Lives of Shakespearian Actors III

William Charles Macready

Edited by
Richard Foulkes

Routledge

LIVES OF SHAKESPEARIAN ACTORS III

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VOLUME 1: CHARLES KEAN
VOLUME 2: SAMUEL PHELPS
VOLUME 3: WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY

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CHARLES KEAN, SAMUEL PHELPS AND WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY BY THEIR CONTEMPORARIES

VOLUME

3

WILLIAM CHARLES MACREADY

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RICHARD FOULKES

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2010 by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

Published 2016 by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

BRITISH LIBRARY CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Lives of Shakespearian actors.
Part 3, Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps and William Charles Macready by their contemporaries.
1. Shakespeare, William, 1564–1616 – Stage history – England. 2. Kean, Charles John, 1811?–1868. 3. Phelps, Samuel, 1804–1878. 4. Macready, William Charles, 1793–1873. 5. Shakespearean actors and actresses – Great Britain – Biography.
I. Charles Kean, Samuel Phelps and William Charles Macready by their contemporaries
II. Kishi, Tetsuo, 1935– III. Sawyer, Robert, 1953–
792'.028'0922'41-dc22

ISBN-13: 978-1-85196-978-4 (set)
ISBN 13: 978-1-138-75438-6 (hbk)
DOI: 10.4324/9781003513308

Typeset by Pickering & Chatto (Publishers) Limited

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http://taylorandfrancis.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my thanks to Gail Marshall, Series Editor, for giving me the opportunity to contribute the Macready volume, and for her support and guidance during the process. Mark Pollard at Pickering and Chatto has been the source of advice on many matters, great and small.

The University of Leicester granted me sabbatical leave to work on Macready and a British Academy Small Research Award enabled me to carry out research in libraries in the United Kingdom and the United States of America. I am grateful to the staff of all those institutions.

Dr Nicole Fayard directed me to sources about Macready in Paris and facilitated translations fluently completed by Angela Kent. Nearer home John Cunningham kept me abreast of developments at Sherborne House. Over forty-five years ago Allan Cook presciently gave me a copy of Charles H. Shattuck's *Bulwer and Macready*. The splendid print of Macready as Richard III presented to me by my colleagues in the School of English at the University of Leicester to mark the conclusion of my term of office as head has indeed spurred me on ('A horse! A horse!') and Macready's own words on the day after his final performance have encouraged me with the prospect of retirement: '*February 27th* [1851] – Rose rather late, but with a feeling of freedom and singular lightness, surprised that I had nothing exactly compulsory to do.'

My wife Christine has sustained me through the preparation of this volume and deserves to share the satisfaction of its completion.

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INTRODUCTION

Records of the life and career of William Charles Macready, 'the Eminent tragedian', are substantial. Pre-eminent is the diary with regular entries of variable lengths from 1827 until 1851, published in three editions: Pollock (1875 and 1876), Toynbee (1912) and Trewin (1967), the first of them also incorporating reminiscences of the actor's early life and correspondence in his old age. The first editor, Sir Frederick Pollock, was a friend of Macready as was his wife who wrote a biography of the actor.[1] In the view of the *Athenaeum* the first two-volume edition of nearly 1,000 pages omitted nothing 'that a reader has the right to look for in such a record, as regards the history of the stage and the home life of the actor'.[2] Indeed many readers considered that the portrait of the actor that had been allowed to emerge fell rather short of the 'sterling gentleman' which Pollock described him as in a dedicatory sonnet.[3] In his Prefatory Note Toynbee referred to the 'suppression' of 'a considerable portion of the diaries' by Pollock and his own inclusion of 'the most important of the omitted passages'.[4] By the time J. C. Trewin embarked on his edition he found that the 'original manuscript of the diaries has perished, destroyed by Nevil Macready, the actor's son, at the outbreak of the first world war.'[5] However 'sixty-four manuscript pages' were discovered by Macready's grandchild Mrs Lisa Puckle in 1960.[6] Regret for what has been lost should not detract from the importance of what has survived, nothing less than the fullest personal account of the life and career of any nineteenth-century actor.

During the nineteenth century the theatre enjoyed greater prominence in the leisure pursuits of all sectors of society than it had ever done before or ever would again. Enthusiasts ranged from Charles Rice, a humble attendant at the British Museum[7], to the well-connected man of letters Henry Crabb Robinson[8] and Queen Victoria herself. What they all had in common in addition to their love of the stage was the habit of committing their experiences and impressions to paper. Though, like Macready's own diaries, these were not intended for publication they provide nuggets of private insight to set beside the more considered and lengthy assessments of theatre critics and journalists. The expansion of the press in the nineteenth century resulted in more publications devoting more space than ever before to the theatre. Compared with the brief accounts of Macready's youthful, provincial engagements in Birmingham, Newcastle and Bath, London critics wrote at length, and in the case of such keen observers as Hazlitt[9], Leigh Hunt[10], Forster[11] and Lewes,[12] with great acuity. Hazlitt's description of Young and Macready as Othello and Iago respectively as 'a great spinning top' and 'a mischievous boy whipping him'[13] is of course worth more than columns from a lesser pen. Then

as now there was clearly a market for theatrical memoirs and accounts of actors' lives and achievements and the detail into which some authors went is remarkable as in the cases of, for example, Marshall and Hackett.[14]

