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AN
ILLUSTRATED

Souvenir

OF

Wilson Barrett

IN AUSTRALIA.

REPRINTED FROM

“The Tatler.”

Souvenir of Wilson Barrett in Australia.



Wilson Barrett



Wilson Barrett.

T was with the most pleasurable anticipations that I kept my appointment with Mr. Wilson Barrett, the distinguished London actor, at Menzies' Hotel, Melbourne, for the purpose of having a chat over things theatrical, especially as touching the career of our visitor.

Punctual to the moment, I was shown into his private sitting-room, and had an opportunity of indulging the usual inquisitiveness of the interviewer, by looking round the room in quest of objects of interest, before my host made his appearance. A casual glance showed me autograph portraits of the Prince of Wales, a devoted playgoer, Mr. Chamberlain, John Ruskin, Hall Caine, and many other well-known personages of both sexes, who seem proud to number themselves

among Mr. Barrett's warmest admirers.

Whilst in the midst of my surreptitious survey, Mr. Wilson Barrett himself appeared, and, after an exchange of greetings, we sat down in business-like fashion to go over the fertile ground of reminiscence and anecdote, which yielded so many interesting facts that I propose to recount them at some length for the benefit of my readers.

But first as to the man himself. The decade which has passed since I saw him last in London has certainly treated him most kindly. His handsome, intellectual face, bright, thoughtful eyes, in which lurk all the varied emotions of his craft, his firm, sensitive mouth, his melodious, expressive voice, all are as conspicuous as ever. Of medium build, his figure gives one the impression of being as supple as it is muscular and well-proportioned, and in every physical attribute Mr. Barrett is obviously well equipped to meet the requirements of the picturesque art of histrionic expression. Perhaps his most striking characteristics at a first greeting are his modesty and *bonhomie*. He has none of the grand manner of the great tragedian—he is, first of all, a man and a sterling good fellow.

No record of Mr. Wilson Barrett's career can fitly commence with other than the anecdote of his childhood's days, which, one must confess, has become somewhat of a chestnut. Mr. Barrett does not remember the day when he was too young to have a decided leaning towards the theatre; indeed, one almost suspects that he must have been a playgoer from his earliest infancy, for in those days the deterrent notice—"Babies in arms not admitted"—was probably not customary or, if it was, it was as resolutely disregarded by pleasure-seeking mothers as it often is to-day. Anyway, he was only a child when he stood outside the old Princess's Theatre, London, and vowed that he would one day be the manager of that theatre, and would play Hamlet there—a vow which he kept some thirty years later.

HIS APPRENTICESHIP.

Mr. Barrett was only a lad of seventeen when he made his first plunge into theatrical life, making his *débüt* at Halifax in Yorkshire.

"You are a Yorkshireman, I believe, Mr. Barrett," I ask, at this information.

"No. That is, however, a very common mistake. Halifax was my *dramatic* birthplace. I am really an East Anglian. I was born in Essex."

It was, of course, as an "apprentice" to his art that Mr. Barrett made his first appearance on the stage. He played that irksome round of what is known as "utility parts," and some idea of the hard work required of him, in return for the munificent salary of £1 is. per week, may be gathered from the fact that each evening he had to act in the first piece, do a song and dance during the interval, and play often more than one part in the second. This was in the days of the old stock companies; now the provinces are supplied with theatrical entertainment by travelling companies, Mr. Barrett being, some years later, the first manager to tour with a full company of his own, Madame Beatrice and Frank Harvey being also pioneers in that innovation.

PLAYS JUVENILE LEAD.

But Mr. Barrett was not long to continue playing small parts, for during that first season of eleven weeks an opportunity occurred, of which he took full advantage. The actor who was to play the leading juvenile part in a new Irish play by George Owen, entitled *The Thackeen Dhu*, became suddenly ill, and the MS. of the part was only put into Mr. Barrett's hands for study on the previous evening. He sat up all night studying his lengthy part, and by 4.15 next morning he had got the part off perfectly. Mr. Barrett noted the time on the manuscript, and the author still holds it as a memento of the past. Among the company who were his first colleagues is Mr. Carter Edwards, who has been with Mr. Barrett ever since and is now playing character parts with him in Australia.

