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THE REAL EDWIN BOOTH.

LETTERS OF EDWIN BOOTH,
WITH INTRODUCTION BY HIS DAUGHTER.¹



Y father's earlier letters to me, covering a period of some seven years, were written chiefly during my absence at a convent school. Written, as they were, during his long professional tours throughout the country, these letters helped to lift me out of my narrow sphere, and took me into a new and broader field, where my father was for me always the chief actor, whether they breathed of his professional life, of his domestic or social experiences, or of loving advice, paternal care, and solicitude. No matter how weary, how irritated by conditions then unknown to me, he was sure to send me weekly missives. Though frequently expressed in a humorous vein, in order to entertain and divert me, I can now read between the lines, and appreciate the noble effort he made to throw off the burdens which during those years must have bowed him down. Under the weight of financial difficulties, the result of misplaced confidence and childlike trust in others, he rallied when his paternal duty and love reminded him of me.

I have abstained from publishing more than a small fraction of his entire correspondence, and offer only such as will prove of special interest and value in the public eye. It appears to me, on re-reading many of these let-

¹ The following forms part of the preface written by the daughter of Edwin Booth to precede a collection of his letters from which those appended are selected.
—EDITOR.

ters after a lapse of years, that they present a side of my father's temperament and disposition hitherto concealed from his friends, as well as from the general public. They reveal a depth of soul, a firmness of purpose, a high resolve to battle against life's struggles, which make it incumbent upon me to publish them. They constitute, indeed, a better and more complete autobiography than that which I have in the past so often urged upon him to write. I fear his innate modesty and reluctance to speak of his own triumphs and misfortunes would have severely handicapped him in such an undertaking. But his letters to me, and to his many friends, speak of him as he was, without reserve or fear of harsh criticism.

To these same valued friends I am greatly indebted for a large part of this correspondence, which is published not only for the benefit of the many who have known and revered him as the artist and interpreter of Shaksperian drama, but as a tribute of filial respect and love.

MY MOTHER.

As a necessary accompaniment to these few reminiscences of my father, I will quote some extracts from letters written by my mother (Mary Devlin) prior to their marriage. They prove an essential chapter in the life of a man then stepping into fame and greatness, and make more clearly manifest the spiritual union of two sympathetic souls so soon to be parted by death.

My father has confided to me the gentle yet

powerful influence exerted over his artistic career by my young mother, herself an actress of no mean capacity. Her whole being became so centered in her lover and husband, her "Hamlet," as she so often called him, that my father felt the reflex of her refined intellectuality, both in his art, and in his attitude toward her in whom he found his purest and highest ideals sweetly embodied. Though it is my misfortune never to have known my mother, her letters, and the recollections of her many friends, place her before me in the sanctified light of noble womanhood—a faithful wife, a blessed mother.

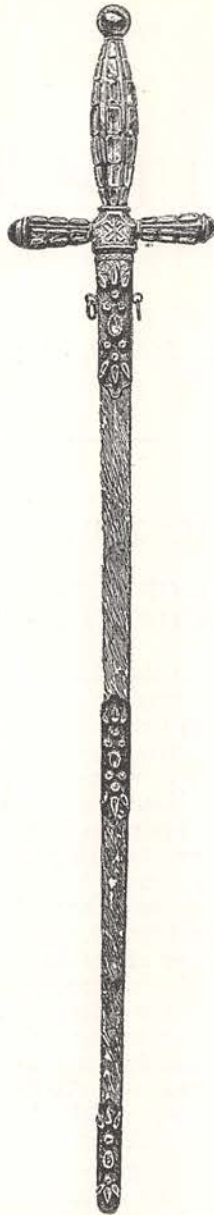
In the year 1860 she writes:

We must ever dwell "above the thunder," treading beneath our feet the black clouds of dissension. You are too great ever to descend to discord; I have too high an appreciation of the divine spark God has gifted you with, and which you intrust to my care, ever to cause you to seek another sphere than your natural one.

The above extract is from a letter written during my mother's betrothal to my father, and while she herself was yet upon the stage. I find in another letter, dated the same year, the following:

Last night I sat by the window thinking of you, and disturbed only by the mournful sighing of the wind. I wondered in "this stillness of the world without, and of the soul within," what our lives in the future would be; and I looked to see if upon the clouds I could trace any semblance of it. This led me into an odd train of thought, in which I recalled a susceptibility of yours you once told me of. You remember, 't was that a passing wind sometimes suggested to you the past, and, carrying you years back, set you dreaming. It is not wonderful that *you* should have such emotions—sensitive natures are prone to them; then why, I ask myself, should my eyes have filled with tears, and trembled lest *you* should experience them again? Ah, dear Edwin, 't was a fear that they would lead you from my side and leave me once more alone. I am very wrong, doubtless, to have allowed so simple a fact to impress me, and am still more to blame to repeat it here; for have you not "died into life," as Keats says—and I should wean you from all remembrance of the tomb; and so I promise to do.

These letters were written by my mother when scarcely twenty years of age. Her death



RICHLY JEWELLED SWORD
WORN IN "RICHARD III."

occurred three years afterward. She constantly refers, as in the following passage, to the sacred mission she is about to fulfil as fiancée and wife:

This morning, in my walk, I was thinking of the being God had given me to influence and cherish. For *you* have ever seemed to me like what Shelley says of himself—"a phantom among men"—"companionless as the last fading storm," and yet my spirit ever seems lighter and more joyous when with you. This I can account for only by believing that a mission has been given me to fulfil, and that I shall be rewarded by seeing you rise to be great and happy.

Ah! the angels surely will rejoice in heaven when that is achieved. Edwin, I have never told you yet, have I, of all the odd thoughts I have had, and do have, about you? Well, on some of the days to come, when I am influenced by your loved presence, and after the singing of some pretty song, perhaps I will tell you.

My mother's love of music, and her naturally beautiful voice, ever proved a delight to my father, and he continued in later years to love the old melodies she used to sing to him in the early days of their courtship and marriage.

The purely unselfish love which my mother bore for my father is manifested in her earliest letters to him. His art was ever the absorbing theme, and although so young herself, she was capable of giving him wise counsel in all things. She says again:

If my love is selfish, you will never be great: part of you belongs to the world. I *must* remember this, and assist in its "blossoming," if I would taste of the ripe fruit. That will prove a rich reward.