It would of course be erroneous to think that the range and richness of such archival resources make the task of the theatre historian easy or even possible. Stage performance is the most fleeting of arts, in Prospero's words 'melted into air, into thin air; ... And like this insubstantial pageant faded / Leave not a rack behind'. Recapturing the appearance of sets, costumes and properties is one thing, paintings, drawings and (later) photographs may exist and some designs and properties have survived, but recreating a an actor's performance is an extreme form of necrophilism which is ultimately doomed to failure.[15] In the case of Macready his call to posterity is threefold: as an actor, as an actor-manager (in modern parlance a director) and as a man. Undoubtedly Macready's immortality (if such it is) is based on his distinction as an actor, but perversely that is the most difficult of the three elements to summon forth, one to which even Prospero's 'so potent art' might prove to be unequal.

The actor's instrument is his body: his voice, his physique, his facial expression and of course his intellect and emotions. The first portrait of Macready was in the character of Romeo, just after his successful stage debut of the role in Birmingham in June 1810. The artist, Samuel de Wilde,[16] depicts 'a chubby-faced boy, in a costume including a broad flowered sash, almost under his armpit, an upstanding ruff, white kid gloves, white stockings and dancing pumps, and a large black hat with white plumes'.[17] There does not seem to be anything about this Romeo's appearance that would discourage Juliet's attraction to him, but in his youth Macready firmly believed that he was nothing short of ugly, indeed in his reminiscences he reproduced several comments ('a devilish ugly fellow')[18] to that effect following his London debut in 1816. Those who knew him in later life considered that 'in later years his face improved, gradually moulded into impressiveness and dignity by the growth of character and the workings of the intellect'.[19] The reference to 'the intellect' is crucial, since whatever Macready may have lacked, or thought he lacked, in looks was amply made up for by his intellectual abilities and disposition.

In his reminiscences Macready recurrently refers to himself as a student, observing the performances of established actors, admiring Mrs Siddons, but adhering for a time to 'my father's command that, from the danger of becoming an imitator, I should not see John Kemble act',[20] but eventually like 'a diligent scholar' taking his place early 'not to lose one look or word of this important lesson'.[21] When he saw Edmund Kean on 'two nights at Drury Lane' he was 'confirmed in my opinion of his unquestionable genius' exonerating him 'of all trick in the performances'.[22] The early decades of the nineteenth century might be regarded as a cross road for English actors, one direction leading to the classical severity of Kemble and another to the Romantic excitement of Kean. As a newcomer it was important for Macready to establish his distinctive style, one which was true to his strengths, but also distinguished him from his more established peers. Aficionados of acting rated performers under headings, one such 'Theatrical Scale of Merit Modelled after the Plan of M. De Piles' Scale for Painters' scored Macready and Kean

respectively as follows: Genius 17/18; Judgement 16/17; Expression 18/18; Action 17/18; and Voice: 18/16.[23] In hindsight the marks for genius seem surprisingly close. The configuration of Macready's style with that of Kemble and that of Kean was outlined by Lady Pollock:

> At the time of his first appearances, which was in 1817, he laboured under many disadvantages; for then it seemed that the classical manner had been almost exhausted by John Kemble and his follower Charles Young, and that the so-called natural style was wholly occupied by the glorious Kean, who was at that time the idol of the public. A French critic has well said, that 'he adopted neither the purely natural, or Kean's style – nor the classical, or Kemble's; but that he was natural, classical, or romantic, according to the part he sustained.'[24]

Entering into the techniques deployed by actors is notoriously difficult for those with little or no practical experience of the art. Fellow actors clearly have the advantage of shared experience, though they do not always have the facility to express it clearly. The contemporary American actor Joseph Jefferson contrasted Macready's methods with those of the elder Booth:

> Macready depended upon the mechanical arrangement of the scene, while Booth relied almost entirely on the impulse of the moment, caring little for set rules. As soon as Macready entered the theatre he began to assume the character he was going to enact. He would remain in his dressing-room absorbed with the play; no-one was permitted to enter...[25]

Sometimes the process would extend to the wings, most notably in *The Merchant of Venice* in which 'he worked himself into a violent passion before his entrance in the Tubal scene by seizing the ladder to the "flies," shaking it, and uttering language that made the stage-hands stare at the "Eminent's" latest eccentricity'.[26] Such preparation was part of Macready's plan and in such a case the anger was under control. It was a different matter if 'by some carelessness' of another actor (of which several examples are given in 'Acting with Macready') 'the chain was broken and he [Macready] could not reunite it', then 'his rage knew no bounds; he would seize the unlucky actor who had "ruined him," shake him, throw him aside, and rushing to his dressing-room fall exhausted upon the sofa.'[27]

Contending with Macready's outbursts of temper was a challenge to his fellow actors whether they were planned or spontaneous, but the fact that the latter were caused by disruptions to the former reflected how meticulously Macready had worked out every moment of his performance. Westland Marston, in some of whose plays Macready appeared, found himself too aware of the almost mechanical subtext in *Macbeth*:

