EDWIN BOOTH.

THE RECORD OF HIS LIFE AND WORKS.

BY WILLIAM WINTER.

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Edwin Booth was born near Baltimore, Maryland, on November 13, 1833. He was the fourth son of Junius Brutus Booth—a name as brilliant in the annals of the American stage as that of Edmund Kean, whose rival he was, in the annals of the stage of England. The elder Booth was then thirty-seven years old, had been for seventeen years an actor, and was in the meridian of his life, his greatness, and his fame. Between him and Edwin there existed from the first a deep and fervent though undemonstrative sympathy. As Edwin grew up his close companionship seemed to be more and more needed and desired by his father, and so it happened that he was frequently taken from school to accompany the great actor in professional expeditions. The early training that he received was fitful and superficial. Experience of the world, however, and sometimes rough experience, combined with irregular schooling to develop his mind and mature his character. As a boy he was grave beyond his years, observant, thoughtful, appreciative of his surroundings and especially reticent. At an early age he began to travel with his father, and indeed was the chosen guardian of that wild, strange, original genius, possessing a greater influence over him than was exercised by any other person. That association, operating upon hereditary talent, wrought its inevitable result in making Edwin Booth an actor. The strange life that he saw and led—a life in which fictitious emotions, imaginative influences and every-day trivialities are singularly blended—exerted its charm upon a sensitive youth, at once alluring him toward the stage and preparing him for its profession.

HIS ENTRANCE UPON A THEATRICAL CAREER ACCIDENTAL.

Edwin Booth's immediate entrance upon a theatrical career was made precipitately, and was accidental. It occurred at the Museum in Boston, on September 10, 1849. The elder Booth was then fulfilling an engagement there—the last but one that he played in Boston—and his son was with him. "Richard III," Cibber's version, had been cast, and the prompter of the theatre, to whom was allotted the minor part of Tressel, desirous to be left out of the bill, persuaded Edwin to take his place. That arrangement was made without the knowledge of the father, nor until the night before the announced performance did he learn that his son designed to appear; and he did not approve of the design when at length he became aware of it. From the first, indeed, and for a long time, the elder Booth opposed his son's adoption of the stage. Nevertheless Edwin drifted into that pursuit and persevered in it, and soon his father became reconciled to his course. The Museum appearance attracted only a momentary attention, but that effort was speedily followed by more ambitious attempts. At Providence, R. I., in the same season, the young aspirant played Cassio, in "Othello," and Wilford, in "The Iron Chest"—his personation of the latter part being accounted especially meritorious and auspicious. At the Arch Street Theatre, Philadelphia, then managed by Edmon S. Connor, his performance of Wilford met with particular approbation. Another of his juvenile efforts in which careful observers discerned the germ of excellence was his embodiment of Titus, in John Howard Payne's tragedy of "Brutus." Once, in Washington, when the elder Booth enacted the lion-hearted hero of that tragedy, Payne was one of the audience and he expressed cordial approbation of Edwin Booth as Titus.

For more than two years, in a desultory manner, acting with his father in various cities of the Eastern States, the beginner continued to advance. His first appearance on the New-York stage was made at that time, as also was his first attempt in the character of Richard III. The first of those events occurred on September 27, 1850, at the National Theatre, Chatham-st., where he played Wilford, to his father as Sir Edward Mortimer. The second occurred at the same theatre in 1851, when at his father's command and on a night set apart for his father's benefit he undertook Richard. Only a brief notice was given to him. The Richmond was John R. Scott, a tragic actor of approved talent who once enjoyed a considerable repute. Illness was assigned by the elder Booth as the cause of his withdrawal from the bill; but it was surmised that the illness had been feigned in order that Edwin might suddenly be put to a severe practical test. Hastily conceived and rendered possible by a concurrence of accidents, the experiment was carried through with not unnatural precipitation. While the young actor was putting on the garments of Gloster a friend stood near him, holding the play-book and hearing his recital of the part, to make sure that he was possessed of the text and to refresh his memory wherever it should be at fault. No announcement was made of a change in the cast, and no preliminary explanation was given to the audience. Not until Edwin stood upon the stage and the vigorous applause intended for his father had abruptly lapsed into silence did the gravity of the situation appear. The assemblage, which was numerous, received the new Gloster with surprise and coldness. An eager throng had gathered to see a famous tragedian in his most characteristic embodiment. It might well have been astonished at sight of the stripling in place of the giant. Its behavior, however, was considerate and generous. As the performance proceeded the identity of the actor became manifest, and so did his unexpected power and brilliancy. Pleasure soon succeeded to surprise, and honest and hearty approval finally rewarded a courageous effort. Edwin was called out at the end of the play, and Scott, who led him forward, responded to the public greeting and spoke the gratitude of the adventurous performer.

THE ELDER BOOTH TAKES HIS SONS TO CALIFORNIA.

Those were the first steps. It was in California though that the hardest work of Edwin Booth's early professional life was performed, and there his first substantial success was gained. His eldest brother, Junius, had visited California, and had brought home rosy reports of the opportunities afforded there for the rapid acquisition of wealth. It was his conviction that his father would have great prosperity in that Eldorado—where yet the gold fever of 1849 was epidemic—and he strongly urged the wisdom of a visit to that region. The plan did not at once commend itself to the elder tragedian, but ultimately, though with reluctance, he adopted it. When free from the baleful insanity which lurked in his noble nature, and sometimes grievously afflicted it, the elder Booth was a man of sweet and delicate temperament, sympathetic with whatever is best of refinement and dignity in old civilization, and he was therefore averse to contact with the asperities incidental to a new and raw state of society. Hence perhaps arose the apprehensive solicitude with which he now shrunk from the untried, turbulent field of venture thus opened before him. A dark presentiment may have mingled with that feeling—a foreboding which was justified by the event, when at length he had journeyed to the Golden Gate. That expedition was made in July, 1852. Edwin had been left at home, but the father soon stopped and sent back for his son, and together they proceeded to San Francisco. Booth's stay in California lasted three months. His first engagement, two weeks and a half, was played at the Jenny Lind Theatre, San Francisco, and it was remunerative both in reputation and profit. Edwin and Junius were members of the stock company. From San Francisco the party went to Sacramento, but there the enterprise failed—all the money that had been earned in the one place being lost in the other. During their stay in Sacramento the father and the sons took each a benefit. For that of Edwin "Venice Preserved" was chosen—the elder Booth playing Pierre and Edwin playing Jaffier. It had long been the stage custom to dress Jaffier in a black velvet tunic and consonant trappings, not unlike the garb that is worn by Hamlet. Seeing the youth in that dress his father looked at him curiously and sadly, and at last said, "You look like Hamlet: why didn't you play that part for your benefit?" "I will, if I ever have another," the young actor answered. That scene and those words came back upon his memory in later days, when the opportunity came for him to play Hamlet and when, in fulfilment of an implied pledge to his dead father, he acted that part, which proved the chief means of his development, his fortune, and his fame, and the chief incentive to the affectionate admiration of his countrymen.