LETTER TO CAPTAIN RICHARD
F. CARY.¹

430 FRANKLIN ST., June 30, 1860.

FRIEND RICHARD: I pray your highness to pardon my long delay in replying to your last kind letter; but the fact is, my head is turned. I am like the chap of old who wrote to his father, ending with this line: "I am, my dearest charmer, ever thine." In short, my head is full of "Marry Mary—marry"—marriage. Those are the three important degrees at present. The second, which implies fear, hope, regret, bliss, love, etc., being a sufficient excuse for anything except suicide; so bear with me, Richard, and don't "impute my

¹ Brother-in-law of Louis Agassiz.

silence to light love" of your delightful company, but rather to the tumultuous heavings of that sea through which you have already passed to a joyful haven. Phew! It takes me so long to reach a period that I almost lose the thread of my "yarn" on the journey. This day week—July 7, "young Edwin" is no more! A sober, steady, *paterfamilias* will then—excuse me a moment, there's a hand-organ playing "Love not" under my win-

found my mother, sister, and Joe. He gives a glowing account of the fight. Says no one was killed. Ten times the number of rebels could not have taken the fort by any means, had Anderson been provisioned. We all start at 7 A. M. for Bethel, Maine, where I hope to have a quiet time for a few weeks, at the end of which I sincerely hope to be summoned to England. I've already received a request to visit the Haymarket, and



EDWIN BOOTH AND HIS FATHER, 1850.

dow, and I must defer this till a more appropriate air strikes up. Half an hour has elapsed, and "A te O Cara" swells on the air—a more inspiring melody than the former, but still not sufficiently so to stimulate me to the performance of a task (to me almost impossible), that of writing a sensible letter. . . . Yours distractedly, BOOTH.

TO CAPTAIN RICHARD F. CARY.

SUNDAY, 30, 1861.

MY DEAR DICK: I cannot tell you how sad I feel at your going away without bidding you good-by. After several ineffectual attempts to find the camp I yesterday succeeded. Covered with dust, headached, and broiled, my wife and I reached the ground just in time to see the parade dismissed, when I learned that you were absent.

I had to visit New York last week, where I

about the middle of July I shall know definitely. But enough of myself. I manage, somehow, to appear very egotistical in my letters; I write of nothing else, it seems.

My dear Dick, you will not, I hope, omit any opportunity to "post" me as to your whereabouts, etc. I shall read with anxiety and interest every bulletin from the seat of war, and pray ever for your safety and distinction — of that I am sure if you only get a chance. My wife sends her blessings and heartfelt good-by, and her sincere regret at not seeing you. There is no need of protestation, I trust, on my part, to assure you of the regret, the anxiety, the hope, the fear, I feel for you, but I will say, God in heaven bless and protect you! That you may return unscathed and glorious shall be the constant, fervent prayer of

Your friend,

NED.

TO ADAM BADEAU.

NEW YORK, 107 East 17th st.

May 18, 1863.

DEAR AD: I got your letter before I left Boston some weeks ago. You see I am now located in New York. I have taken Putnam's house (the publisher) furnished for six months, during which time I shall busy myself looking for a permanent home

— God is. And as surely as you and I are flesh and bones and blood, so are we also spirits eternal. I believe it beyond a doubt, and I believe, too, that she who sat beside me only a few weeks ago is living, and is near me now. This should make me happy, should it not? But it does not. . . . Ad, I never knew how much I loved her. I do not perhaps fully realize it yet; if I did the loss of my Aiden might kill me. God is wise and just and



PHOTOGRAPHED BY CASE AND GETCHELL.

MRS. MARY DEVLIN BOOTH.

while on earth; something I can leave my child in case of my departing, which God grant may not occur until I have become worthy of being united with her. . . . While Mary was here I was shut up in her devotion. I never dreamed that she could be taken from me — as I ever have lived, so live I now within; you would not think I suffer were you here with me; nor would I have you think that I do suffer constantly; it is only at times, as now. When I wrote you last it seems I was hopeful and patient; now I am torn with all sorts of hateful fancies; yet but an hour ago I might have written you a far different letter. Believe in one great truth, Ad

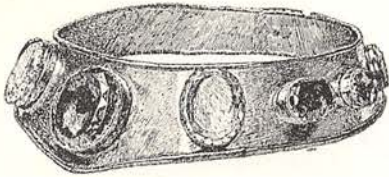
good in this, as in all things. I tell you, Ad, it is not well to forget God in our prosperity; we do not when we are sinking. . . .

TO MISS EMMA F. CARY.

November 11.

MY DEAR FRIEND: . . . I have been quite ill, as I told you in my last, nor am I yet in a condition for work; but I must soon get at it for a long winter campaign. On Friday, the 25th, without fail, the long-talked-of benefit "to Shakspeare" will take place at the Winter Garden with the

TO MRS. RICHARD F. CARY.



CROWN WORN IN "MACBETH."

"Brothers Booth"—à la Hanlon—at the main-springs, and on the night following, *Hamlet* in a new dress (I wish Mr. W—were here to see it) will fret his brief hour every night until further notice.

. . . I voted (for Lincoln) t' other day—the first vote I ever cast, and, I suppose, I am now an American citizen all over, as I have been in heart. . . .

Saint Valentine's Day.

MISS CARY,

MY DEAR FRIEND: A little lull in the whirl of excitement in which my brain has nearly lost its balance affords me an opportunity to write to you. It would be difficult to explain the many little annoyances I have been subjected to in the production of "*Richelieu*," but when I tell you that it far surpasses "*Hamlet*," and exceeds all my expectations, you may suppose that I have not been very idle all this while. I wish you could see it.

Professor Peirce¹ has been here, and he will tell you of it. It really seems that the dreams of my past life—so far as my profession is concerned—are being realized. What Mary and I used to plan for my future, what Richard and I used laughingly to promise ourselves in "our model theater," seems to be realized—in these two plays, at least. As history says of the great cardinal, I am "too fortunate a man not to be superstitious," and as I find my hopes being fulfilled, I cannot help but believe that there is a sufficient importance in my art to interest them still; that to a higher influence than the world believes I am moved by I owe the success I have achieved. Assured that all I do in this advance carries, even beyond the range of my little world (the theater), an elevating and refining influence, while in it the effect is good, I begin to feel really happy in my once uneasy sphere of action. I dare say I shall soon be contented with my lot. I will tell you this much: I have been offered the means to a speedy and an ample fortune, from all parts of the country, but prefer the limit I have set, wherein I have the power to carry out my wishes, though "on half pay," as it were. . . .