> The apostrophe to the 'air-drawn dagger' as given by Macready, was a triumph of discrimination and emphasis. The transitions from amazement to awe to reviving reason – once more staggered by the growing force of his terrors, and again re-asserting itself to dispel them- could not have been more judiciously marked. And yet – to me at least- there seemed a want. Reasoning carried it over intuition; all had been too obviously reasoned out. The thoughts did not sufficiently hurry upon and partly confuse each other, as they do in real tumults of the soul ... The acting of Macready, after the murder, has been so generally extolled, that I rather state as a personal feeling than as a critical opinion that here again various mental states seemed too sharply defined and separated. The emotions of shame, terror, remorse, momentary despair, and selfish fear, might, I fancied, have more often flowed into each other,

> as when, in real life, some fatal act almost at the same moment excites and yet paralyses apprehension by the sense that it is irretrievable. [28]

Westland Marston who, like most of Macready's chroniclers, concentrated on his performances in tragedy did commend his Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, though interestingly he observed that it 'differed widely from that of other well-known actors' in that 'in the various conflicts with Beatrice there was not that repartee, that animated enjoyment of the wit combat, nor quite that polished address (though Macready was both the solider and the gentleman) ascribed to Charles Kemble'.[29] Lady Pollock also regarded Macready's Benedick as a success, considering 'his dialogue with her [Beatrice] was very happy' but his 'Jaques in "As You Like It" was not altogether so successful. Here he was somewhat too sombre'.[30]

It is natural to speculate on Macready's lack of success on comedy. He was of course a very serious-minded man, but a jovial offstage personality is not a prerequisite for success as an actor in comedy. Another factor may have been that Macready's character analysis may have been too deep and detailed for comedy, but in the light of Joseph Jefferson's and Westland Marston's comments it seems quite likely that Macready's determination to control his performances so tightly was inimical to comedy which requires a degree of spontaneity, both with fellow actors (the repartee with Beatrice for instance) and with the audience. One of the traits, inherited from Edmund Kean and others, which Macready increasingly displayed was the tendency, as Fanny Kemble put it, to 'stand two yards behind me while I am speaking to him'[31] a technique which hardly seems to be applicable to comedy, undermining, as it does, rapport with fellow-actors and contact with the audience. Similarly another of Macready's mannerisms militated against another key characteristic of comedy: pace.

Macready had a strong, if not particularly sonorous, voice, capable of projecting into the vast auditoria at Covent Garden, Drury Lane and other large theatres, though he was on guard lest it might become too declamatory at the expense of realism. G. H. Lewes considered that 'his declamation was mannered and unmusical; yet his intelligence always made him follow the winding meaning through the involutions of the verse, and never allowed you to feel ... that he was speaking words which he did not understand'.[32] Macready was prone to imposing sudden transitions, designed to impress audiences with the actor's facility of changing rapidly from one mood to another:

> In his anxiety to avoid any slur or liaison between a final consonant and the initial letter of the next word, he fell into the irritating mannerism of inserting an explosive *a* (or, as some writers represent it, an *er*) at the end of certain words, and even to prolonging the intercalated sound into a sort of rumble, something after this fashion – 'Be innocenttta of knowledge, dearesttta chuck, / Till thou applauddda the deed.'[33]

By the time he performed before the court at Windsor in February 1850 in the opinion of Queen Victoria he 'was ranting too much, and being so affected in manner – his voice cracking and gulping, and having an unpleasant way of stopping between every word'.[34]

Like many actors before him and since during the span of his career, which in his case was a considerable forty-one years, Macready had slipped from being the exponent of a fresh, innovatory style to being the last vestige of an outmoded method. What had remained as his hallmark throughout those years was his intellect, in the words of fellow-actor James Henry Hackett: 'I consider him by far the most intellectual and generally effective actor of his time', a compound of 'the classical dignity of John Kemble with the intense earnestness and colloquial familiarity of Edmund Kean',[35] aimed at achieving consistency from performance to performance. In some cases, notably Macbeth over nearly thirty years, the time span was indeed lengthy, but given the number of roles available to the actor in Shakespeare's plays Macready's range was quite limited.[36] This was exacerbated by the almost total absence of comedy. As noted, his Benedick was considered to be a success, but it was not a part he played often or indeed at all in his American and French engagements. The situation was similar with Leontes and although it was his performance as Richard III that established his reputation in 1819, by the mid-1830s Charles Rice rated him poorly in the role. Macready evidently felt an affinity with Richard II, but the play did not appeal at the time and his successes as Henry V and King John were within grand historical revivals rather than as free-standing performances. The same was true of Coriolanus. This leads naturally to an assessment of Macready's achievements during his managements of Covent Garden and Drury Lane prior to the abolition of the Patent Theatres' monopoly.