EARLY WANDERINGS.

A BITTER ORDEAL FOR THE YOUNG ACTOR.

In October, 1852, the elder Booth bade farewell to his sons and set forth on his homeward journey. Before parting with Edwin, whom he had determined to leave in California, he spoke to him gravely and indicated the necessity of learning the art of acting amid circumstances of comparative independence.

The elder Booth travelled to New-Orleans and there filled an engagement—the last that he was destined to play—at the St. Charles Theatre, ending it on November 19, 1852, with Sir Edward Mortimer and John Lump, in "The Iron Chest" and "The Review." He then embarked aboard a Mississippi steamboat, the Cheneworth, for Cincinnati. At starting there was rain and he got wet and caught a cold. That illness he only so far observed as to retire to his cabin and his bed, where he lay, in silence and alone, for more than forty-eight hours, worn out with care, labor and pain and with the struggle of his own self-torturing spirit, but to the last patient, reticent, firm, and unwilling to be a burden or an annoyance to any one. When at last he was visited he was found to be dying. His death occurred on November 30, 1852, in the fifty-seventh year of his age. (He was born on May 1, 1796, in St. Pancras Parish, London.) His body was brought home for burial and his grave is in a cemetery at Baltimore, marked by a monument to his memory, erected by Edwin Booth, who devoted to that filial duty the gains of the first successful engagement that he played after returning to the East.

Much intervened before that return. The California period of Edwin Booth's career—inclusive of a trip to Australia and the Sandwich Islands—extended from the summer of 1852 to the autumn of 1856. At first, after his father's departure, there was a brief period of waiting. Then he got an engagement with D. W. Waller to act at Nevada and Grass Valley, playing various parts in various pieces. Mr. Waller was the star. During that engagement Edwin acted Iago for the first time. It proved an unfortunate engagement, attended by bad business, weary travelling, storms and general discomfort, and terminating in disaster.

Booth, now penniless, managed to make his way to Sacramento, and thence to San Francisco, where he arrived in a forlorn condition. His brother Junius had received later intelligence from home. Their father's body had been sent to Baltimore and laid in the grave. Their mother's wants were not to be considered. If they saw good fortune in California they would do well to remain there. That was the counsel from home, and by that they determined to abide.

WINNING FAME IN THE GOLDEN STATE.

Edwin Booth now became a member of a dramatic company under his brother's management, to play "utility" parts at a theatre called the San Francisco Hall. Farces and burlesques were given at that place, and in those the ready and versatile player took an active share. One of his hits at that time was made as Dandy Cox, in a negro farce produced by the Chapman Family. Another was his personation of Plume, a local celebrity, whom he reproduced in a farce, and so well reproduced that the "counterfeit presentment" proved both popular and remunerative. Mr. Plume was pleased to signify approval, and to show the sincerity of his satisfaction by sending to the actor his hat, coat, and gaiters. A more important success was made by Booth at the same time in Shakespeare's Petruchio, which he then first acted.

Step by step in that little theatre he toiled upward. The work was hard, the discipline irksome, the drudgery various and incessant; but this was valuable experience. One night, for the benefit of a comrade, he acted Richard III. The success was magical. The city rang with his praises. Even the phlegmatic Junius was surprised and delighted at that outburst of tragic power, and he straightway advised his brother's appearance in a series of the great characters of Shakespeare. Most of them Booth had studied. Many of them he had seen, as acted by his father, from whom it was his privilege to learn and to whose genius and example he was ever deeply indebted. He accepted the opportunity and he proved equal to it. Richard was followed by Sir Giles Overreach, and that by Macbeth, and those impersonations caused a popular excitement unprecedented in the dramatic life of California. Crowded houses applauded him. The generous if not always judicious enthusiasm of the Press encouraged and cheered him. The sympathy of brother actors stimulated him to new exertions. He became the favorite of the theatre-going public and made an impression on the stage of his time which was deep, strong, true and destined to endure.

A TRIP TO AUSTRALIA WITH LAURA KEENE.

A new theatre, the Metropolitan, was presently opened near the San Francisco Hall, with Catherine Sinclair (Mrs. Edwin Forrest—obiit June, 1891) as manager, and Mr. James E. Murdock as the first star. The new house—handsome, well appointed and managed by an intellectual and accomplished woman—soon captivated the popular fancy. Public attention was diverted from the old theatre; the business there grew bad; the company dwindled; the place was finally abandoned to negro minstrelsy; and Edwin Booth—after taking service at the Metropolitan for about one year—determined to go to Australia. That was in 1854. The Australian trip, including an episode of professional experience at the Sandwich Islands, the Samoan Islands, and Tahiti, occupied nine months. Booth was accompanied by D. C. Anderson and Laura Keene; and it was arranged that those three were to constitute the nucleus of a company to act in Sydney, Melbourne, and wherever else the star of adventure should guide them.