RING WORN IN "HAMLET" DURING A PERIOD OF THIRTY YEARS.

Ever your friend,
EDWIN BOOTH.

¹ The late Professor Peirce, professor of mathematics in Harvard University, father of Professor James Mills Peirce.

June 3, '64.

MY DEAR, DEAR FRIENDS: You know my heart, I cannot speak to you of comfort.

One after another the blows have fallen so heavily that souls unaided by God's unflinching love, and faith stronger than death, would have sunk in despair beneath their crushing weight.

But in your hearts as in hers,—dear, dear mother, for so she always seemed to me, Mary's mother,—as in my own, there is a light which sorrow cannot quench; which guides us through the darkness of the grave; which reveals to us the secret of His mysterious works—the secret love! Oh, that I could give you the full companionship of that love as I have felt it since Mary's death, the peace that has filled my soul, and the strength that has flowed steadily into it since that terrible day! Could I give you this you would rejoice for her as I do, although my heart aches for you while I write. Oh, be assured, dear, dear ones, that they are together; that their knowledge now is so great that even our grief for their departure causes them no pain, so well they know how good it is for us to suffer.



DAGGER USED IN "MACBETH."

That I was in the hearts of my noble Richard and his dear sister, while they were on the very threshold of Home, is a joy to me past all that earth can give me. I know I shall be welcomed there by them; they never forget us, never cease to love and care for us. When we meet, I know that I shall wonder how I could ever miss them, so brief will the separation then seem. If I feel this, dear friends, I who am so much lower in the grade of worthiness, how joyous must your hearts be when you reflect how near we all are to our unseen but real home—when you know that all that comes from Him is for our good.

Oh, I feel such an intense love for God when sorrow touches me that I could almost wish my heart would always ache—I feel so near to Him, I realize His love so thoroughly, so intensely, at such times.

I did not mean to write so much, but this (my love I speak of) has carried me away. Several times I have stopped to brush the tears away that came for you, and to give vent to that long sigh which is a yearning of the spirit to follow its loved ones home; but I could not cease to write until I had given utterance to all that choked my heart.

Let this be for the dear good mother and sisters of our dear ones as for you.

Good-by. God bless and comfort you!

Your friend,

EDWIN BOOTH.

TO MISS EMMA F. CARY, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Saturday, May 6, 1865.

MY DEAR FRIEND: I've just received your letter. I have been in one sense unable to write, but you know, of course, what my condition is, and need no excuses.

I have been, by the advice of my friends, "cooped up" since I arrived here, going out only occasionally in the evening. My health is good, but I suffer from the want of fresh air and exercise.

ferred, and died in doing. My baby, too, is there. Now that the greatest excitement is over, and a lull is in the storm, I feel the need of that dear angel; but during the heat of it I was glad she was not here.

When Junius and Mr. Clarke are at liberty, mother will come here and bring Edwina to me. I wish I could see with others' eyes; all my friends assure me that my name shall be free, and that in a little while I may be where I was and what I was; but, alas! it looks dark to me.

God bless you all for your great assistance in



EDWIN BOOTH'S DRESSING-TABLE, 1889.

Poor mother is in Philadelphia, about crushed by her sorrows, and my sister, Mrs. Clarke, is ill, and without the least knowledge of her husband, who was taken from her several days ago, with Junius.

My position is such a delicate one that I am obliged to use the utmost caution. Hosts of friends are stanch and true to me. Here and in Boston I feel safe. What I am in Phila. and elsewhere I know not. All I do [know] of the above-named city is that there is one great heart firm and faster-bound to me than ever. Sent in answer to dear Mary's prayers—I faithfully believe it. She will do what Mary struggled, suf-

fered, and died in doing. My baby, too, is there. Now that the greatest excitement is over, and a lull is in the storm, I feel the need of that dear angel; but during the heat of it I was glad she was not here.

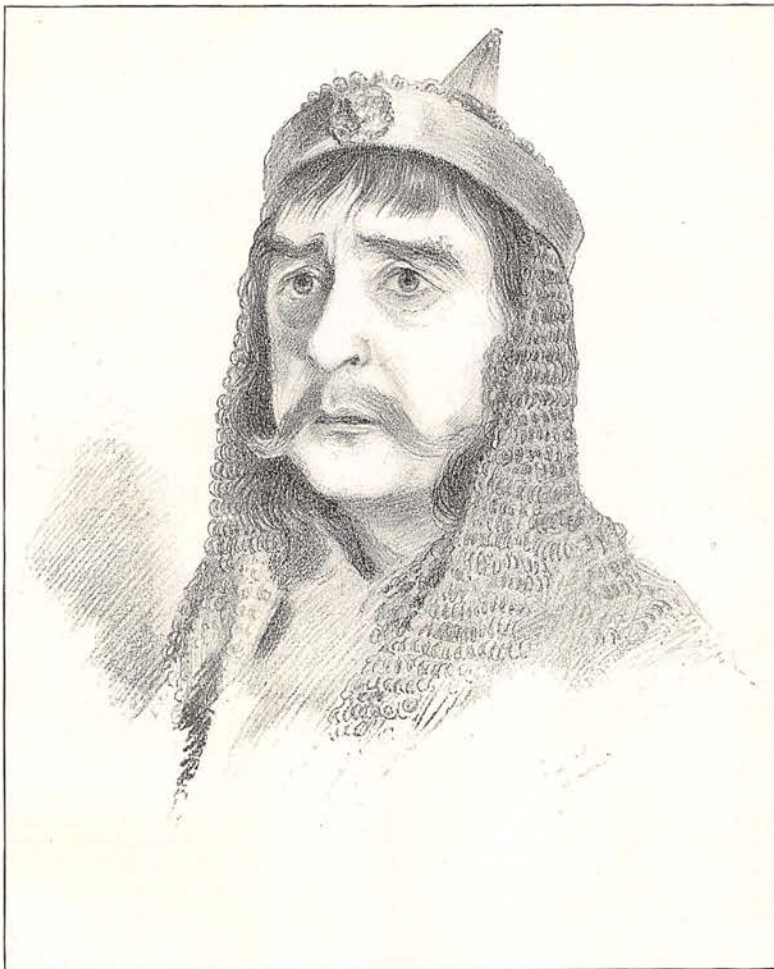
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Ever yours, EDWIN BOOTH.