Given his meticulous attention to every nuance of his own performances it is only to be expected that as a manager and stage director Macready was no less painstaking. Prior to the opening of his managements at Covent Garden and Drury Lane he embarked on extensive refurbishment to ensure that the facilities for the audience in the auditorium and foyers were such as would make the respectable classes whom he wanted to attract feel comfortable and at home. Then there was the engagement of personnel: stage management, musicians, scene-painters and of course actors, the last-mentioned being particularly prone to flattery and offence (warranted or otherwise). Even prior to formally assuming the status of manager Macready had become renowned for his attention to rehearsal, as for instance with Sheridan Knowles's *Virginius*, and long after he had laid down the burden of management he still supervised rehearsals to Fanny Kemble's not inconsiderable irritation.

The aspect of his major revivals of Shakespeare's plays upon which Macready lavished most attention and which was clearly greatly appreciated by his audiences and went on to exercise a powerful influence on stage practice for years to come was the scenery. Macready cannot be said to have invented or created the vogue for realistic pictorial scenery, earlier practitioners included J. R. Planché, who recalled 'a casual conversation' with Charles Kemble that led to him designing the costumes and settings for what was to turn out be a historic (in more ways than one) revival of *King John* at Covent Garden in 1823. According to Planché 'Mr. Kemble ... perceived the pecuniary advantage that might result from the experiment', but if the manager was in any doubt he must have been reassured by Planche's willingness to 'make the necessary researches, design the dresses, and superintend the production of "King John," *gratuitously*'[37]. Such work was evidently a labour of love for Planché, though he encountered strong resistance from the actors who feared 'they should be roared at by the audience. They *were* roared at; but in a much more agreeable way than they had contemplated.'[38] Similarly, although he had

perceived potential 'pecuniary advantage' in the plan, nightly receipts of from £400 to £600 probably vastly exceeded Kemble's expectations.

There was a financial nexus between investment of this kind and the public's appetite for historical scenery. As Russell Jackson put it:

> Pictorial realism was a means to this end [pointing the lessons of the stories told], showing how the very fabric of social life had meaning – or, in the case of historical subjects, how the life of the past was picturesquely different from that of the present, but enacted the same human impulses and moral dilemmas.[39]

Attractions of historical subjects for the theatre included the identification with the nation's past and association with the more elevated art of painting, to the extent, in Macready's case of employing Clarkson Stanfield, a distinguished Royal Academician.

In fact *King John* was the last of Macready's grand Shakespeare revivals at the patent theatres. Its debt to Planche/Kemble and its relationship to Charles Kean's production have been explored by Charles H. Shattuck in his splendid facsimile edition of Macready's promptbook, which begins with an extract from the *Examiner* review: 'The rude heroic forms of the English past ... are in this revival realized ... The accoutrements are complete, from the helmet to the spur of each mailed warrior ... The scenery has had the same attention.'[40] Other studies of Macready's historical revivals have detected similar influences and techniques, though in the case of his *Cymbeline* Carol J. Carlisle has noted the challenge of establishing historical accuracy for this more remote setting: 'If he did consult the authorities, he chose a period somewhat later than Cymbeline's, when British men of rank had begun wearing a simple Roman tunic instead of their former ensemble of pantaloon-tunic-and-cloak, and he disregarded the long, drooping moustaches that were their distinctive feature.'[41] For all this preoccupation with historical accuracy the revival which, Lady Pollock recalled, was Macready's 'favourite production' was *As You Like It*, despite the fact that his Jaques 'was not altogether successful'.[42] As with *King John*, Charles H. Shattuck has produced a comprehensive 'prompt-book study' identifying a debt to Planche who had laid down the 'principles for costuming *As You Like It* ... according to authentic originals of late fifteenth century France (specifically, the reign of Charles VIII)'.[43] But of course strictly historical principles cannot be applied to the period and place of *As You Like It* and it is apparent that the success of the revival owed much to the acting even in such a minor role as Le Beau, though like Macready as Jaques Mrs Nisbett was ill-suited to Rosalind.[44] Nevertheless according to James Anderson, who played Orlando: 'The comedy was brought out with the greatest care and attention to the smallest detail. The forest scenery was grand, in addition to the beautiful dresses, properties, hunting dogs, music, madrigals and sheep bells. The cast was equally perfect ... The whole play was about as perfect a performance as any audience ever sat to witness.'[45] This was put to the test on 12 June 1843 when the audience included none other than Queen Victoria:

> In state to Drury Lane Theatre...The programme consisted of Shakspear's beautiful play 'As You Like It' and a most laughable Farce 'The Thumping Legacy'. The House was immensely full, and we were very enthusiastically received. 'As You Like It' was extremely well acted and got up. Macready acted the part of 'Jaques' and pronounced the famous speech about the 7 ages beautifully. Anderson acted the part of 'Orlando' very well, and Keeley was excellent as Touchstone, but what surprised us most was the really beautiful acting of Miss H Faucit [replacing Mr Nisbett] as 'Rosalind'. She looked quite pretty in male attire and was so lively and 'naive'. [46]

Like his monarch Macready committed his thoughts on the evening to a diary: 'Acted Jaques very well ... When the Queen came from her box, she...said she was much pleased, and thanked me'; a rather more studious playgoer Prince Albert enquired 'if this was not the original play' to which Macready replied: 'Yes...we had restored the original play.'[47]