Arrived at Sydney the dramatic adventurers soon found an opening. Booth made his first appearance as Shylock—acting that part for the first time—and played a successful engagement. Then the party proceeded to Melbourne, where they were less fortunate and where Booth's association with Laura Keene was ended. Finally the actor took passage for San Francisco, in a vessel that was to stop at the Sandwich Islands. Accompanied by Anderson, John Roe, and a few other players, he landed at Honolulu, hired the only theatre in the town and remained there two months—producing "Richard III," "The Lady of Lyons" and other pieces. Roe who possessed skill in the delineation of female characters, acted Pauline. Most of the dramatic company slept in hammocks rigged up in the theatre. Booth himself went about and pasted his posters on the walls—not to save expense, but because he found that the native boys whom he employed to do the work ate the paste (poipoi) and threw away the playbills. Some prosperity rewarded the actor's enterprise, but not much, and he presently concluded to return to San Francisco. On his arrival there Catherine Sinclair offered him an engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre, where he reappeared, playing Benedick in "Much Ado." At a later date Booth and that actress formed a partnership to travel and act, which was distinguished by one incident of interest—the first production in America of the drama of the "Marble Heart." Catherine Sinclair was the original Marco in this country, Booth the original Raphael, and Mr. Henry Sedley, son of the Boston actor, W. H. Sedley Smith, the original Volage. That novelty, as it then was, met with "acceptance bounteous" and its presentation, which occurred at Sacramento, was the most important event of the dramatic season of 1855 in California.

FOLLOWED BY FIRE ON THE PACIFIC COAST.

The partnership soon ended and Booth then started on other wanderings. This time he journeyed from Sacramento into the adjacent mountains with a strolling manager named Moulton, who had organized a dramatic company and provided a wagon for its transportation, and also a brass band to make music by the way. Booth travelled on horseback, halting now and then to act, and so making the mountain circuit. The expedition met with fluctuating public favor but it was uniformly attended by one startling incident: Each town took fire as soon as Moulton's cavalcade had left it, and so regularly did this lurid phenomenon recur that at last it became the theme of general remark and speculation, and Booth was known and mentioned as "The Fiery Star." It was an epithet of ill-omen, but as a warning it served him well. Ignorant and lonely communities are superstitious and dangerously impulsive. There was no obvious link between the strollers and the fires, but somehow the logic of the mountaineers deduced the one from the other, and travel became unsafe for Moulton's caravan. At Downieville Booth found such reason for solicitude as to his personal safety that he deemed it judicious to go immediately out of the town. The discreet manager, having private reasons to dread the sheriff, followed that example. Indeed, he improved upon it—for he ran away not only from Downieville but from his company. The band ceased to blow, the actors dispersed, the driver of the wagon seized Booth's horse as security for the money owed to him by the manager, and "the fiery star" seemed to be quenched. He still retained a few trinkets, though, and of those he made the best use. Hardships had to be endured; but hardships were not new to him and youth can endure much. Without a cent the tragedian drifted back to Sacramento, tired of painful vicissitudes and unrequited toil.

Thoughts of home and longings for a more refined field of labor had now begun to color his moods and sway his purpose. He wished to return to the East and it was not long before the wish became a possibility. In Sacramento he found friendship, counsel, and practical assistance. Two benefit performances were arranged for him, in succession, and both were successful—a result largely due to the heart and zeal of his friend, M. P. Butler, a generous soul, since called from earth, who labored in his cause with devoted assiduity and aroused and stimulated the theatrical community to give him, at parting, a substantial mark of good-will. A cheering crowd accompanied him to the riverside and saw him embarked. At San Francisco he had another benefit; and once more he exchanged a farewell greeting with the California public. On that occasion and for the first time he acted King Lear. His departure from California occurred in September, 1856.

RETURNING HOME.

GOOD FORTUNE ATTENDS HIM IN THE EAST.

Booth made his first appearance, after coming to the Atlantic coast, at the Front Street Theatre, Baltimore, and from that place he made a rapid tour of the South, playing successful engagements in the large cities of that region. Washington, Richmond, Charleston, New-Orleans, Mobile and Memphis were among the capitals that opened their arms to receive him, and in all of them he laid foundations of solid reputation, "whole as the marble, founded as the rock." In Richmond he met for the first time Miss Mary Devlin, the lady who afterward became his wife.

The most important of the series of performances by which Booth endeavored to revive, in the Atlantic States, the memory and lustre of a great name was given at Boston. The playgoers of that city were remarkable in those days for refinement of taste and severity of judgment, and the actor looked forward to his appearance there with trepidation. Should it prove a failure, he was determined to subside into "the stock." Should it prove a success, he would, perhaps, press on to the fulfilment of more ambitious designs than he had yet disclosed. But his belief was that his success as a star would last only for one or two seasons, and the utmost that he expected, in those days, was that he might become a leading actor in a New-York theatre. Booth appeared at the Boston Theatre in April, 1857, in the character of Sir Giles Overreach, and gained a triumph. It was the turning-point of his career. It banished self-distrust; it confirmed him in a hopeful estimate of his talents; and it strengthened his resolve to attempt those magnificent enterprises for the advancement of the stage which he afterward pursued with results so valuable to art.

From Boston Booth proceeded to New-York. Injudicious and unauthorized announcements had been put forth in advance of his coming—ostentatious placards, made by an agent, which apprised the public that the mantle of the father had fallen upon the son, and that "Richard's himself again." Those ebullitions of misguided enthusiasm caused the tragedian deep mortification. He had intended to begin with Sir Giles Overreach; but as Richard III was promised he kept faith with the public and appeared in that character. That was at Burton's Metropolitan Theatre, May 14, 1857. Ireland, in his copious and valuable "Records of the New-York Stage," says that Booth played Richard, on that occasion, "with a brilliancy and force that surpassed the warmest expectations of his friends," and that he "gave evidence of the highest order of talent and created a sensation hitherto unequalled by any native-born actor, Forrest alone excepted." During that engagement he acted Richard III, Sir Giles Overreach, Richelieu, Shylock, Lear, Romeo, Hamlet, Claude Melnotte, Sir Edward Mortimer, Petruchio, St. Pierre, The Stranger, Lucius Brutus and Pescara.