A NOTABLE ENGAGEMENT.

After this satisfactory introduction to leading business, Mr. Barrett played leading juvenile with the same company, but still continued his song and dance between the first and second parts of the programme. Thence he went to Leeds, still playing lead in Mr. George Owen's drama; thence to Liverpool, where he played juvenile lead in *The Colleen Bawn*; to Preston, Douglass (Isle of Man), Nottingham, where he played leading heavy business, though only nineteen years of age. This engagement was a notable one, as the following sample programme of a week's work will show. The well-known actor, Charles Pitt, was playing a starring engagement, and Mr. Wilson Barrett supported him in the characters named. On Monday, Mr. Barrett played Brabantio in *Othello*; on Tuesday, Barradas in *Richelieu*; on Wednesday, Stukely in *The Gamester* and Pizzaro in *Pizzaro*; on Thursday, Cotier in *Louis XI.* and Jupiter in the burlesque of *Ixion*, in which character Mr. Barrett had to give songs and dances; on Friday, Edmund in *King Lear* and the Father in *The Little Treasure*; on Saturday he played the lengthy and arduous rôle of Francis in Schiller's *Robber* and Major Galbraith (with song) in *Rob Roy*. But Mr. Barrett gives me this list in no querulous spirit, but readily allows that such training, though heavy, was invaluable, as it gave a young actor assurance and solidity, which cannot be attained by the present system of lengthy engagements in the same character.

"HAMLET" AND "HARLEQUIN."

Mr. Barrett's next engagement was at Aberdeen, where he at first played leading character parts. He was soon engaged however, for leading "star" parts such as Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello. It was during this season that he met his future wife, Miss Heath, who was playing a starring engagement. Miss Heath was one of the most beautiful and accomplished actresses of her day, and held the appointment for many years of Dramatic Reader to the Queen, which she retained until her death. But although he was playing leading Shakesperian rôles he had to dance as Harlequin in the pantomime which concluded the programme. One of the local critics wrote a notable criticism of him, which Mr. Barrett repeats with much relish. That gentleman ventured the opinion that "Mr. Barrett's Hamlet was a scholarly and refined performance, but his Harlequin lacked repose." Thus unconsciously paying an eloquent tribute to the young actor's versatility.

With Miss Heath he then went on tour in the provincial towns and cities, and eventually found his way to that actors' Mecca—London.

HIS FIRST APPEARANCE IN LONDON.

Mr. Barrett's London *début* was made under somewhat peculiar circumstances. He and Miss Heath were booked to appear at the Surrey Theatre in the then new drama of *East Lynne* on the Saturday, but on the previous Monday morning the actor who was playing Tom Robinson in Charles Reade's play of *'Tis Never Too Late to Mend*—Mr. Richard Shepherd, a very popular actor—suddenly became seriously ill, and the management was confronted with a grave dilemma. Mr. Shepherd turned up at the theatre in the morning, whilst Mr. Barrett's company were rehearsing *East Lynne*; he was so ill that he could scarcely speak. Mr. Barrett saw that the sudden closing of the Theatre would be detrimental to his own season, so he courageously declared he would play Tom Robinson. The part is an exceedingly lengthy one, and its study seemed quite impossible in the few hours before the performance. Mr. Barrett had seen the play, but never read a word of it. The manager ironically declared as he handed him the part, "If you can swallow all that, your capacity must be enormous." Mr. Barrett's heart sank as he turned over the almost endless pages, but he felt he had gone too far to retreat. He set off to his home on Clapham Common in a cab, and on the way read the part through. He read it again as he hurriedly ate his lunch, and devoted the afternoon to the task of learning it and also getting together the wardrobe and properties necessary. It was duly announced from the stage that owing to the illness of Mr. Shepherd, Mr. Wilson Barrett would play Tom Robinson, an announcement which was received with a storm of hisses by the audience, who had come to hear their favourite, Mr. Shepherd, and Mr. Barrett was then quite unknown in London. Though he heard the hisses, Mr. Barrett was undaunted, and when he made his first entrance riding on a donkey, his reception with another storm of hisses only served to put him on his mettle, and he played to such effect that at the end of the first act he was rewarded with a double call, and triple calls after each succeeding act. Mr. Shepherd stood in the wings looking on grimly, but although

he recovered during the week, Mr. Barrett continued to play his part with continued success and was established as a firm favourite when he produced *East Lynne* on the Saturday evening, having a phenomenally prosperous season.