A few days earlier Macready had noted in his diary 'Received a note from W. Anson, informing me that the Queen would command on Monday, an act of kindness which I felt very much.'[48] In so expressing himself Macready, republican though he professed to be, took a far more grateful (and gracious) attitude to his monarch than the *Theatrical Journal* which wrote of the royal command on 'the last night of Old Drury under Mr. Macready's management' as

> Alas, too rare – for had our lovely Sovereign earlier enforced the practice of conferring Royal patronage on our national theatres (after the manner of her royal ancestors), we should not now have to deplore the present state of our Shakespearian temples – Old Drury and Covent Garden.[49]

At Rugby School the young Macready famously observed that his experience had taught him that 'whilst the law, the church, the army, and navy give a man the rank of gentleman on the stage that designation must be obtained in society (though the law and the Court decline to recognise it) by the individual bearing.'[50] In these remarks lies the essence of our third line of enquiry: into Macready the man. It has become apparent in our previous two lines of enquiry into Macready the actor and Macready the manager/director that he took the closest interest in his work and applied the highest standards to it, but had no love or regard for his profession and the majority of those who earned their living in it. It was rather that as he progressed to the position of leader he felt that he should be accorded the respect that he would have been accorded had he been able to adopt his profession of choice, what Frederic Whyte termed 'the Macready that might have been: Macready, Head Master of his own Rugby – Macready, Speaker of the House of Commons – Macready, Archbishop of Canterbury.'[51] Thus the endorsement of the head of state was as befitting to him as the head of the theatre as it would have been to him as head of the established church.

Macready did not mix socially with actors and other members of the profession, though he did draw into it friends such as Browning, Bulwer Lytton, Talfourd and Stanfield, being keenly aware of their potential contributions as authors or artists. Typically for his time he took his role as husband, father and brother very seriously and his diaries abound in references to listening to his children's schoolwork or presiding over family prayers. Though he visited his own alma mater Rugby School to give a Shakespeare reading he did not send any of his sons there, preferring Westminster School and later after his retirement Sherborne, though a disagreement over

a form of punishment led to Macready withdrawing his sons. At Westminster he was on cordial terms with Dr Liddell the head master, the future Dean of Christ Church, who wrote to him on 3 March 1851: 'I should very much like to have been one of the clergy who attended on Saturday to express by their presence their thanks to one who had done so much for elevating the drama to its high and noble office. But all efforts to get tickets were, for me at least, in vain.'[52]

That gathering of the great and good, masterminded by Dickens, the doyen of celebratory dinners, was the apogee of Macready's social networking. Macready's American biographer W. T. Price wrote: 'Macready entertained the best people of the land at his table', going on to append a list of 'those he had met on terms of intimacy at home and abroad'.[53] Though not included on Price's list the dramatist Westland Marston did enjoy Macready's hospitality: 'The guests at Macready's table were, in many cases, representative men and women, whose very presence was a testimony to the intellect and cultivation of their host.'[54] It comes as no surprise that Macready, the hallmark of whose acting was his intellect, should number amongst his friends scientists (Faraday and Lyall) as well as painters (Stanfield, Maclise, Etty and David Roberts) and authors (Wordsworth, Thackeray, Carlyle, Browning, Tennyson). A further indication of Macready's intellectual range can be found in the records of his reading in his diaries and in the catalogue of the sale of his library by Christie, Manson & Woods on 8 July 1873. The catalogue contains 316 lots including personal items such as inscribed copies from Charles Dickens, George Sand and other authors known to the Macreadys, but as James Arnott observed: 'In comparison with the other sale catalogues included in this volume, Macready's has remarkably few books on theatre history or the art of acting.'[55] Instead Macready was more inclined to accommodate a complete set of Valpy's *Delphin and Variorum Classics*, running to 162 volumes.

One slim volume which Macready's widow might have held on to for the future edification and delectation of her son was *The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope Revised and Arranged Expressly for Family Reading by William Charles Macready*, published in 1849. The dedication 'To My Children' was of course framed with the offspring (to date) of his first marriage in mind, but was no less applicable to Nevil, the son of his second marriage, born in 1862: 'With the desire of leaving you a parting token of affection, better worth your grateful remembrance than the ordinary memorial of leave-taking, I have urged forward the production of this volume ...' Macready affirmed his 'constant aim to induce and cultivate in your minds an intimate acquaintance with the works of the greatest authors', purged of 'the occasional indelicacy and coarseness, into which Pope has – it must be admitted *rarely* – been betrayed'[56] Here in the guise of the Victorian *pater familias* is the voice of the actor-manager, committed alike to the promulgation of his art and the protection of his public from any indelicacy or embarrassment.