MR. BOOTH MARRIES MISS MARY DEVLIN.

On August 31, 1857 he again appeared at the Metropolitan Theatre, and by another series of impersonations increased the multitude of his friendly admirers. For some time after that the tragedian wandered in the West and South. In the summer of 1859 he was betrothed to Miss Mary Devlin, and in New-York on July 7, 1860, they were married; and shortly afterward they sailed for England. That marriage was happy. The lady was one of those gentle and cheerful creatures, the incarnation of sunshine, who by the unconscious loveliness of their lives seem born for the purpose of teaching happiness and hope to the sadder mortals around them. She possessed the winning charm of soft, seductive personal grace. Her mind was imaginative, tasteful, sensible and well cultivated. She was an excellent musician and a pleasing actress. Her brief existence diffused a sweet influence and left a tender memory.

She accompanied her husband to England, where they remained till September, 1862. Their daughter, Edwina, was born at Fulham, London, December 9, 1861. On their return to America they established their home at Dorchester, Mass. The health of Mrs. Booth had become impaired; but she was not thought to be seriously ill when her husband parted from her, to fulfil professional engagements making it necessary for him to travel. They never met again. Her illness took a sudden and dangerous turn; she sank rapidly and died on February 21, 1863. Her grave is at Mount Auburn.

LONDON AND NEW-YORK.

HIS FIRST ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLAND.

Edwin Booth's first engagement in London was played at the Haymarket Theatre, under the management of J. B. Buckstone, in September, 1861. At the suggestion of the manager and contrary to his own plan and desire he began as Shylock. The public received him kindly, but actors and critics were cold. He then acted Sir Giles Overreach and he closed the engagement with Richelieu. In the latter character he aroused enthusiasm. Mr. Buckstone regretted, too late, that he had opposed the tragedian's design of beginning with that part.

From London he went to Liverpool and Manchester, but he did not win favor in either of those cities. The Civil War beginning to darken over the American Republic, and a lively dislike for "Yankees" was prevalent in those capitals. Booth felt the force of that sentiment. He therefore made no further trial of fortune in England, but after a trip to Paris returned home with his wife and daughter and resumed his place in his native land.

The Metropolitan Theatre—in Broadway, opposite to the end of Bond-st.—had become the Winter Garden. The manager was T. B. Jackson, long since dead. The acting manager was the Momus of the banquet hall, William Stuart, whose true name was Edmund O'Flaherty—a man of wayward life and intellectual brilliancy, and a remarkable exemplification of Irish sentiment and humor. That personage was destined to exercise some influence upon Booth's fortunes. Their first meeting had taken place several years before, at Wallack's Theatre—the house in Broadway, near the corner of Broome-st.—on the occasion of a performance for the benefit of H. C. Jarrett, when E. L. Davenport acted Othello, Booth acted Iago and Mr. Stuart managed the enterprise. They now met again, in more intimate business relations. Booth made his first appearance on September 29, 1862, and with that date began an important period of his professional life—a period that witnessed the practical utilization of the popularity he had previously gained, in the establishment of his reputation as a tragic actor of the first order. That result was brought about by means that are obviously sagacious but are difficult of practice—the conspicuous presentation of his best works in the best style. He appeared only in good parts; he played them under only good circumstances; he attracted and held the public attention as the central figure in a series of magnificent revivals of the standard drama. The Winter Garden episode extended from September 29, 1862, to March 23, 1867. During the first engagement Booth acted, in rapid succession, Hamlet, Othello, Lucius Brutus, Shylock, Iago, Richelieu, Richard III, Romeo, Pescara, Sir Edward Mortimer, and Don Caesar de Bazan. His success was unbounded. The best class of playgoers in New-York attended his representations, and the discussion of them in the newspapers was conducted in a sympathetic and thoughtful spirit—showing that the chords of feeling in the community had been smitten with a strong hand.

THE DEATH OF MRS. BOOTH.

At the close of that engagement he made a professional tour of the country. On February 9, 1863, he returned to the Winter Garden and again appeared as Hamlet; but he was ill in mind and body and depressed by a presentiment of impending evil. The engagement, prematurely broken, lasted only till February 20 and comprised only eleven performances. On its last night the actor was summoned to the bedside of his dying wife. He went at once—but he reached home only to find its light extinguished, its music hushed, and its fair spirit departed. Thus once more a bitter bereavement laid upon his life the heavy burden of affliction and sorrow.

Booth now relinquished his Dorchester residence, bought a house in New-York, abandoned his profession and went into retirement, with his mother—contemplating a long seclusion from public life. As time wore on however he began to feel the necessity of occupation. The dreams and plans of his youth came back upon his mind; the wish to "shine in use" rather than to "rust unburnished" woke again and asserted its former power; and at length he determined to improve opportunities which then presented themselves of embarking with his brother-in-law, John S. Clarke, the celebrated comedian, in two theatrical enterprises of magnitude and importance. One of those was the purchase of the Walnut Street Theatre, Philadelphia; the other was the hiring of the Winter Garden Theatre, New-York. Both were speedily undertaken and they at once opened a field for the energetic exercise of great and various ability. In the management of the Philadelphia house Booth and Clarke were associated from the summer of 1863 till March, 1870, when the latter purchased his partner's interest. In the management of the Winter Garden they associated with themselves, at first as an agent, afterward as a lessee, William Stuart (long since dead), and by that triumvirate the theatre was conducted. Its first season under its new management began on September 21, 1863, when Booth reappeared as Hamlet. He was welcomed with cordiality, and he played a prosperous engagement—extending to October 17. Toward its close he acted, for the first time, Ruy Blas, in the drama of that name by Victor Hugo.

A GOLDEN TRIUMPH IN "THE FOOL'S REVENGE."