He was only twenty-one at this time, but he was promptly engaged to play such parts as Malcolm, Laertes, Cassio, and others in support of such stars of the first magnitude as Charles Dillon, Samuel Phelps, and T. C. King, at Drury Lane (then under the management of Mr. T. B. Chatterton). In that company he was associated with the Vandenhoffs, John Ryder, Mrs. Howard Paul, Addison, John Ronse, Joseph Irving (a very clever comedian), M'Intyre, and other famous players, and played during a season of eight months.

PRODUCTION OF WILLS' "JANE SHORE."

The Drury Lane company then toured the provinces, during which season Mr. Barrett played Romeo, and then returned to London. Mr. Chatterton was then manager of the Drury Lane, Adelphi, and Princess's Theatres, and it was at the last-named house that Mr. Barrett produced some plays he had procured, including W. G. Wills' drama of *Jane Shore*, in which character Miss Heath made the greatest success of her career. This play ran through two consecutive seasons with phenomenal success.

FIRST APPEARANCE AS A DRAMATIST.

Mr. Wilson Barrett then toured the provinces with Miss Heath in the standard dramatic success of the day, *Jane Shore*, and also in several plays from his own pen. Among these was a modern "drawing-room drama," entitled *Twilight*, in which Mr. W. F. Clitherow, well-known in Australia, played a part. These original plays of Mr. Barrett's were all destroyed in the disastrous fire at the Amphitheatre at Leeds. This disaster led to several prominent local citizens building the Grand Theatre at Leeds for Mr. Wilson Barrett, who retained possession of that magnificent theatre, one of the most beautiful and well-appointed theatres in England, until some three years ago.

TAKES THE LONDON COURT THEATRE.

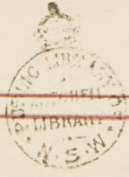
Whilst he was managing the Grand Theatre, Leeds, and the Theatre Royal, Hull, Messrs. Hare and Kendal left the Court Theatre, London, to take the management of the St. James'. Mr. Wilson Barrett then obtained a lease of the Court, and opened there in the romantic play of *Fernande*, and subsequently produced other plays, including *The Old Love and the New*. At this time Mr. Barrett introduced to London the famous Polish actress, Madame Modjeska. Other members of his famous company, besides himself and Miss Heath, were Miss Amy Roselle, Miss Louise Moodie, Mrs. Bernard Beere, Miss Ada Ward, Miss Winifred Emery, Miss Cissie Graham, Mrs. Leigh Murray, Miss Emmeline Ormsby, Mr. Charles Coghlan, Mr. Arthur Dacre (who first met his wife, Miss Amy Roselle, at this theatre), Clifford Cooper, G. W. Anson, Edward Price, John Clayton, J. Crawford, Forbes Robertson, Norman Forbes, W. Holman, and others—truly a memorable company! At the Court Theatre, Mr. Barrett first introduced Henry Arthur Jones as a playwright, with a charming one-act play, *A Clerical Error*, the cast being—Mr. Barrett, Mr. Anson, Mr. Dacre, and Miss Winifred Emery, who on that occasion made her first success in London.



Wilson Barrett as Hamlet.



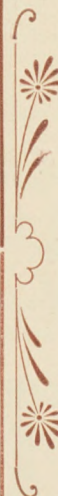
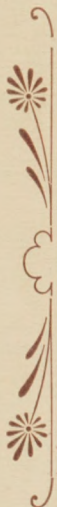
From a Photograph by W. & D. DOWNEY, London.



Maud Jeffries as Mercia,
IN "THE SIGN OF THE CROSS."

From a Photograph by W. & D. DOWNEY, London.





Wilson Barrett as Marcus Superbus,
IN "THE SIGN OF THE CROSS."