Westland Marston recalled a dinner party at the Macreadys' when 'a lady happened to speak of the "lower class"' to which her host excepted saying 'I always like to think of our less fortunate fellow-creatures as the poorer classes rather than as the *lower* classes'.[57]

When he retired to Sherborne Macready showed the strength of his convictions, supporting the Sherborne Literary Institute which set up an Evening School located in premises adjacent to his house opening on 26 June 1854. London friends such as Dickens and Thackeray were prevailed upon to give talks or readings to the Sherborne Literary Institution, the objectives of which were:

> to provide the purest intellectual recreation, as a relief and invigoration to the mind after labour – to inculcate, through the medium of instructive entertainment, the principles most conducive to a healthy state of moral and religious feeling, and to induce among the various grades of society the reciprocal manifestations of good will.[58]

Objectives such as these would not have been out of place inscribed on the portals of Covent Garden or Drury Lane. As for the Sherborne Night School in his Report as an Assistant Commissioner the Revd James Fraser, the future Bishop of Manchester, wrote: 'I saw several very *interesting* night schools...; but the only really *efficient* one that I witnessed at work, the only one full of life and progress and tone of the best kind, was the one at Sherborne, which owes its origin and its prosperity to the philanthropic zeal and large sacrifices of money, time, and personal comfort of Mr. Macready'.[59]

By the time of this Report Macready, after eight years as a widower, had married the twenty-three-year-old Cecilia Spencer of whom Lady Pollock wrote:

> The affection with which he inspired her owed nothing to the particular bent of his genius. She had never seen a play. She did not know what acting was. But in Macready's presence she felt the power which impressed her; the things he said, and his way of saying them stirred her thought and feeling. When she paid visits to a friend who lived at Sherborne, she often found him in poor men's cottages reading to the sick and relieving want. She had heard of him as a proud man; she found him a gentle one. He was old; she was still fresh and fair. But when she knew that he loved her, she knew also that he was very dear to her.[60]

Thus the happiness that Macready found in his old age was not founded directly on his (near) genius as an actor, his renown as a manager or his prominence in society, though those achievements did of course reflect his character and ability, but on the bond of common humanity he formed with his future bride.

Notes

1. *Macready's Reminiscences and Selections from His Diaries and Letters*, ed. Pollock (London: Macmillan and Co., 1876); Lady Pollock, *Macready As I Knew Him* (London: Remington and Co., 1885).
2. *Athenaeum* (27 March 1875), p. 417.
3. *Macready's Reminiscences*, ed. Pollock, p. xvii.
4. W. Toynbee (ed.), *The Diaries of William Charles Macready 1833–1851*, 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, Ltd., 1912), vol. 1, p. v.
5. J. C. Trewin (ed.), *The Journals of William Charles Macready* (London: Longmans, 1967), p. xvii.
6. Ibid., p. xvii. Trewin used 'a few extracts from them'. The MSS pages were then in the Mander and Mitchenson Theatre Collection which is now located at the University of Greenwich.

7. A. C. Sprague and B. Shuttleworth (eds), *The London Theatre in the Eighteen-Thirties by Charles Rice* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1950), p. v.
8. E. Brown (ed.), *The London Theatre 1811–1866 Selections from the diary of Henry Crabb Robinson* (London: Society for Theatre Research), p. 11.
9. W. Archer and R. W. Lowe (eds), *Dramatic Essays by William Hazlitt* (London: Walter Scott, Limited, 1895).
10. Ibid.
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CHRONOLOGY

1793 (3 March) William Charles Macready born at 3 Mary Street (later 45 Stanhope Street), Euston Road, London, the fifth of eight children of actor William Macready-or M'cready (1755–1829) and his first wife, actress Christina Ann, née Birch (1765–1803). Macready senior, who was the son of a prosperous Dublin upholsterer, joined the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin in 1785 and thereafter secured engagements in Liverpool and Manchester, where he married on 18 June 1786.

1796 After a decade playing supporting roles there Macready senior left Covent Garden Theatre and took the New Theatre, Birmingham, subsequently extending his managerial enterprise to Leicester, Stafford, Sheffield and further afield.

1803 Young Macready attends Rugby School, where a cousin (William Birch) of his mother taught. Greatly distressed by the death of his mother on 3 December, Macready nevertheless remained at Rugby, engaging in some school theatricals, though determined on a career in the church or law, until December 1808 when he was withdrawn because of the disastrous decline in his father's fortunes.

1810 Having already served his managerial apprenticeship helping to save his father's companies, Macready made his acting debut as Romeo in Birmingham on 7 June. Further provincial roles included Hamlet in Newcastle (1811), where he also had the formative experience of performing with Mrs Siddons in Edward Moore's The Gamester and Home's Douglas; Bath (1814), a clutch of Shakespearian roles; and Glasgow (1815) where he met his first wife Catherine Frances Atkins (1803/4-1852), then a child actress aged nine.

1816 (16 September) Macready made his London debut in The Distressed Mother by Philips at Covent Garden, but, though he was deemed a success and subsequently alternated Othello (10 October) and Iago (15 October) with Charles Mayne Young, for the next couple of years he chaffed under what he regarded as disappointing casting.

1819 (25 October) Macready's success as Richard III (Colley Cibber's adaptation was still preferred) was all the greater as his performance invited comparison with Edmund Kean's.

1820 Macready declines the title role in King Lear -in competition with Kean- in favour of Edmund (13 April). Took charge of rehearsals for Sheridan Knowles's new play Virginius (17 May) achieving a triumph as stage-manager and actor (title role). Debut as Macbeth (9 June).