Wanderings, in the usual track, followed that period of metropolitan effort, but by the ensuing spring those had ended, and on March 28, 1864, he once more claimed the attention of the New-York public, appearing at Niblo's Theatre, and winning a golden triumph as Bertuccio, in "The Fool's Revenge."

He was also seen, during the engagement at Niblo's, as Raphael, in "The Marble Heart," which he then played for the first time in New-York—April 18, 1864. On the 16th he had acted Sir Edward Mortimer and Petruchio, for the benefit of the American Sanitary Fair; and for that cause he also joined in a production of Macbeth, with Charlotte Cushman as Lady Macbeth. The engagement terminated on the 22d, and he resumed his place at the Winter Garden.

PRINCE AND CARDINAL.

SUPERB SHAKESPEAREAN REVIVALS.

The 300th anniversary of Shakespeare's birthday, April 23, 1864, was celebrated by the production of "Romeo and Juliet," to increase the fund for erecting a monument to the poet in Central Park—James H. Hackett playing Falstaff, at Niblo's Garden, on the same night in aid of that cause. Booth continued to act at the Winter Garden till May 14, appearing as Hamlet, Othello, Richelieu and Richard III. A summer of preparation succeeded, with a view to the first of those dramatic pageants by which the tragedian did so much to delight and instruct the community, to dignify the American stage, and to gild his name with honor. "Hamlet" was brought out on November 21, 1864, and it kept the stage till March 24, 1865—greeted at the outset with enthusiasm and sustained to the end by a sincere public interest. That was the period that saw accomplished for "Hamlet" the celebrated run of 100 nights.

Booth's Hamlet, withdrawn from the Winter Garden on March 24, 1865, was immediately transferred to the Boston Theatre, and at that house the tragedian was acting when a little later—on the 14th of April—a sudden calamity overwhelmed and well-nigh ruined him. The people of America and the heart of all Christendom suffered in it a terrible shock and a bitter bereavement. Consternation, grief, and rage swept over the land. The excitement of that hour was wild and indiscriminate; the relatives of the maniac who took the life of President Lincoln suffered under the odium of unjust suspicion and popular resentment. The knowledge that a brother was thus steeped in guilt and ignominy was a heavy weight of woe to Edwin Booth. Immediate and superficial troubles incident to the hideous experience could be endured and surmounted; but the sense of the crime itself, as done in all its awful wickedness and madness by one of his own kin, imposed upon his sensitive, conscientious nature an acute, irremediable anguish. For a time his hard-earned reputation, the honor of his name and the station and repute of his family seemed destroyed. Life in the present was a blank, and beyond the present a waste of misery stretched into the future. He left the stage and buried himself in obscurity, and from that retirement he would never have emerged but for the stern necessity of fulfilling obligations incurred long before and now only to be met by his active resumption of professional industry. The softening influence of public sympathy, which presently began to set toward him in a strong tide of interest, made the duty of a reappearance more practicable and more tolerable than it could otherwise have been. Had there not existed, however, an imperative necessity that Edwin Booth should return to the stage he would never had acted again. He reappeared on January 3, 1866, at the Winter Garden in Hamlet. A great crowd welcomed him, and with such a welcome as might well have lightened the saddest heart. Nine cheers hailed the melancholy Dane upon his first appearance. The spectators rose and waved their handkerchiefs. Flowers were showered upon the stage. There was a tumult of applause; and the affectionate good-will that beamed in every face gave assurance deep and strong that the generous public had no intent to heap upon an innocent man the burden and blight of a brother's guilt. Wherever he appeared after that momentous return to the stage he found a free-hearted greeting and respectful sympathy, and so, little by little, he got back into the old way of life, and his professional career resumed its flow in the old channel.

A SUMPTUOUS PRODUCTION OF "RICHELIEU."

The second of these sumptuous revivals of the legitimate drama with which the name of Edwin Booth is inseparably associated was made after his return to the stage in 1866. Preparations for it had been begun prior to the disaster which led to his retirement. The play was "Richelieu," and it was brought forward on February first. The scenery, painted by Witham, Van Hanlein and Hilliard, made up a pageant of extraordinary splendor.

Booth's Richelieu—always a majestic figure—showed with singular distinctness and beauty amid those poetic accessories. In respect to magnificence and elaboration the effect of that revival was afterward surpassed in the production of "Richelieu" at Booth's Theatre in 1871, but the plan of it, fully matured and fairly tried, was followed as a model. It was on the occasion of that presentment of "Richelieu" that the expedient was first adopted of putting the court of Louis XIII into mourning, in act fifth, for the supposed death of the Cardinal. Booth's personation of Richelieu has, by many acute critics, been accounted his best work.

Affairs at the Winter Garden went on in the customary routine of theatrical life for another year. Most of the time Booth was absent, on professional expeditions. With the first days of 1867 came the maturity of another professional enterprise in which he had labored with zeal, and the result of which was seen in the sumptuous presentation of "The Merchant of Venice," made on January 28 of that year. The beautiful comedy was brought forward in a beautiful dress. Hilliard and Witham painted the scenes, from sketches made by Lentze. The chief pictures showed the Rialto, the Church of San Giovanni, the place of St. Mark, a hall in Portia's house and the Venetian Senate Chamber. Upon the walls of the latter hung copies of paintings by Tintoretto. The garden scene reflected the sweet sentiment and delicious langour of a summer landscape. Booth acted Shylock. The character is an embodied protest against cruel wrongs inflicted by a powerful oppressor upon an outlawed nation, and to the Jew, as a usurer and a hater, it would be impossible to render more adequate justice than was done in Booth's performance.

THE "HAMLET MEDAL" PRESENTED BY CITIZENS OF NEW-YORK.