Miss Maud Jeffries as Desdemona.

From a Photograph by W. & D. Downey, London.



Mr. Wilson Barrett as Dan Mylrea in "Ben-My-Chree."

From a Photograph by Elliott & Fry, London.

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HER MAJESTY'S.—"VIRGINIUS."

Although, in view of the success of "Othello," the production of "Virgilius" at yesterday's matinee was an act of supererogation on Mr. Wilson Barrett's part, it is one sure to carry with it its own reward in the warm approval of the playgoing public. In this country Sheridan Knowles's tragedy is chiefly identified with the name of Creswick, nor has it been staged here for some 20 years past. Thus the history of the piece in Australia resembles its English record, for Macready, who played it from 1820 to 1851, was in a similar way to Creswick so good in the chief part that other actors feared to take it up at the great theatres even after his retirement. It is true that amongst fugitive revivals of the play in London was one at the Queen's Theatre by John Ryder in 1872, when George Rignold was the Icilius; but speaking generally it may be asserted that since Macready no English actor has made any such mark in the great character as Wilson Barrett. It was expected by many of those who thronged Her Majesty's Theatre at the two performances yesterday that "Virgilius" would prove slow and old-fashioned. Experience happily contradicted this theory, which has been taken up in a whole-souled manner by a great section of the London critics—probably by those of them who were also playwrights. A few skilful touches on Mr. Wilson Barrett's part have "modernised" the piece without materially altering it. The transfer of a tender passage of solemn betrothal between the young lovers from the second act to the end of the first, and the shortening of the play from five acts to four, are to be acted primarily. Then at the close, by way of dramatic retribution, Virgilius drags Appius Claudius to the Forum, and there, where he delivered his base judgment, strangles him. In the original this just revenge is consummated in the dungeon. Finally, in place of bringing in Virginia's ashes in a classic urn, the body itself is borne along with funeral rites and music, and the broken-hearted centurion, recovering from his madness, recognises his dead child and falls lifeless, holding her hand in his own. Some well-written passages here strengthen the piece; but viewing it as a whole it remains Sheridan Knowles's tragedy, a work full of eloquent lines and situations which reach the heart, a work in the heroic style such as our vaunted modern dramatists cannot now produce.

Mr. Wilson Barrett does well to make his farewell appearance this evening as Virgilius. It is a part he carries through to success with fine breadth of style and poignant tenderness of feeling. In no other part has he looked quite so much the noble Roman as in this. The strong, classic countenance seems lightened and softened by the silvery hair, and the fluent robes of purest white add to the majesty of the presence. The exacting part was, moreover, evenly sustained throughout. There was the dissertation on "patience" when, over the dead body of the murdered Dentatus, the centurion, splendid at the seat of war in golden helm and gorgeous trappings over a suit of crimson, turns like a wounded lion upon the friend who tells him of Virginia's danger. Here the actor roused the audience to enthusiasm; and still more so when, before the judgment seat in the Forum, Virgilius sternly challenged Appius Claudius and his kinsman, and finally clasped his daughter to his sobbing breast before he snatched the knife that ended all. "Lo! Appius, with this innocent blood, I do devote thee to the infernal gods! Make way there!" Mr. Barrett's art held the audience in thrall to the last, when, with the words quoted, Virgilius bore the corpse through the ranks of the awed lictors and terrified people. The last act, it must be admitted, is almost like an epilogue, and such interest as it possesses is chiefly due to the pathetic simulation of madness by the chief actor.