1821 (12 March) Macready's partial restoration of Shakespeare's Richard III gained further plaudits for his performance (though the restoration did not prevail), but his Hamlet (8 June) did not impress unlike his Henry IV (in 2 Henry IV on 25 June) a role in which he was painted by John Jackson (portrait now in the National Portrait Gallery).

1822 Macready travels extensively in France, Switzerland and Italy. Visits Juliet's tomb in Verona, the Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza, Venice, Florence and the Théâtre Français in Paris where he meets Talma.

1823 (15 January) Macready plays Wolsey in Henry VIII, Hubert in King John (3 March) and Shylock in The Merchant of Venice (13 May), but, increasingly at odds with Charles Kemble, accepts R.

W. Elliston's offer of triple his Covent Garden salary and makes his Drury Lane debut as Leontes (3 November) in The Winter's Tale. Engagement to Catherine Atkins, though the wedding is deferred to allow the future bride a period of study under the supervision of Macready's sister Letitia.

1824 (1 May) Macready plays the Duke in Measure for Measure. Marriage to Catherine Atkins at St Pancras Church on 24 June, was followed by wedding tour and provincial engagements.

1825 (5 January) The Fatal Dowry,Sheil's expurgated version of Massinger after which Macready became seriously ill (inflammation of the diaphragm), recovering to play the lead in Knowles's William Tell (11 May).

1826 Apart from some provincial appearances and a short Drury Lane season (10 April to 19 May) Macready, his new wife and Letitia (their constant companion through twenty-eight years of marriage and eleven children) relaxed at 'The Cottage, Llanrwst, Denbigh,' before setting sail from Liverpool for New York on 2 September. Macready's American debut as Virginius took place under the management of Stephen Price at the Park Theatre, New York on 2 October. Whilst in New York he attended a performance of Julius Caesar in the Bowery noting an energetic young actor Edwin Forrest as Mark Antony. Thereafter he appeared in Boston, Baltimore (where he was taken ill), Philadelphia and Albany.

1827 Macready's successful tour extended to June 1827. Back at Drury Lane his performance as Macbeth was admired by an aristocratic German visitor Prince Puckler-Muskau (12 November).

1828 (7 April) Macready began a season in Paris, the highlights of which were his Virginius and Macbeth. After meeting his obligations at home Macready returned to Paris in June for a further four weeks at £100 a week. He calculated his income for the year to be £2,361.

1829 (11 April) Macready's father died. To assist his stepmother Sarah, Macready with Richard Brunton took over the lease of the Theatre Royal, Bristol until 1833 when she was able to take it over in her own right.

1830 Like 1829 1830 found Macready mainly in the provinces, though he did commit himself to a three year contract at Drury Lane, where he premiered Byron's Werner (15 December). He settled his family at Elm Place in Elstree; his first child (Christina Letitia) was born on 26 December.

1831–2 Macready continued his engagement at Drury Lane, from 10 September 1831 with Alfred Bunn and Captain Polhill. In that season he appeared only fifty-two times, compared with ninety-nine in the previous season. The highlight was playing Iago to Edmund Kean's Othello (26 November 1832).On 27 June Macready gave evidence to the Select Committee on Dramatic Literature.

1833 (25 May) Macready was a pallbearer at Edmund Kean's funeral. Kean's death effectively confirmed Macready as leader of the theatrical profession. Macready made his first essay at King Lear in Swansea (29 August) and professed himself dissatisfied. Back in London, Bunn, who now controlled both Drury Lane and Covent Garden, compounded his attempts to reduce salaries with imposing a excessive workload on his leading actors, in Macready's case fifteen appearances between 5 and 30 October. Hopelessly ill-prepared for Antony and Cleopatra (21 November) Macready tried to buy himself out of his contract.

1834 (23 May) At Drury Lane Macready played his first London performance of King Lear and raised the standards of staging with a spectacular production of Byron's Sardanapalus (10 April).

1835 Despite his poor relationship with Bunn Macready signed a contract with him at Drury Lane (21 September). He failed to bring Jaques to life (3 October).

1836 (29 April) At the end of Act III of Richard III Macready, observing Bunn at work attending to his managerial duties, was overwhelmed by anger and struck him in the face. Sued for assault by Bunn Macready got off relatively lightly with a fine of £150. The warm reception accorded to him as Macbeth at Covent Garden (11 May) reflected widespread public sympathy. On 18 May he appeared with Helen Faucit for the first time (in Benjamin Thompson's The Stranger). Macready cultivated plays by leading contemporary authors: Thomas Noon Talfourd, Edward Bulwer (Bulwer-Lytton) and Robert Browning.

1837 (4 January) Macready and Faucit premiered Bulwer's first play The Duchess de la Vallière and Browning's Strafford (1 May). Encouraged by his coterie, which included Dickens, Forster, Stanfield, Macready took the management of Covent Garden assembling a notable company, including Faucit, Phelps, Warner and Anderson, which he painstakingly rehearsed for the opening play The Winter's Tale (30 September).