It was during that engagement, on the night of January 22, 1867, that Booth received "the Hamlet Medal," an offering indicative of appreciation and respect, from many of the chief citizens of New-York, students of Shakespeare and friends of the stage. The presentation was made publicly at the close of the performance of "Hamlet" and in the presence of a great concourse of people. The stage was set to represent a drawing-room. Entering that room the presentation committee met the actor in the dress of Hamlet—the united bands of the principal theatres in New-York playing, meanwhile, the Danish National Hymn. Among the citizens who appeared on the stage were Admiral Farragut, Admiral Palmer, Major-General Robert Anderson, John T. Hoffman, then Governor of New-York; George Bancroft, Charles A. Dana, Judge C. P. Daly, Albert Bierstadt, Jervis McEntee and William Fullerton.

It is an oval medal made of gold, and is encircled with a gold serpent. In the centre is a head of Booth as Hamlet. At the top is the Danish crown, from which two wreaths are pendant, of laurel and myrtle. The pin to which the metal is attached bears, in the centre, a head of Shakespeare, and on either side are heads emblematic of comedy and tragedy. The motto is "Palmam qui meruit ferat," and the inscription is: "To Edwin Booth: In commemoration of the unprecedented run of 'Hamlet,' as enacted by him in New-York City for one hundred nights."

BOOTH'S THEATRE.

BURNING OF THE WINTER GARDEN.

The hour of doom for the Winter Garden Theatre was now at hand. By way of giving zest to the close of his engagements it had been Booth's custom to dedicate the final week in each of them to that variety which the public always approves. The custom was followed now. The last week of that engagement, in 1867, which was also the last in the record of the theatre, began on March 18. Booth played, on four successive nights, Pescara, Hamlet, Othello and Sir Giles, and on the fifth he appeared as Lucius Brutus. That was the night of March 22. Fire is used in one scene of Payne's tragedy, and this is thought to have been the cause of the disaster that followed. Toward morning, on the 23d, flames burst forth underneath the stage and thence spread so swiftly and raged with such fury that all efforts to save the property were baffled, and persons in the building had difficulty in saving their lives. In a few hours the theatre was a ruin. With it perished the scenery that had been provided for "Hamlet," "Richelieu" and "The Merchant of Venice," Booth's personal wardrobe, including several articles of stage-dress that had been worn by his father, a large and rich collection of stage dresses, a mass of theatrical furniture, valuable clothes and jewels owned by members of the dramatic company, a quantity of costly armor, a considerable library, inclusive of several important manuscripts, and an interesting gallery of theatrical portraits.

The Winter Garden was destroyed on March 23, 1867. The cornerstone of Booth's Theatre was laid on April 8, 1868, and the first performance in the new house occurred on February 3, 1869. The project for the new theatre was started by Edwin Booth shortly after the loss of the old one, and he presently entered into a partnership with Richard A. Robertson, of Boston (obiit 1891), for the establishment of Booth's Theatre. In the spring of 1867, Mr. J. H. Magonigle, their business representative—afterward the manager of the theatre—selected and purchased land on the southeast corner of Twenty-third-st. and Sixth-ave., New-York. The work was begun on July 1, in the same year.

A MASSIVE AND BEAUTIFUL BUILDING.

Booth's Theatre was made of granite. The front of the structure in Twenty-third-st. was 184 feet in length—the theatre front measuring 150 feet. The other thirty-four feet was the width of a wing of the main building, abutting on its west end, with a frontage of seventy-six feet in Sixth-ave. That wing was devoted to shops, studios and miscellaneous rooms. The theatre was 100 feet deep, from north to south, and 120 feet in height. The main entrance was in Twenty-third-st., but there was another door in Sixth-ave. At the end of the front was a great door to the stage, corresponding in size and style with the main entrance to the auditorium. Between these were three smaller doors, used as means of exit. Three large panels surmounted those doors, made to contain sculpture. All the doors were arched. Higher up, and placed equidistant along the front of the theatre, were three large niches, with Ionic pillars, to contain statues. There were four large windows on a line with those alcoves. Above was a beautiful cornice, and above that was a mansard roof, surmounted by three short towers. In each tower there was an oval window. A flagstaff rose from the centre of the flat roof. Around the summit of each tower was an ornamental iron trellis-work, and the lightning-rods which trailed over the towers and roof were adorned with gilded stars and crescents. Entering at the principal door the visitor found himself in a commodious vestibule paved with Italian marble tiles and lined with Italian marble cement—the ceiling being frescoed. That vestibule extended in a semi-circle along the rear of the auditorium, to which entrance was afforded by three arched doors. The lower floor of the theatre comprised the divisions of parquette and orchestra. A spacious stone staircase, at the south end of the vestibule, led to the balcony. Midway on the staircase was Gould's marble bust of the elder Booth. Above the balcony was a second gallery, and above that the amphitheatre, reached by a stone staircase from the Sixth-ave. entrance. There were three proscenium boxes on each side of the stage, and the house contained seats for 1,750 persons and standing room for 300 more. In shape the auditorium followed the horseshoe model. From every part of the theatre the stage could be distinctly seen. Bright frescoes shone forth on the ceilings. A chandelier depended from the centre of the roof, and all the gas-jets in the building were ignited by electricity. Marble pillars adorned with statues arose on either side of the boxes. In the centre of the proscenium arch stood a statue of Shakespeare, the work of Signor Turini, an Italian artist, representing the poet in the act of writing. Other statues and emblematic devices surrounded that figure and completed the decoration of the arch. There was a neatly designed pit for the band, sunk below the front of the stage and below the level of the main floor, so that the musicians did not obstruct the view of the stage from the auditorium.

MR. BOOTH'S SECOND MARRIAGE.