Miss Maud Jeffries looked a lovely Virginia, played brightly the pretty scene of filial love in the first act, and showed with power the agonised despair of the scene in which the terror-stricken girl anxiously awaits the tardy return of her father from the wars. The costumes of the chief characters are sumptuously in keeping with this tragedy of Imperial Rome. Mr. Carter-Edwards, resplendent in the robes and precious stones of a Decemvir as Appius Claudius, puts such a noble face on villainy as the unjust judge as greatly to strengthen the situation by giving to it an air of probability. Mr. Edward Irwin as Icilius—a part originally played at Covent Garden by Charles Kemble—proved a manly and vigorous lover; and Miss Lillah McCarthy played with spirit as Servia. The cringing Caius Claudius was rendered with master effect by Mr. T. Wigney Percyval, whose robe of dead-leaf green with arabesque border was one of the most artistic on the stage. Mr. Ambrose Manning, who on Monday appeared as a youthful athletic-looking Rodrigo, was wonderfully disguised as the veteran Dentatus, whose habitual snarl he emphasised with much acceptance. Mr. Horace Hodges would also be named for the ingenuity of his make-up as the aged Numitorius. The actor had apparently copied one of the figures of the Apostles from a picture by Rubens. There were many minor characters employed in the street scenes and the like, in which Sheridan Knowles has evidently profited by pretty close study of "Julius Cæsar," "Coriolanus," and other of Shakespeare's plays.

"Virgilius" was received with overwhelming enthusiasm yesterday, so that Mr. Wilson Barrett will bid farewell to Sydney this evening before a crowded house.

Souvenir of Wilson Barrett in Australia.



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Souvenir of Wilson Barrett in Australia.



HOLTERMANN.—The Friends of Mr. H. ADOLPH HOLTERMANN are kindly invited to the Funeral of his beloved WIFE, Katharine, at his residence, No. 183 Pyrmont Bridge Road, Potts Point, TO-MORROW (Friday) Morning 7.30, for St. John's Church, Darlinghurst, the Metropolitan station, and by 9.25 train to Windsor, N.S.W.

WOOD and COMPANY, Undertakers, Tel., 875.

WINGATE.—The Funeral of the late Mrs. E. WINGATE will move from her residence, Potts Point, TO-MORROW (Friday) Morning 7.30, for St. John's Church, Darlinghurst, the Metropolitan station, and by 9.25 train to Windsor, N.S.W.

Mrs. P. KIRBY and SON, Undertakers, 7 Elizabeth-street, Tel., 875.

HENRY.—The Funeral of the late Mrs. HENRY, widow of JAMES SHEPHERD HENRY, Colonial Architect's Department, will leave the Metropolitan station, for St. Anne's Cemetery, Ryde, at 2.30 p.m. train from Sydney, TO-MORROW (Friday) AFTERNOON.

WOOD and COMPANY, Undertakers, Tel., 875.

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Bicycles Wanted and for Sale. RECORD BREAKING. TO-MORROW (FRIDAY) AFTERNOON at the SYD. CRICKET GROUND, J. B. GARGUREVICH, the Holder of the 25 MILES AUSTRALASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP, will Attempt to Lower the Existing 50 MILES RECORD of 1hr., 54min. 58secs. He will be mounted on his Dunlop-tire "SWIFT," and will be paced by the "ARIEL" Pacing Teams. Special Trams. ADMISSION: GROUND, 6d. GRAND STAND, 1s.

AUSTRAL CYCLE AGENCY. SOLE AGENTS FOR SWIFTS, HUMBERS, ARIELS, &c. 391 George-street.

AUCTIONEERS' SPECIAL. In consequence of the Balance of the Stock of ECLIPSE BICYCLES having been disposed of privately, the SALE advertised for TO-MORROW, FRIDAY, at 12 noon, WILL NOT TAKE PLACE.

HENRY HARRIS and COMPANY (late HARRIS and ACKMAN), Auctioneers, &c., 199 Pitt-street.

BICYCLE (lady's) wanted, in Exchange for second-hand Piano. 274 King-st., Newtown. BEESTON HUMBER, in good order, Dunlop brake, guards, &c., cheap. 5 Barrack-st., City. TWO BICYCLES, Lady's (Rover) and Gentleman's (Humber), cheap. Jenkin, chemist, Summer Hill. GOOD assortment of new and second-hand Bicycles, mod. prices. Sydney Bicycle Exchange, 8 Imperia-st. BEESTON, Notts, HUMBER, nearly new, good Dunlop tires, bargain. 655 George-st. BICYCLE, latest English model, will sacrifice. Regent-st., Sydney.