TO MISS EMMA F. CARY, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

NEW YORK, Nov. 24, 1865.

MY DEAR FRIEND: Pray forgive my neglect. I've been a little bothered of late, and could not bring my mind to a calm.



EDWIN BOOTH AS "MACBETH."

My affairs are quite unsettled. I don't know yet when I shall act, or what I shall do next. . . .

It seems a long time since I visited Auburn¹ last. I have lost the level run of time and events, and am living in a mist. But I am told my health is better than it ever was. I do not realize it, but am bored by people saying I am getting fat. I am a little Byronic in my dislike of such compliments, because I don't feel as I look.

Mother is very much broken, I think, poor soul! . . . She seems to have still a lingering hope in her heart that all this will prove to be a dream.

Y'r faithful friend, EDWIN BOOTH.

TO MRS. R. F. CARY, BOSTON.

NEW YORK, Dec. 20, 1865.

MY DEAR FRIEND: . . . Let it pass; life is a great big spelling-book, and on every page we turn the words grow harder to understand the meaning of. But there is a meaning, and when the last leaf flops over, we 'll know the whole lesson by heart.

¹ Mount Auburn Cemetery, where my mother was buried.

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You have also, doubtless, heard that I will soon appear on the stage. Sincerely, were it not for *means*, I would not do so, public sympathy notwithstanding; but I have huge debts to pay, a family to care for, a love for the grand and beautiful in art, to boot, to gratify, and hence my sudden resolve to abandon the heavy, aching gloom of my little red room, where I have sat so long chewing my heart in solitude, for the excitement of the only trade for which God has fitted me. . . .

I shall begin January 3 (Wednesday), with *Hamlet*. . . . Ever truly y'r friend,

EDWIN BOOTH.

TO MISS EMMA F. CARY.

TOLEDO (in the West), Sept. 27, 1868.

MY DEAR FRIEND: . . . I've heard of Dettmar. What you say of his scene with the *Ghost* I have often done; but the play (and especially that first act) is so long that I have often omitted it. Many do not like it; others (and I among them) consider it absolutely necessary to that magnificent scene. Omitting the burial and the rest of that scene is after the Garrick style of cur-

tailment. He slashed unmercifully; altered and changed scenes by wholesale to suit his ideas of stage effect. Now I (egotist!) intend to go even beyond Chas. Kean in my devotion to the sacred text of the late W. S. I intend restoring to the stage (to mine, at least) the unadulterated plays of Shakspeare; his "Romeo and Juliet," not so performed since the days of Betterton, I fancy, unless Barry, in opposition to Garrick, revived it; "Richard III.," which Chas. Kean feared to attempt, and offered a weak apology for retaining the Cibber version. My respect for Kean runs high up to that point; there I turn back, and pity his feeble correction of Shakspeare's geographical blunders in "Winter's Tale." He should have ascertained the name of the town in which the wise man lived who jumped into a brier-bush.

My affairs are greatly mixed. The theater will be completely roofed next week, and, I hope, opened in December early (about the 14th) with as good a company as it is possible to obtain in this country. The enterprise swelled gigantically on my hands, and has attained such proportions as would frighten any one whose bump of "don't-care-a-tive-ness" was less than mine. I'm in a very big puddle; if I can wade it, well; if not, why, as Bunsby would say, "well, too." I trust to fate, chance, or whoever that "sweet little cherub" be that looks out for me. Certain it is, I have had enough vexation regarding this same theater to drive me mad, and yet I am as calm and as careless as though the ultimate success was a fixed fact. It will entail a world of work and anxiety, but would n't life be long and dreary without these little worries and bothers?

I traveled West and South last season from Sept. 5 until June 9, made lots of money, and paid it out as fast as I could count it; have just begun my second tour, which will last until my theater opens. When I began the work, I expected to be acting in the theater by this time, but the usual obstacles—weather, rock strikes, etc., delayed it, and we are only just covering the "roof-tree."

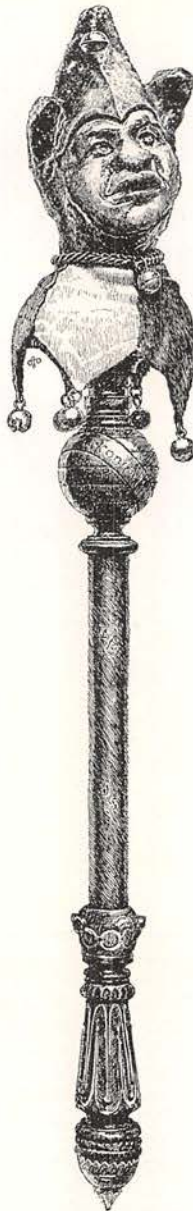
I shall be in Boston week after next. When do you expect to be there? Apropos of Dettmar and the King's "picture in little," I think the allusion to the courtier's wearing it is correct. Barry Sullivan did the same thing.

TO HIS DAUGHTER.

BOOTH'S THEATER, NEW YORK.

November 15, 1871.

MY OWN DEAR DAUGHTER: I arrived here last night, and found your pretty gift awaiting me.



BAUBLE PRESENTED TO BOOTH, AND USED IN THE "FOOL'S REVENGE." "O NOBLE FOOL, O WORTHY FOOL, MOTLEY'S THE ONLY WEAR," IS ENGRAVED ON THE HANDLE.

Your letter pleased me very, very much in every respect, and your little souvenir gave me far more delight than if it were of real gold. When you are older you will understand how precious little things, seemingly of no value in themselves, can be loved and prized above all price when they convey the love and thoughtfulness of a good heart. This little token of your desire to please me, my darling, is therefore very dear to me, and I will cherish it as long as I live. If God grants me so many years, I will show it you when you are a woman, and then you will appreciate my preference for so little a thing, made by you, to anything money might have bought. God bless you, my darling! . . .

God bless you again and again!
Your loving father.

TO DAVID C. ANDERSON.

DUBLIN, July 15, 1880.

DEAR DAVY: Arrah Galoo! Hooroo! mabokalush falcen sockdalergerwhack, me bye!

