnest application which can alone create the great actress. When she returned to New York, and produced her 'Armand,' I witnessed with great satisfaction its favorable reception, and her own improvement as an actress. Her departure for England followed shortly after the production of 'Armand,' and on her return to New York I was immediately requested to renew our personal intercourse.

I found her to my astonishment developed into a magnificently formed woman, vigorous and healthy, and beaming with geniality and hopefulness ; and from that period until her departure for England, in 1860, our personal intercourse was only interrupted by her occasional professional absences from New York. I have hundreds of her letters preserved, which she



used to say I should find useful in delineating her life and character if I survived her. They all breathe the truest feelings that ever warmed a woman's breast.

The professional career of Mrs. Mowatt, after her return to New York, was marked by uniform success; the reputation and standing she had acquired in England established her claim here, and her closing professional labors were satisfactory, both artistically and professionally. This success, however, was interrupted by a painful and dangerous illness. During this retirement from her professional labors I frequently visited her at her father's residence at Ravenswood, and witnessed with admiration the traits of character this almost fatal illness developed. She was cheerful and resigned to a degree that could only have been the result of a Christian spirit. I saw her a day or two before the operation was to be performed by her friend and physician, Dr. Valentine Mott, and found her actually joyous over the successful experiments he had been making with chloroform. The operation was most successfully performed, and she was restored to comparative health and to the society of her doting father and friends. These remembrances confirm the statements she has made in her autobiography that Christian confidence was her support through the painful struggles and dangerous attacks she encountered during her residence in England, which culminated in the loss of her first husband, Mr. James Mowatt.

J. W. S. H., in the *New York Tribune*, August 22, 1870.

I had a little adventure of my own when Mrs.

Mowatt was at Niblo's. It was the last night of her stage-life. The house was crowded to its utmost capacity with a fashionable audience, many of them personal friends of the lovely woman whose history all New Yorkers know ; who has gone back to grace the society that claimed her for one of its brightest ornaments ere the world at large knew of her traits or her charms. The throng was so great that I could find no place but the passageway in the dress-circle, and there I sat on the floor. A fine, gray-headed old man was on the sofa next to me, and opened the conversation, remarked the immense concourse, and said it reminded him of the Théâtre Français in the days of Talma. From the crowd to the actress was a ready transition, so we fell to discussing Mrs. Mowatt. I said she was charming and clever, and wondered if her graces were natural or acquired. My acquaintance insisted that they were natural ; in fact, he knew they were so. Then I wondered if this was really her last appearance, and surmised that she would soon return to the stage. "No," said my friend, "she will be married in a month." I knew of that before, and told him the day, but we did not agree upon the date, and the fine, old gray-headed gentleman thought he ought to know best since "he was her father." Of course I admitted the probability of his being correctly informed, and apologized for the freedom of my criticisms ; he declared, however, that they had not been offensive, and even if they had proved unfavorable that I was not to blame. But I could not remember having been very sensorious, and we chatted away all the evening.

ADAM BADEAU : the 'Vagabond.'

“Home and rest” did not signify selfish ease. The energy that had led her—who, up to the hour of Mr. Mowatt’s financial ruin, had been the petted darling of a luxurious home—to devote the best years of her life to the laborious calling for which she believed the bent of her talents best fitted her, that she might stay her husband’s failing forces, kept her up now to the full measure of the duties prescribed by heart and conscience. Her sympathy with the working woman was unailing. Her own habits were as methodical as when she was bound by the rigid necessities of study and rehearsal. To every hour was allotted its occupation and each was performed well. Nothing that could advance another’s welfare, were that other the lowest menial of her household, was ignoble in her sight. While as Secretary of the Mount Vernon Association her voluminous correspondence was a severe tax upon time and strength, and her numerous social duties were never neglected, she could yet oversee every department of her neat establishment; give lessons in elocution to a young girl who wished to become a public reader; write letters of friendship and business; supply weekly articles upon various subjects, not only for the *Enquirer* but for other periodicals, and prepare ‘Mimic Life,’ the most thoughtful study and, in most respects, the best of her published volumes.

At this time the proceeds of her literary work were devoted to private charities. I learned this accidentally, and not from herself. So far was she above the paltry ambition to play the Lady Bountiful that she shrank from the expressed gratitude of her beneficiaries. When she did a favor it was with grace and



ANNA CORA MOWATT.



sweetness, which conveyed the impression that she was made richer, not impoverished by the privilege of giving. . . . .

I have written this sketch—so tame and imperfect in my sight when I compare it with the living, ever-fresh picture enshrined in my mind—impelled by conscience and affection to add a leaf to the record of a pure, beneficent life.

While she was on the stage the boldest tongue durst not utter a syllable derogatory to her honor and her discretion. In the might of her innocence she neither saw nor felt the fires that had scorched and slain their thousands. In stooping to rescue others she had gathered no smirch—not so much as the smell of fire upon her white garments. Seeing this, men marveled with loud admiration and praised her as a demi-goddess. But when, at the beckoning of Love, she stepped down from her pedestal, the world remembered her no more. Few cared to follow her into retirement to note what work would there be done by the brave spirit and great, loving heart. If her fame as an artist belongs to the history of histrionic art in America, the knowledge of her womanly virtues should make her name a household treasure.

I would, at the risk of misconstruction of my motives, and, it may be, censure of the act itself, testify in some poor sort to the good she did in the sphere which the admirers of the actress deemed narrow and poor. She, in the beauty of her humility and unerring perception of the divinity of humanity, esteemed it exceeding broad. Having known and loved and learned of her as it was my pleasure and honor to know and listen and be taught, I cannot



withhold love's tribute to the breadth and holiness of the charity, the fidelity to truth and right, the zealous labor for others' weal, the Christian love, faith, and hope that made this woman's life and character as "round and perfect as a star."

MARIAN HARLAND: 'Personal Recollections of a Christian Actress,' in *Our Continent*, March 15, 1882.

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