Religious Announcements. ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL. Ascension Day.—H. C., 8 and 11. Preachers—Archbishop; 7.30, Rev. F. Swain Wigfield. ALL SAINTS', WOOLLAHRA.—Ascension (Thursday, May 19th)—7.30 a.m., Holy Communion; 10.15 a.m., Matins; 10.30 a.m., Second Celebration (6.30 p.m., Evensong, with Address. ST. Simon and St. Jude's, S. H., 7.30 (p.v.), Ascension. Rev. J. G. Southby. SYDNEY WOMEN'S PRAYER UNION, Est. 1883.—MEETINGS for Prayer at the Bathurst-st. Baptist Schoolroom (back of Calverley-st.) every Thurs. Afternoon, at 3. All welcome. E. J. Ward.

Personal. ARTISTS and PAINTERS.—If you want best Goods for Lowest Cost, buy from JAMES SANDY and CO.,



Mr. Wilson Barrett as Virginius.



From a Photograph by W. & D. Downey, London.



Miss Maud Jeffries as Virginia.

*now Mrs J B Colburn
of Cambridge Station N.S.W.*

Souvenir of Wilson Barrett in Australia.



Wilson Barrett as Claudian, Act I.

From a Photograph by TALMA, Melbourne.



Wilson Barrett as Claudian, Act III.

From a Photograph by TALMA, Melbourne.



Wilson Barrett as Pete, in "The Manxman."

From a Photograph by W. & D. DOWNEY, London.

OPENS THE NEW PRINCESS'S THEATRE.

At this time the Princess's Theatre was rebuilt, and Mr. Barrett was offered the lease, and promptly took possession, relinquishing the management of the Court.

His opening performance was *Frou-Frou*, with Madame Modjeska in the leading character, Mr. Barrett as Henri de Sartoris, and Forbes Robertson as the lover. This was followed by a reproduction of *The Old Love and the New*, which had been played at the Court with great success, with Miss Mary Eastlake as the heroine. Miss Eastlake making her first appearance with Mr. Barrett, whom she supported for several years at the same theatre, creating the heroines in all the many famous plays produced by him during his historical management of that theatre.

When Mr. Barrett took possession of the Princess's, he determined to produce plays of sterling merit only, which would "serve to combine with amusement" (to quote his own words to me) "a certain amount of instruction (if you like to call it so) and endeavour to introduce into the plays something that would make the audience feel a little better when they left the theatre."

One of his first acts in taking over the Princess's was to write to Mr. Geo. R. Sims, asking his assistance as a playwright, and one of Mr. Sims' first acts was to write offering his services. Accordingly the letters crossed. The outcome of the consultation which followed was that *The Lights of London* was written and produced after *The Old Love and the New* had run its course.

PRODUCTION OF "CLAUDIAN."

The next drama by Sims was the *Romany Rye*, and following that at the considerable interval of several hundred nights, came *The Silver King*, by Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman. The last-mentioned drama was produced in December, 1883, and may be said to mark an important era in Mr. Wilson Barrett's career.

Claudian may be said to have been in a measure the precursor of the religious drama with which Mr. Barrett's name is now connected, and on which his fame as a dramatist has so far rested in this country—*The Sign of the Cross*. The story of how *Claudian* came to be written is interesting. One evening during the run of *The Silver King*, which was written as everybody knows, by Messrs. Henry Arthur Jones and Henry Herman, the latter came to Mr. Barrett and said, "I have had a phrase running through my brain all day. It is *Be young for ever!* It seems to me to contain the germ of a fine play—something in the nature of a curse, or punishment for sin." The idea struck Mr. Barrett as an excellent one, and it was at length decided to found a play upon it and Mr. Herman worked on it in collaboration with the late W. G. Wills, and Mr. Barrett.

How admirably this fine idea was carried out is seen in the drama as now performed with such unbounded success in Australia. The production of the drama in London was a great "boom," to use a phrase of local significance. A run for twelve months to crowded audiences and the unanimous approbation of many great writers, of the press and public, came as a fitting reward.

JOHN RUSKIN, HELEN FAUCIT, AND OTHERS.