The new house was completed in January 1869. Booth had employed the time between the burning of the Winter Garden and the opening of his new theatre in acting in the provinces. One of the cities that he visited was Chicago, and there, in the summer of 1867, he met and was betrothed to Miss Mary McVicker. He had first seen her in 1858, when she was but nine years old, and when she attracted his attention by her precocious talent as a vocalist. She sang in concerts with Signor Brignoli and on the dramatic stage she acted juvenile parts, such as Eva in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Seeing her after a lapse of nine years Booth found her polished by education, intelligent, sanguine in temperament, vivacious and endowed with both the sense and faculty of humor. When he acted at McVicker's Theatre in Chicago in 1867, that lady returned to the stage, playing Ophelia to his Hamlet, and subsequently during that and other engagements, there and elsewhere, she co-operated with him, in chief female characters. At a later period she accompanied him to New-York, where on the opening night of the new theatre she acted Juliet to his Romeo. Their marriage occurred at Long Branch, New-Jersey, on June 7, 1869. Miss McVicker's last professional appearance was made at Booth's Theatre, in the spring of that year, as Desdemona. Mrs. Booth retired from the stage and never resumed its pursuit. A son was born to Edwin and Mary Booth on July 3, 1870, but he died a few hours after he was born. Mrs. Booth died in New-York on November 13, 1881, and was buried in Chicago.

A SPLENDID VENTURE.

OPENING OF HIS NEW THEATRE.

The opening of Booth's Theatre, on February 3, 1869, was the most important dramatic incident that had concentrated the attention of New-York for several years. The day had been stormy and the night was unpleasant, but the new theatre was crowded with a brilliant company. "Hail Columbia" was performed by Edward Mollenhauer and his band, and then, responding to the public call, Edwin Booth came forward and spoke as follows:

An opening address, in verse, written for the occasion by the old dramatist and actor, Edmund Falconer, of London, was printed in the play-bills of the night, but was not spoken. The performance of "Romeo and Juliet" was followed with eager attention, and at many points the pleasure of the assemblage broke forth in delighted plaudits.

"Romeo and Juliet" ran for ten weeks and earned upward of sixty thousand dollars for the treasury of the new house.

Other successes followed. "Othello" was brought out, with excellent appointments, on April 12 and it ran until May 29. Booth acted Othello. It is a work conceived in such a terribly earnest as well as imaginative mood as almost to conceal the painful quality of the play. As an analysis and portrayal of jealousy, when that passion is aroused by suspicion of outrage against the affections and the marriage tie, "Othello" leaves nothing to be thought or said.

It had forty-two successive presentations, and in closing its career Booth closed his first engagement.

FOUR YEARS OF SPLENDID ACHIEVEMENT.

On January 5, 1870, Booth reappeared in Hamlet, the stage accessories being grand beyond precedent, and continued to play that part till March 19. He was subsequently seen as Sir Giles, Claude Melnotte and Macbeth, the latter personation being offered on March 28.

On January 9 Booth reappeared as Richelieu, the drama being revived with such splendor of scenes and dresses as not even this theatre, renowned for richness and beauty of stage embellishments, had before displayed.

"Richelieu" was kept on the stage eight weeks and it had forty-eight representations. On March 6 Booth produced "Much Ado About Nothing," and appeared for the first time in New-York as Benedick. Fourteen performances were given, and it was then succeeded, on March 20, by "Othello," Booth acting the Moor and Lawrence Barrett Iago. A revival of "The Fool's Revenge" occurred on April 3, and Booth once more enacted Bertuccio. On April 24 "A Winter's Tale" was brought out, with Lawrence Barrett as Leontes. The stage setting of that piece was superb—the cost being $40,000. It ran till June 3. On the 5th W. G. Wills's beautiful play of "The Man of Airlie" was enacted, with Barrett as James Harebell; and that—a noble addition to the literature of the stage—was performed till the close of the theatrical year and the closing of the house on the 4th of July.

One of the most splendid and most successful achievements of Edwin Booth's career in Booth's theatre was his production of "Julius Caesar," in which at different times he represented Brutus, Cassius, and Antony, and in which Lawrence Barrett gave a great performance of Cassius. This array of facts and dates has a barren aspect but a worthy significance. It shows in Edwin Booth's mind a conscientious sense of the grave obligations to public morality and the cause of education that rest on a theatrical manager, and it shows that the affairs of his theatre were conducted in a steadfast spirit of sympathy with what is pure and good in dramatic art. In 1872 Booth purchased his partner's interest in the theatre and became its sole proprietor. In June, 1873, he left it, and in February, 1874, his bankruptcy was declared, and the theatre finally passed out of his control. It was subsequently managed by Junius Brutus Booth, by Messrs. Jarrett & Palmer, by Augustin Daly, and by other persons, and many efforts were made—mostly in vain—to establish it in public favor. It was finally closed, on April 30, 1883, with a performance of "Romeo and Juliet"—Mme. Modjeska playing Juliet—and soon after it was demolished.

THE FINAL SCENES.

CLOSING YEARS OF MR. BOOTH'S STAGE CAREER.

On August 17, 1875, while driving near Stanford, Conn., Edwin Booth was thrown from his carriage and severely hurt. His left arm and two of his ribs were broken, and for several weeks he lay in an almost helpless condition. He recovered, and on October 25 he reappeared upon the stage, at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. In 1876 he made a tour of the Southern States under the management of John T. Ford, and subsequently he visited California; and everywhere he was received with enthusiasm. In San Francisco, where he filled an engagement of eight weeks, the receipts exceeded $96,000. In 1886 he was the recipient of a farewell banquet, at Delmonico's, prior to his departure for England, at which Judge John R. Brady presided, and which was attended by distinguished representatives of the arts and the learned professions from all parts of the Republic. In that year, and again in 1882, he visited England. He filled an engagement at the Princess' Theatre, London, in 1882, and later he joined Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre, and those famous actors represented, alternately, Othello and Iago—Miss Ellen Terry appearing as Desdemona. In the autumn season of 1882-'83 he went to Germany and acted, with prodigious success in many of the principal cities of that country. The rest of his career was upon the American stage, and during a period of five years, ending with the death of Lawrence Barrett (March 20, 1891), he was associated with that admired actor and tried and devoted comrade; and it was while travelling and acting with Lawrence Barrett that he had the first stroke of dangerous illness—a paralysis affecting the tongue—which befell him at Rochester, N. Y., on April 3, 1889. He did not take a formal farewell of the stage, but closed his professional career with a performance of Hamlet, at the Academy of Music, Brooklyn, on April 4, 1891—the character with which his temperament was most congenial, and with which his illustrious name will always be associated in history.