I'm on the sod, wid a dudeen o' the rale ould bog-wood in me jaw, acushla! One week ago to-night I left the ship at Quanestown, and have been to Cork and Killarney in a fog; then spent a fine day in the cars, and reached here in the same old fog and rain, bad luck to 't!

Did yez iver come here? Don't! I did, but I won't again, mavourneen. Saving the antiquities and the foul weather, we can bate 'em in Yankeeedom. Lakes and hills and all the beautiful scenery and sights they boast of are 'way behind us, so they are.

Anent ancientiquities, I am writin' wid a pen that 's mightier than the sword, videlicet a quill, from an old goose, or a hin, or else a fowl of some kind. A plume o' the weather, maybe; that 's fowl enough.

Three days here, and to-morrow we are off for Belfast, stopping *en route* at several points of interest. Shall not reach London till latter part of August. Have had two offers from there, but not being what I want, I shall wait. Find friends and acquaintances every-

where; no trouble or inconvenience yet. Had a sort of a canal-like voyage—no sea whatever. So far the trip has done us all good. Don't want to think of theater: won't, till my cash runs low. After a day or two at Belfast shall go to Glasgow, and see a little of Scotland before going to England and Wales. After a week or so in London, go to the continent. This day one month ago I was breakfasted in New York. It seems but day before yesterday. Poor mother is very sad and lonely now, I know that she misses

me very much. God bless her! Wish you were here with me. Had a jaunt in a jolting car to-day, from a place called Kingstown. Not any more in mine, I thank you. I like a trotter when I sit astride him, but a sidewise bump up and down for an hour ain't handsome, not at all, sir. How doth your *bonne dame* (no, that's not Irish), how 's de ould 'ooman? An' how 's yersel', me darlint? I 'll write ye Scotch next toime, maybe. All our loves to yees, all of yees.

McCullough has secured the spring months at Drury Lane; got ahead of me there. Irving keeps his place, and the only other tragedy-shop has lost caste of late; so I 'm in the cold, as before. Clarke would let me in at the Haymarket, but I 've been there onct before, ye know.

Good night, Davy. May the good God bless you and yours! Write me soon. Ever yours,
TED.

TO THE REV. DR. EWER.

LONDON, December 19, 1880.

MY DEAR EWER: So dazed have I been of late that I really forgot to whom I have and have not written. At all events, I remember that you were among the first on my long list of friends with whom I intended to shake hands after my *début*. I 'll take it for granted that I did so after "Hamlet"; if not, forgive my negligence. Had that play been kept on, it would doubtless have pulled through the fog, which *Richelieu* dispelled with his first breath, although many of the so-called critics still see me through a glass darkly, and sniff their learned noses knowingly. All goes well, but slowly. I did not expect a sunburst, as my friends predicted, nor did I expect such kindness from the public, nor from private sources, as I have received.

Your water-cure, hay-fever letter is not where I can put my hand on it just now ('t is after midnight), and therefore, without reference to it, I may be repeating what I said in reply to it. I hope you have entirely got rid of that vexation, funny as it appears to be at a distance, and that good health will attend your Christmas, with other blessings, a hundred-fold. For the first time since childhood my sister and I will (D. V.) pass that day together. I wish our dear old mother could be with us. What a miserable existence is the actor's, especially if he is domestically inclined! Home is something denied to him. I 've tried to fix myself, to settle down a dozen times, yet always comes some stern necessity to break camp and travel. I 'd rather be at home, somewhere in America, quiet and secure from the publicity my profession brings, than be here fêted and applauded, and tired with what 's called fame. Bosh! it 's my liver, I dare say;

the doctors tell me so. I suppose I 'd be dissatisfied with any other lot. I 'm a chronic growler, I fear. You may judge by this that I 'm not over-elated by my success here. If I had a "pitful of kings" to act for, I should not be so. Royalty (unless I except the Duke of Connaught) has not yet deigned to notice my efforts; but titled nobles, and several citizens of high standing, have shown me great kindness. To-day we met at dinner the poet Robert Browning, and at the same house, on a former occasion, Huxley. The Dowager Marchioness of Ely, Her Majesty's lady-in-waiting, and several lesser lights near the throne, have shone serenely on my Yankee ship. Now is n't this enough to turn one's head? Yet, you see, I 've been so accustomed to the purple; with kings and cardinals have I hobnobbed so familiarly since my boyhood, that I 'm accustomed to these honors. . . . I 'm inclined to think the "Passion Play" will not be given at Ammergau again; it has degenerated into a mere show.

I 'm glad I saw it, although at the time I was disappointed. Would not look at it again, though it were presented within easy reach; but the scene of its performance — Ammergau — is worth a dozen visits, though so out of the way and uncomfortable. . . .

Ever yours,
TED.

TO MR. STEDMAN.

PICCADILLY, LONDON.

December 24, 1880.

. . . I know how "run to earth" you are, and therefore do not expect you to write me very often. I know what you feel for me, and shall be more than satisfied if I get but a line of greeting only when you wish to try a new pen. It was very good of you, my dear boy, to write me, tired and busy as you are, and I cordially appreciate it. Yes, "*Richelieu*" has warmed them up, but I believe the houses would have been quite as full if I had kept "Hamlet" on the bills. There is little chance in that respect. The enthusiasm is greater, of course, for the theatrical situations of the former play compel it. . . . Ever yours,

EDWIN BOOTH.

"WINDSOR HOTEL," July 28, 1881.

DEAR SIR: I can give you very little information regarding my brother John. I seldom saw him since his early boyhood in Baltimore. He was a rattle-pated fellow, filled with quixotic notions. While at the farm in Maryland he would charge on horseback through the woods, "spouting" heroic speeches with a lance in his hand — a relic of the Mexican war — given to father by some soldier who had served under Taylor. We regarded him as a good-hearted, harmless, though wild-brained, boy, and used



CANE CARRIED IN
"THE TAMING OF
THE SHREW."



