EDWIN BOOTH

RECOLLECTIONS BY HIS
DAUGHTER

EDWINA BOOTH GROSSMANN

AND LETTERS TO HER AND
TO HIS FRIENDS



NEW YORK
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1894

TO NAHUM CAPEN.

WINDSOR HOTEL, July 28, 1881.

DEAR SIR:

I can give you very little information regarding my brother John. I seldom saw him since his early boyhood in Baltimore. He was a rattle-pated fellow, filled with Quixotic notions. While at the farm in Maryland he would charge on horseback through the woods, "spouting" heroic speeches with a lance in his hand, a relic of the Mexican war, given to father by some soldier who had served under Taylor. We regarded him as a good-hearted, harmless, though wild-brained boy, and used to laugh at his patriotic froth whenever secession was discussed. That he was insane on that one point, no one who knew him well can doubt. When I told him that I had voted for Lincoln's reëlection he expressed deep regret, and declared his belief that Lincoln would be made king of America; and this, I believe, drove him beyond the limits of reason. I asked him once why he did not join the Confederate army. To which he replied: "I promised mother I would keep out of the quarrel, if possible, and I am sorry that I said so." Knowing my sentiments, he avoided me, rarely visiting my house, except to see his mother, when political topics were not touched upon, at least in my presence. He was of a gentle, loving disposition, very boyish and full of fun,— his mother's darling,— and his deed and death crushed her spirit. He possessed rare dramatic talent, and would have made a brilliant mark in the theatrical world. This is positively all that I know about him, having left him a mere schoolboy when I went with my father to California in 1852. On my return in '56 we were separated by professional engagements, which kept him mostly in the South, while I was employed in the Eastern and Northern States.

I do not believe any of the wild, romantic stories pub-

lished in the papers concerning him; but of course he may have been engaged in political matters of which I know nothing. All his theatrical friends speak of him as a poor, crazy boy, and such his family think of him.

I am sorry I can afford you no further light on the subject. Very truly yours, Edwin Booth.

TO COLONEL LAWRENCE.

May 15, 1882.

MY DEAR COL. LAWRENCE:

Before I received your kind note of invitation, my daughter had sent our regrets at being unable to enjoy your hospitality, which I looked forward to with much pleasure.

I have had hardly an hour that I could call my own since I left the theatre, and the engagements already made will inconvenience me very much, being so pressed for time before I sail.

Believe me, I am very sorry to forego the pleasure you kindly offer, but hope that in the future I shall have the honor of being your guest.

On Saturday I expect to start for Pittsfield—just for a Sunday peep into "The Box," to see how the dear ones get on.

I wrote to Mrs. Bartlett from Newport, telling her that next Sunday is the only day at my command, but as yet I 've had no word from her. She was ailing from anxiety for her children when I last heard from her, and she was about going to Boston for a few days.

I sincerely hope that she and the children are well.

With kindest regards for you both,

I am very truly yours,

Edwin Booth.