Among the well-known people who expressed their delight at this impressive play by means of lengthy autograph letters to Mr. Barrett were, Professor John Ruskin, the famous author and art critic; Helen Faucit (Lady Theodore Martin), the distinguished actress. By the courtesy of Mr. Barrett, I have been permitted access to this interesting correspondence, for the purpose of publishing (for the first time) selections of especial interest from the lengthy letters. Professor Ruskin writes a truly beautiful letter full of choice thoughts and observations, from which I quote the conclusion, written in this scholarly writer's usual graceful literary style. "May I come some day," he wrote; "Sunday week perhaps, and talk a little over it (*Claudian*) with you and thank you better and speak myself, your faithful admirer and, if I may be, friend, JOHN RUSKIN."

Lady Martin (Helen Faucit) wrote:—"The idea that pervades it is elevating and ennobling, and it is a double delight to see the idea so skilfully brought out and to find that there are overflowing audiences who feel and sympathise with it. Forgive my stating that I thought highly of your conception and treatment of your very difficult part."

WILSON BARRETT AS *Hamlet*.

After the lengthy run of *Claudian* was brought to a close, Mr. Barrett indulged in the ambition of his life and played *Hamlet* at the Princess for over a hundred consecutive nights. It is no exaggeration to say that his conception of the character, the most difficult and complex in the whole range of the drama, startled the London critics by its daring. As Bronson Howard, the well known American journalist and playwright said in a congratulatory letter to Mr. Barrett: "I saw *Hamlet* again on Saturday. I enjoyed it exceedingly. The critics have not yet decided for me whether one has any right to *enjoy* *Hamlet*, and the question certainly puzzles me, but I confess the fact freely. If *Hamlet* was intended to be a living breathing man like ourselves, then decidedly you came nearer the poet's idea than I have ever seen." Mr. Justin McCarthy, the historian, statesman, novelist and journalist, wrote to Mr. Barrett, that he had given "a study of *Hamlet* which explained much to him in a true light and which will always remain in his memory with the few truly artistic performances it has been his good fortune to witness."

OTHER MEMORABLE PRODUCTIONS.

I have left myself only sufficient space to refer briefly to other splendid productions of high-class dramas with which Mr. Barrett made memorable his tenancy of the Princess's Theatre, and have to sacrifice for the present much very interesting information regarding these fine plays. Many as have been his productions of classical drama, Mr. Barrett has also made famous many other plays, including his own melodrama of *Now-a-Days*, and dramatic versions of Hall Caine's fine romances, *The Deemster* (under the stage title of *Ben-My-Chree*), *The Bondman*, and *The Manxman*, and he has also appeared as Othello and Virginius with the greatest success, not only in London, but throughout America.

As we have not yet, at the time this article is written, seen Mr. Wilson Barrett's *Othello* in Australia, we can only echo the verdict of the London press and, from one of the

most discriminating of the daily papers, I accordingly cull the following description :—"A commanding figure, swarthy of hue, alert but calm, he is the simple warrior, self-reliant, stern, inflexible. Unsuspicious, he looks to others for candour equal to his own. Greatly, deeply loving, he is greatly, deeply wronged. And out of the depth and reverence of his love he draws the strength to sacrifice the woman he adores. Such is the Othello, and a very human and Shakspearean Othello it is that Mr. Wilson Barrett represents."

To glean any knowledge of Mr. Barrett's performance in London of *Virginius* we are obliged to resort to the same authorities, and we find the Press practically unanimous in its praise. *The Times* said that "certainly there is no actor of the day better qualified than Mr. Barrett to revive *Virginius*. He wears the toga well, and is one of the few who can declaim blank verse with an air of conviction." *The Daily Telegraph* recorded that "the four calls after each act rose to ten at the end of the play."

"THE SIGN OF THE CROSS."

But perhaps the greatest success of Mr. Barrett's life has been made in the production of his own drama, *The Sign of the Cross*, which has been the sensation of the last two years in England, America, Australia, and in many European capitals. So great has been the interest in this beautiful play in Australia, that I took the opportunity afforded by the present interview to secure Mr. Barrett's views on two points to which objection has been taken by local playgoers. Asked why he made the comic character of the play a habitual drunkard, Mr. Barrett said that drunkenness was held in those days to be, not a vice, but almost a virtue. It was one of the great accomplishments of the fashionable men of those days, and any attempt at reproducing the life of the debauched Rome of Nero's days would be seriously ineffective and unreal without a reference to the common vice of drunkenness."