WOODEN PIPE USED IN "HAMLET."

to laugh at his patriotic froth whenever secession was discussed. That he was insane on that one point no one who knew him well can doubt. When I told him that I had voted for Lincoln's reelection he expressed deep regret, and declared his belief that Lincoln would be made King of America; and this, I believe, drove him beyond the limits of reason. I asked him once why he did not join the Confederate army. To which he replied, "I promised mother I would keep out of the quarrel, if possible, and I am sorry that I said so." Knowing my sentiments, he avoided me, rarely visiting my house, except to see his mother, when political topics were not touched upon—at least in my presence. He was of a gentle, loving disposition, very boyish and full of fun,—his mother's darling,—and his deed and death crushed her spirit. He possessed rare dramatic talent, and would have made a brilliant mark in the theatrical world. This is positively all that I know about him, having left him a mere school-boy, when I went with my father to California in 1852. On my return in 1856 we were separated by professional engagements, which kept him mostly in the South, while I was employed in the Eastern and Northern States.

I do not believe any of the wild, romantic stories published in the papers concerning him; but of course he may have been engaged in political matters of which I know nothing. All his theatrical friends speak of him as a poor crazy boy, and such his family think of him. I am sorry I can afford you no further light on the subject.

Very truly yours, EDWIN BOOTH.

TO HORACE H. FURNESS.

29 CHESTNUT STREET, BOSTON,

May 12, 1885.

MY DEAR FURNESS: Ever since I left you I have been pacing the "Rialto," my gaberdine wrapped about me,¹ but with my eyes fixed on the "Sagittary." In other words, I have been thinking more of *Iago* than of *Shylock*. In Act III I made some remark regarding *Desdemona's* boldness, which, I'm sure, does not express my opinion of her. I was *Iago* when I wrote it, not my cold-blooded self; his opinion of the "guinea-hen" influenced me when I said "she was bolder than her father supposed." My own notion is that in the very extravagance of innocence she exclaimed impulsively, I wish "that Heaven had made me such a man," not appreciating the dan-

¹ At Mr. H. H. Furness's desire, my father had aided him in compiling his *Variorum* on Shakspeare's plays by explaining many points in his own interpretation of Shaksperian characters.

gerous nature of her words, and even when she said "if I had a friend that loved her," etc., it was in courtesy, not inconsistent with the paddling of palms, which was a common custom of the time, and thought innocent—except by *Jago*. I think that *Othello*, as guileless and impulsive as *Desdemona*, mistook her meaning for his "cue," or "hint," to speak. I am sure, too, that she burned with shame when she realized what she had unconsciously done in the way of wooing, and maybe cried herself to sleep that night; but for all that she did not refuse the suit of him whose mental beauty was affined to her own. She saw *Othello's* visage in his mind; had she not been similarly endowed she might have been fascinated as school-girls are by actors, preachers, and the like, asked his autograph, giggled, and said, "Yes," to repeat at leisure. She never repented her love and marriage, not though it killed her father; even in her own death she was firm in her devotion to him, to whose "honors and valiant parts" she had consecrated her very soul. (I might say something here anent the "marriage of true minds," but I forget the passage.) She was not the darling "daisy" we see upon the stage, in white satin of the latest cut, and wax pearls, gabbling the precious text by rote; but a true woman, with a mind of her own, a deathly devotion to the man of her choice, and as pure and artless as a baby. 'T is absurd for me to say this to you, who know more of Shakspeare in a moment than I've learned in thirty years, but that note of mine (or rather *Iago's* comment on it) distresses me, and I want you to understand me rightly. I am slow at expression, and get awfully mixed at times, frequently conveying the very opposite idea to what I intend, and often forget the very gist of my subject. But this you will understand and believe of me: if my notions concerning the two characters of Shakspeare that I have given any thought to "have any power to move you" to the pursuit of your great object, I am happily rewarded, and ask "no do it of usance" for my twaddle in the form of commendation other than your own, privately given, proud as I would be if merely glanced at in the progress of your work. Now 't is daylight, and I am going to bed—with my gaberdine about me, and will cuddle up with *Shylock* till I lose him in sleep. I wish I could describe to you the white-lipped, icy smile, the piercing glance at *Othello's* half-averted face, and the eager utterance with which my father spoke the lines "Ay, there 's the point: as to be bold with you," etc., but I cannot; and if I could at any time, I would not attempt to do so now—I'm too sleepy. . . .

Thine own,

EDWIN BOOTH.

TO HORACE H. FURNESS.

NEWPORT, June 30, 1885.

MY DEAR FURNESS: . . . I fear that I can be of no service to you in dealing with the "Merchant." Somehow I can feel no sort of inspiration or spirituality in the atmosphere of that play. *Shylock* seems so earthy that the little gleams of light that I have perceived while acting some other parts are absent, and I can see no more than what is clear to the "naked eye." However, I will tug at him during the summer; in the mean time let me be assured that you are bravely and cheerfully "pegging away" at "Othello." . . .

Affectionately yours,
EDWIN BOOTH.

TO HIS DAUGHTER.

NEW YORK, January 5, 1888.

. . . I have seen Rose several times, and shall say good-by to-morrow. I do all I can for her, but nothing on earth can render her lonely life less weary, poor soul! As for God's reward for what I have done, I can hardly appreciate it; 't is more like punishment for misdeeds (of which I've done many) than grace for good ones (if I've done any). Homelessness is the actor's fate; physical incapacity to attain what is most required and desired by such a spirit as I am slave to. If there be rewards, I certainly am well paid, but hard schooling in life's thankless lessons has made me somewhat of a philosopher, and I've learned to take the buffets and rewards of fortune with equal thanks, and in suffering all to suffer—I won't say *nothing*, but comparatively *little*. Dick Stoddard wrote a poem called "The King's Bell," which fits my case exactly (you may have read it). He dedicated it to Lorimer Graham, who never knew an unhappy day in his brief life, instead of to me, who never knew a really happy one. You must n't suppose from this that I'm ill in mind or body: on the contrary, I am well enough in both; nor am I a pessimist. I merely wanted you to know that the sugar of my life is bitter-sweet; perhaps not more so than every man's whose experience has been above and below the surface. . . . Business has continued large, and increases a little every night; the play will run two weeks longer. Sunday, at four o'clock, I start for Baltimore, arriving there at ten o'clock. . . .

To-morrow, a meeting of actors, managers, and artists at breakfast, to discuss and organize, if possible, a theatrical club¹ like the *Garrick* of London. . . .

TO THE SAME.

NEW YORK, November 14, 1888.

