

BOOTH'S DEBUT.

First Appearance in a Cellar and the Admission Three Cents.

Apropos of the splendid success which has attended the present engagement of Mr. Booth in the city of his boyhood, it may not be uninteresting to recall his first appearance as an actor in Baltimore. It was upwards of forty years ago, according to an old resident of Baltimore, who was speaking to a reporter concerning it. In those days the boys who patronized the Old Drury and Museum, where a twelve and half cent piece (the Spanish levy) gained them admission to the play, absorbed a love of the drama which took a practical turn and led to the reproduction of the pieces they had witnessed in less elegant but no less ambitious scale. Along about the years 1847 or 1848 a Mrs. Hinman kept a fashionable boarding house on Calvert street opposite what was then Lovely lane (now German street). Ned Booth, who was then on intimate terms with the boys who made that locality their favorite playground, organized among his companions a dramatic company, and Mrs. Hinman gave the boys use of her cellar. John Sleeper Clarke, Stuart Robson and Theodore Hamilton were members of the company. Performances were given in this cellar every evening for about one month in the year 1847, and were steadily patronized by Mrs. Hinman's boarders. The programme always concluded with the fifth act of *Richard III*, in which young Booth appeared decked out in the stage trappings of his distinguished father, borrowed for the occasion (probably without the elder Booth's knowledge).

The cost of seeing Booth in those days was not \$1.50 per seat, and no speculators stood at the cellar door offering choice places for nearly twice that amount.

The modest sum of three cents secured the best the "house" afforded. To the boys who acted only as spectators, however, the sum charged was no trifling one, for it represented the amount of

money earned in putting away a cord of wood in those days.

"There were no dead heads in those days, were there?" queried the reporter of his informant.

"Not with William Duff as doorkeeper," was the emphatic reply. You had to put down your three cents or you saw no show there."—*Baltimore News*.

EDWIN BOOTH.

AN EARLY "BARN STORMING" EXPEDITION IN VIRGINIA AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

Once, during the days of his early struggles, Booth was "barn storming" down in Virginia at a place called Lee's Landing. The improvised theatre was a tobacco warehouse, and it was crowded with planters for miles around. Booth and his companions had arranged to take the weekly steamer expected to call late at night, and between the acts were busy packing up. The play was "The Merchant of Venice," and they were just going on for the trial scene when they heard a whistle, and the manager came running in to say that the steamer had arrived and would leave again in 10 minutes. As that was their only chance for a week of getting away they were in a terrible quandary.

"If we explain matters," said the manager, "they will think they are being cheated, and we shall have a free fight. The only thing is for you fellows to get up some sort of natural like impromptu ending for the piece and ring down the curtain. Go right ahead, ladies and gentlemen, and take your cue from Ned here" and he hurried away to get the luggage aboard.

Ned, of course, was Bassanio, and he resolved to rely on the ignorance of the Virginians of those days to pull through all right. So, when old George Ruggles—who was doing Shylock—began to sharpen his knife on his boot, Booth walked straight up to him and solemnly said:

"You are bound to have the flesh, are you?"

"You bet your life!" said Ruggles.

"Now, I'll make you one more offer," continues Booth. "In addition to this big bag of ducats I'll throw in two kegs of niggerhead terbacker, a shotgun, and two of the best coon dogs in the State."

"I'm blarmed if I don't do it!" responded Shylock, much to the approbation of the audience, who were tobacco-raisers and coon-hunters to a man.

"And to show that there's no ill-feeling," put in Portia, "we'll wind up with a Virginny reel."

When they got on board the steamer the captain, who had witnessed the conclusion of the play, remarked:

"I'd like to see the whole of that play some time, gentlemen. I'm blarmed if I thought that fellow Shakespeare had so much snap in him."—*Buffalo Times*.