EDWIN BOOTH'S LAST APPEARANCE.

A record of that performance was made by the present biographer, in The Tribune of April 5, 1891, in the following words:

Edwin Booth ended his season yesterday afternoon at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, giving a performance of Hamlet, and this was followed with deep interest and received with affectionate admiration by a multitude as numerous as could be crowded into that great theatre. Every scene was observed with a vigilance which is keener than that of critical taste—the vigilance of the heart. How much and how truly Edwin Booth is respected and loved might readily be seen in the faces of that eager throng.

Mr. Booth played Hamlet in that mood of poetic exaltation, pensive melancholy, and exquisite refinement for which his acting of the part has always been distinguished, and also in that tone of settled spiritual pain—that atmosphere of profound, inexorable grief—which is inseparable from a right embodiment of Shakespeare's conception. Poetry in the art of acting cannot be carried further than it is by Edwin Booth; and as he now passes into his chosen retirement, whether it be long or short, we can but feel that there will be a darkness upon many fields of the Shakespearean drama until his gentle, gracious figure comes once more upon the scene, and his voice of eloquence and of beauty speaks to us again.

After the last curtain, the applause was wildly enthusiastic, and it continued for a long time. The audience rose, and there was loud cheering, and Mr. Booth was recalled again and again. In response to the last of those calls—the sympathy and sincerity of which could not be doubted—the tragedian came forward and spoke as follows:

"Ladies and Gentlemen: I scarcely know what to say, and, indeed, I can only make my usual speech—of thanks and gratitude. I thank you for your great kindness. It will never be forgotten. I hope that this is not the last time I shall have the honor of appearing before you. When I come again I hope that I shall be able to give greater attention than I have ever given to whatever part I may play. I hope that my health and strength may be improved, so that I can serve you better; and I shall always try to deserve the favor you have shown."

Mr. Booth withdrew amid copious plaudits, and the audience slowly dispersed.

BOOTH'S INSTITUTION OF THE PLAYERS CLUB.

The last public service done by Edwin Booth was his institution of the Players Club. On the last night of the year 1888, and just before the death of the old year, the members of The Players Club, founded by Edwin Booth, assembled for the first time, and were formally installed in their home. The assemblage began to convene about 11 o'clock, and soon upward of a hundred gentlemen were gathered in the cheery parlor and around a spacious fireplace, awaiting the signal for the beginning of a new career of festival and happy fellowship. Among the players were Edmon S. Connor, James E. Murdock, and John Gilbert, the oldest actors, of national reputation, then surviving in America (Gilbert and Connor have since died.) It nears 12 o'clock when Edwin Booth, the founder of the club and its first president, taking his place upon a dais in front of the hearthstone, formally addressed his associates, and in a brief speech, marked by deep feeling, dignity, and winning sweetness of manner, together with sincerity and simplicity of language, presented to them the title-deeds to their club-house—the building No. 16 Gramercy Park, next to the mansion of the late Samuel J. Tilden—which, with all its unique furniture, beautiful and rare works of art, and costly decorations, was his personal gift to the club. The applause that greeted him was emphatic, and it came directly from the hearts of all who heard his voice—for every heart felt the absolute earnestness of his words, and recognized the noble generosity of his conduct. No speech was ever in better taste, nor was there ever a good deed done with more grace, humility, and sweetness.

Upon the score and qualities of Edwin Booth's dramatic genius it seems impossible that comment should take the form of absolute precision. The subtle odor of the jasmine is not more illusive than is the secret of that magnetic charm which at once enkindles and hollows the intellect, making it potent to beguile mankind of equal admiration and love. Spiritual essence seems always to baffle words. A human soul is not to be described. In the endless study of dramatic criticism, moreover, the results of analysis can never be generally acceptable. To comprehend amply and minutely an actor's ideal of an author's conception, and to compare that ideal with one's own, approving if it corresponds and disapproving if it differs (with due concession for knowledge imparted and due revision of instructed opinion), is the obvious, just and usual method. Yet it seldom leads a student to unqualified admiration of all the works of an actor, and it often leaves critics of liberal culture and competent judgment in the attitude of wide dissent from one another's conclusions. The salient attributes of Booth's acting were imagination, intuitive insight, spontaneous grace, intense emotional fervor and melancholy refinement. In Hamlet, Richelieu, Othello, Iago, King Lear, Bertuccio and Lucius Brutus they were conspicuously manifest. But perhaps the controlling attribute, the one that imparted individual character, color and fascination to his acting, was the gently thoughtful, introspective habit of a stately mind, abstracted from passion and touched by mournful dreaminess of temperament. The moment that charm began to work, his victory as an artist was complete. It was that which made him the true image of Shakespeare's thought, in the glittering halls of Elsinore, on its midnight battlements, and in its lonely wind-beaten places of graves.

Under the discipline of sorrow, and through "years that bring the philosophic mind," Booth, like all true artists, drifted further and further away from what is dark and terrible, whether in the possibilities of human life or in the ideal world of imagination. It is the direction of true growth. In all characters that evoked the essential spirit of the man—in all characters, that is, which rest on the basis of spiritualized intellect, or on that of sensibility to fragile loveliness the joy that is unattainable, the glory that fades and the beauty that perishes—he was easily peerless. Hamlet, Faust, Manfred, Jacques, Edgar of Ravenswood, Esmond, Sydney Carton, Clifford Pyncheon and Sir Edward Mortimer are all—in different ways—typical or suggestive of the personality that Edwin Booth was destined to illustrate. It is the loftiest type of personality that life affords, because it is the embodied supremacy of the soul, and because therein it denotes the only possible escape from the cares and vanities of a vanishing world.

WILLIAM WINTER.