. . . I could not write yesterday, as I intended, for the whole day was a whirl until long after midnight. Your most welcome portrait came to greet

me first,—the previous day, in fact,—and that pleased me very much. It does not do you justice, but 't is a fine piece of work. Flowers and fruits from many quarters, a little gold pencil from D—, and some silk handkerchiefs from Barrett. I must have had a hundred dozen silk handkerchiefs given me at various times by different persons. . . .

I've had an irreparable loss in the midst of all this fun; the dear little knife your mother gave me twenty-seven years ago, and which I've always carried about with me, is gone! I think I dropped it at supper Saturday night . . . at Delmonico's; they have searched in vain for it. I never missed anything so much. The pictures of babies amuse and delight every one that calls, and to all of whom I exhibit them. . . .

TO OLIVER J. LAY.

HOFFMAN HOUSE, Dec. 26, 1888.

MY DEAR MR. LAY: I have heard that some of my friends among the "Players" desire to compliment me by placing a portrait of myself (in character) on the wall of the club reading-room, as a surprise for me on the opening night, and that your *Hamlet* has been suggested for that purpose.

On some other occasion I could not decline such a manifestation of good feeling; but under present circumstances—while the house is yet my own, to be presented by me to others—I shrink from the indelicacy I should be guilty of were I to permit any conspicuous portrait of myself to be exhibited. Therefore I request your non-compliance with the wishes of my over-zealous friends, who, no doubt, will consider me morbidly sensitive on the subject. I may be so, but 't is my nature, and no effort of mine can overcome my aversion of anything suggestive of self-glorification, which a prominent portrait of myself on such an occasion would evince.

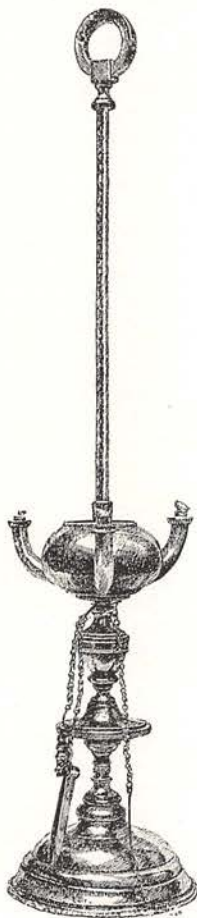
Since the secret has "leaked out," and I am no longer a stranger to their diabolical (?) plot, I shall request the gentlemen who are interested in the well-meant compliment to spare my blushes till some future time, when the property will be theirs to decorate as it may please them best. I have written to acquaint you with my feelings on this subject, which I am sure you will respect. Very truly yours, EDWIN BOOTH.

TO HIS DAUGHTER.

THE PLAYERS, 16 GRAMERCY PARK,
NEW YORK, Jan. 1, 1889.

Happie Newe Yeaere! God bless you, darling, and all of you! The thought of your not being

¹ This resulted in my father's founding The Players' Club, which was ready and inaugurated at the close of that same year.



ANTIQUE ROMAN BRASS
LAMP USED IN "RICHELIEU."

well alone marred my full enjoyment of last night's delightful success — the culmination of my professional hopes. I cannot describe the universal joy that pervaded all hearts present, the sympathy expressed, and the entire success of everything — except my speech. I broke down toward the close of it, but it passed off with *éclat*. Everything else was *perfect* — the clock, with deep cathedral tones tolled twelve in the midst of Barrett's reading of your blessed letter — just in time, as though it had been prearranged. White, the architect, went into ecstasies at the success of everything, and exclaimed, "Even the log burned without smoking," which we feared it would do in the new chimney.

I suspected that Barrett had a poem to read, but the dear letter was a happy surprise, and the wreath and your apt quotation on the card were delightful.¹ You got as much applause as I did. I wired Dr. Parsons of his success. Several were here from Boston. Harry Burnett and Mr. Wendell, Fairchild, and others, were prevented from coming; so was Furness, so was Jefferson, but all sent messages. Barrett and I got to bed about 5 o'clock this A. M., but got little sleep; we both feel wretched in consequence. The papers are full of it, but I've not had a chance yet to read them. Since I rose at 1 o'clock I have been busy packing my things at the hotel to bring here, as we both concluded to pass the balance of the week "at home." When we get *well set*, we will have a "lady's" day for *you*. My head is now in a whirl, of course. Old Mr. Connor and Murdock, with other old actors, were present. Judge Daly just interrupted me; sends his love, and has ordered his lunch. Several of the best men of New York are here, and it will, no doubt, be the rendezvous of the choicest. Some are in the library reading, and it really seems as if we had been going for years instead of one day. All the exclusive neighbors in this most conservative quarter are pleased instead of offended by the innovation of a club-house in the midst of their respective mansions, as they were at first. All believe, as I do, that this will be of more real benefit to the actor than anything ever done in the world. . . . Only old distinguished actors are "on the free list." . . . The list is overfull, and we must go slowly now, lest we exclude the actors we want. Our list of membership is too small in its limits at present. The walls are filled with pictures, mostly mine,² and my books just filled one section of the cases, which soon will be entirely filled; every day some gift comes. An anonymous lady sent a fine crayon copy of a Shakspeare, and other things come from strangers. The affair has aroused the greatest sympathy for the cause, to my great surprise and delight. This is all I can tell you now, and I am too hurried and nervous to review my letter, so you must guess at what my mistakes mean.

God bless you all a thousand times!

¹ I had sent a wreath of laurel, asking Mr. Barrett to place it upon my father's brow on this great occasion. I attached to the wreath on a card the words, "Hamlet, King, Father."

² Portraits of celebrated actors, and many valuable

I hope you are well again and very happy. I go to Pittsburg from here, — one of the Baltimore weeks, as per printed tour, — then to Baltimore, then Boston. God bless you! Papa.

TO THE SAME.

DETROIT, April 14, 1890.

. . . Yes; it is indeed most gratifying to feel that age has not rendered my work stale and tiresome, as is usually the case with actors (especially tragedians) at my time. Your dear mother's fear was that I would culminate too early, as I seemed then to be advancing so rapidly. Somehow I can't rid myself of the belief that both she and my father helped me. But as for the compensation? Nothing of fame or fortune can compensate for the spiritual suffering that one possessing such qualities has to endure. To pass life in a sort of dream, where "nothing is but what is not," — a loneliness in the very midst of a constant crowd, as it were, — is not a desirable condition of existence, especially when the body also has to share the "penalty of greatness," as it is termed. Bosh! I'd sooner be an obscure farmer, a hayseed from Wayback, or a cabinet-maker,³ as my father advised, than the most distinguished man on earth. But Nature cast me for the part she found me best fitted for, and I have had to play it, and must play it till the curtain falls. But you must not think me sad about it. No; I am used to it, and am contented.