1838 (25 January) King Lear Macready boldly restored the Fool (albeit played by an actress Priscilla Horton). His commitment to new plays was evidenced by Lytton's The Lady of Lyons (15 February) and Knowles's Woman's Wit, or, Love's Disguises (23 May). Coriolanus (12 March) was more notable for its scenery, costumes and crowds than for Macready's own performance in the lead role and the same was true of The Tempest (13 October).

1839 (7 March) Richelieu, in the writing of which Bulwer had extensively consulted Macready, ran for an impressive thirty-seven performances and Henry V (10 June) for twenty-one (thanks in no small measure to Clarkson Stanfield's scenery), but Macready did not extend his management for a third season.

1840 Reverting to acting Macready was engaged by Ben Webster at the Haymarket where he appeared in two further plays by Bulwer, Money (8 December) in which he was re-united with Helen Faucit being a notable success.

1841 Macready again succumbed to the lure of management this time at Drury Lane opening, after extensive refurbishment, with a careful revival of The Merchant of Venice (27 December) followed by the rarely performed The Two Gentlemen of Verona (29 December).

1842 His second season was marked by two outstanding Shakespeare revivals: As You Like It (1 October) and King John (24 October). Marston's The Patrician's Daughter (10 December) was not a success.

1843 (24 February) Much Ado About Nothing was not a happy choice (comedy was not Macready's forte) and with the failure of another new play (Browning's A Blot in the 'Scutcheon 11 February) Macready drew his management to a close (14 June). On 5 September Macready, accompanied by John Ryder, sailed from Liverpool to New York, opening as Macbeth (25 September). On 23 October his Lady Macbeth was Charlotte Cushman. In Boston he befriended Emerson and Longfellow.

1844 Macready's dates included Charleston, Savannah, New Orleans, Macon, St Louis, Montreal and Philadelphia, before returning home (9 November) £5,500 better off. In December, accompanied by Catherine, Macready went to Paris, appearing at the Salle Ventadour as Othello, Hamlet and Virginius.

1845 The Paris engagement continued adding Werner and Hamlet to his repertoire performing the latter before King Louis Philippe (16 January). The rest of the year was devoted mainly to provincial engagements and appearances at the Princess's Theatre in London.

1846–8 Reprises of established successes in London at outlying theatres such as the Surrey and Marylebone as well as the Princess's and provinces. No longer his own manager Macready's stage partners include Charlotte Cushman, Mrs Warner and Fanny Kemble; inevitably the staging often fell short of his own high standards. In Edinburgh on 2 March 1846 his performance as Hamlet was interrupted by a hiss from the American actor Edwin Forrest in the auditorium.

1848 (9 September) Macready leaves Liverpool, again accompanied by Ryder; makes first appearance in New York as Macbeth (4 October). In Philadelphia (20 November to 2 December) Forrest appears at a rival theatre duplicating Macready's roles.

1849 Tour continues (Richmond, New Orleans), but in Cincinnati (2 April) half of the raw carcass of a sheep is thrown on the stage. Macready's performance as Macbeth at the Astor Place Theatre, New York on 7 May is seriously disrupted, but he is persuaded to appear again on 10 May, when the 'Astor Place Riot' results in up to thirty fatalities and Macready is forced to flee in disguise. Back home Macready resumes provincial engagements and seasons at the Haymarket Theatre, London.

1850 A succession of farewell performances throughout the country. Plays Brutus in Julius Caesar (1 February) at Windsor Castle despite his republicanism and resentment of Charles Kean's appointment as director of the Windsor Theatricals. Spends first night at Sherborne House (4 September), a substantial property on which he has taken a lease as his retirement home.

1851 (26 February) The definitive farewell performance at Drury Lane as Macbeth, followed by grand dinner (1 March) with speeches by Bulwer, Dickens, Chevalier Bunsen and Thackeray.

1852 (18 September) Catherine dies unexpectedly. During retirement Macready suffers the loss of five of their children.

1860 (3 April) At the age of sixty-seven Macready marries Cecile Louise Frederica Spencer, the twenty-three year-old-close friend of his daughter Katie, at Clifton. At his new wife's insistence they move to a smaller property in Cheltenham (6 Wellington Square).

1862 (7 May) Cecil Frederick Nevil, Macready's only child by his second marriage, is born. After a much-decorated military career, he became commissioner of Metropolitan Police (1918–20) and a baronet (1923). He died in 1946.

1873 (27 April) Macready, who had been suffering from paralysis and blurred speech for some time, died at his Cheltenham homel. He was buried at Kensal Green in a vault that already contained his first wife, his sister Letitia and five of his children.

ABBREVIATIONS

Archer	William Archer, *William Charles Macready* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1890).
Downer	Alan S. Downer, *The Eminent Tragedian William Charles Macready* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966).
Pollock	Sir Frederick Pollock (ed.), *Macready's Reminiscences, and Selections from his Diaries and Letters* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1876).
Toynbee	William Toynbee (ed.), *The Diaries of William Charles Macready* (London: Chapman and Hall Ltd, 1912).
Trewin	J. C. Macready, *Mr Macready A Nineteenth-Century Tragedian and His Theatre* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1955).

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