"But still more general objection was taken to the realism of the love scene between Marcus and Mercia in the home of the former," I observed.

"I can understand the objection," replied Mr. Barrett; "but I must tell you that both the points you mention were the subject of very long and anxious thought when I was writing the play. I was, of course, anxious not to give offence, but I found it was quite impossible to give a true portrait of the wealthy and powerful pagan, Marcus Superbus, without showing clearly the work of regeneration brought about by the contact of the fiery passions of a noble who was never called upon to curb his desires, who had no religion to teach him the sin of debauchery, with the absolute, unassailable purity of the young Christian, Mercia."

"And is your Australian tour really limited strictly to twenty weeks?"

"Yes, absolutely. I have important engagements in the large cities of Great Britain which are now three years overdue, and I dare not further postpone them, although I should have been glad to make a thorough tour of this delightful country, and really hope to have that pleasure at some future opportunity."

EDWARD A. VIDLER.

Miss Maud Jeffries.

MISS MAUD JEFFRIES was born in 1870 away down South of Dixie, on a cotton plantation in Cahoma Country, Mississippi, and until she reached the age of thirteen years she had never seen a city or village of any kind. The solitude of the surroundings in which she lived so happily, was doubtless, says the London *Sketch*, the means of inculcating in her a love of home, parents, and brothers, which to this day is one of the most marked of the many beautiful and worthy traits in Miss Jeffries' character. At this period in her life she was sent to a large college in Columbia, Tennessee, where she remained until her nineteenth year. Monetary losses of a very serious nature made it necessary for her to earn her own living, and, looking upon the stage as one of the most likely vocations, she wrote to Mr. Augustin Daly, and, as a result, was given work in New York. Among the various plays she performed in under his management were *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*. It was about this time that Miss Jeffries first saw Mr. Wilson Barrett act, and the romantic element surrounding the plays in which he took part so delighted her that she felt nothing would satisfy her until she became a member of the company. The outcome of a communication to Mr. Barrett was an offer from him which Miss Jeffries immediately accepted, and she then made her first journey to England, playing a variety of small parts, and understudying some of the larger ones.

It was shortly after this that, when at the Olympic Theatre, London, Mr. Barrett experienced some little difficulty in providing his company with a leading lady. Miss Jeffries received an invitation to Mr. Barrett's home where a few friends had assembled, and after dinner she was asked, in a casual way, to give the second act of *Claudian*. This was done, those present arranging themselves round and forming an audience, and at the conclusion they all expressed the utmost pleasure at her performance. It was then that Mr. Barrett told her he needed her to play "leading business." She was so utterly surprised at the proposition that she burst out sobbing and said she would not do it, for she not only felt incapable of accomplishing it successfully, but she did not believe in such "jumps." Miss Jeffries immediately cabled home to America, telling her parents that she was leaving England by the next ship. The following day, as Mr. Barrett knew, she was lunching with some American friends, and he sent word to them to do all in their power to persuade her to accept his offer, which eventually, out of sheer despair, she accepted.

The reason Miss Jeffries turned her attention to the stage instead of teaching, which exercised a strong fascination for her, was because her parents felt she was more fitted for such a calling; and they had a good chance of judging, for in early youth—her years could not have numbered more than five—one of the joys of her father, and the many friends assembled for the shooting season, was to coax her out of her cosy bed after their day's sport, and have her recite some simple or dramatic old poem. She is passionately fond of an athletic and out-door life, and her innumerable accomplishments, especially with the gun, are of no mean order. The sweet disposition of Miss Jeffries carries everything before her, and makes her loved and respected by everybody.

J.W.L.

farewell
May 19 1898



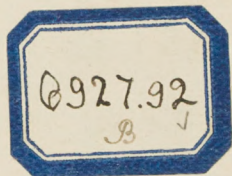
Maud Jeffries as Almida, in "Claudian," Act I.

From a Photograph by TALMA, Melbourne.

David Dr Colvne a rich squatter of vt sw

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