I continue well, and act with a vigor which sometimes surprises myself, and all the company notice it, and comment upon it. I'm glad the babes had a jolly birthday. Bless 'em! Love for all.

TO THE SAME.

"THE PLAYERS," March 22, 1891.

DEAR DAUGHTER: I'm in no mood for letter-writing to-day. The shock,⁴ so sudden and so distressing, and the gloomy, depressing weather, entirely unfit me for the least exertion — even to think. Hosts of friends, all eager to assist poor Mrs. Barrett, seem helpless in confusion, and all the details of the sad business seem to be huddled on her. . . .

General Sherman's son, "Father Tom," as he is affectionately called by all the family and the friends of the dear old general, will attend. He was summoned from Europe recently to his father's deathbed, and he happens to be in time to perform services for his father's friend, poor Lawrence. After the services to-morrow at 10 A. M., the remains and a few friends will go direct to Cohasset for burial Tuesday, where Barrett had only two weeks ago placed his mother; removed from her New York grave to a family lot, which he had recently purchased at Cohasset. He had also enlarged his house there, where he intended to pass his old age in privacy. . . . I have not seen Lawrence since death; when I saw him Thursday he was in a burning fever, and asked me to

paintings owned and presented by my father to the club.

³ My father has often related that his father was opposed to his being an actor, and desired him to learn a trade, like cabinet-making.

⁴ Mr. Lawrence Barrett's death.

keep away for fear his breath might affect me, and it pained him to talk. He pulled through three acts of "De Mauprat" the night before, and sent for his wife that night. His death was very peaceful, with no sign of pain. A couple of weeks ago he and I were to meet General Sherman at dinner: death came instead. To-night Barrett had invited about twenty distinguished men to meet me at Delmonico's, and again the grim guest attends. . . .

My room is like an office of some state official; letters, telegrams, and callers come every moment, some on business, many in sympathy. Three hours have elapsed since I finished the last sentence, and I expect a call from Bromley before I retire. A world of business matters have been disturbed by this sudden break of contracts with actors and managers, and everything pertaining to next season, as well as much concerning the balance of the present one, must be rearranged or canceled. I, of course, am free; but for the sake of the company I shall fulfil my time, to pay their salaries, this week here; and next week in Brooklyn, as they were engaged by Barrett for my engagement. After which they will be out of employment for the balance of the season. . . .
Papa.

TO THE SAME.

NEW YORK, March 15, 1893.

. . . It seems a most difficult task for me to write a simple letter, even to spell. I don't know what is the cause; I certainly am much better than I was, in all respects, until I attempt to write, when all my wits seem to go astray, and my nerves get beyond control. Several days have gone without my having had energy to write more than a telegram to you, which I did also yesterday. If I could take exercise, I believe I should gradually grow stronger. My 'lectric doctors are now reduced to two; I formerly had four a day. After breakfast I take a paper and lie on my sofa in the back room, where I get most sunlight, till about 3:30 or 4 o'clock, when I dine a little, and after go to Carryl's or Bispham's, or to the play, in order to get a vain hope for an interest in the theater. My deafness is so much increased that I don't hear a word that is spoken on the stage. . . . I won't promise any more, but I'll try to finish this badly begun letter in the morning. 'T is quite late now, eight and a half, at least; just my bedtime, and dear old Harry stays with me, to tuck me up, and say

good night, till the last, every night. I miss you all very much, but am glad you escaped this bad weather.

March 16. Good morning, my little ones! Only 't is nearly evening again; the way I let time slip away is a caution to babies. I left this letter to mama last night, meaning to finish it for her this morning: but 't is now nearly to-morrow evening ahead, and I'm just about awake, and have only just scratched a few lines addressed to my good little "Babes in the Woods" way down South, where 't is nice and warm, amongst the birds and flowers. Here 't is just as cold as winter still. I'm really cold and shivering while I try to write. . . . I hope you are still all well. If you are always as good as you are now, and have been this summer, I'm sure the good angels will take good guard of you, and bring you all to our happy home in New York, to see grandpa, who is anxious to see his old babies again. Now, you see, I've managed to write two letters for you (you and mama in one, you see). That 's for waiting so long. . . .

TO THE SAME.

"THE PLAYERS," NEW YORK,

Tuesday, 4:30 P. M., April 17, 1893.

DEAR DAUGHTER: I rose very late this morning, and brought with me an all-night and permanent headache, which still sways me after a long nap on the sofa till just now; I hope to get rid of it, and be soon with you for a while this evening. Will send for coupé; am sorry that I did not send word earlier. Very sorry your cold is worse, but am glad that you take care of it, and have stayed in-doors, for it seems quite cold here.

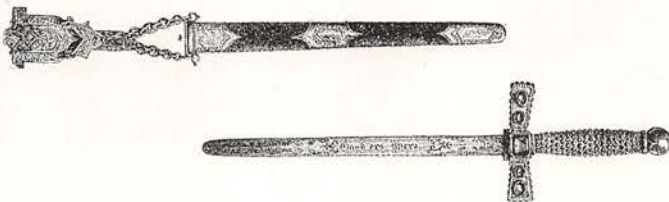
If I should not get out, don't worry; I am quite well, except my stupid headache, that will perhaps keep me in the house. Nothing worse. I hope 't is better with you, and nothing worse with you all.

God bless you! Papa.

The above is my father's last letter to me; on the following morning he was taken ill (Wednesday, April 18).

On the previous evening he came to my house, as usual, to dinner, and although very feeble, he seemed bright, and spoke of his pleasure in still being able to come to us.

Edwina Booth Grossmann.



DAGGER AND SHEATH WORN BY BOOTH IN "HAMLET." HANDLE STUDDED WITH BOHEMIAN GARNETS AND TOPAZES; STEEL BLADE ENGRAVED ON ONE SIDE WITH THE BOOTH MOTTO, "QUOD ERO SPERO"; ON REVERSE WITH HIS NAME AND DATE, "EDWIN BOOTH, 1866."