

Quotations from Edwin Booth

Whatever calamity may befall me or mine, my country, one and indivisible, has my warmest devotion.

I often wondered at the popularity of my Hamlet with the native chiefs.

I think I am a little quieter.

I don't think John will startle the world, but he is improving fast and looks beautiful onstage.

'Tis a great pity he had not more sense but time will teach him.

I asked him once why he did not join the Confederate Army.

God bless you, my boy! And stick to the flag, Dick, as I intend to do, though far away.

To talk about such old-time nonsense as my own affairs is now too trivial. May the God of Battles guard you.

A daughter, and thank God, all is well with her and her mother.

I saw every time I looked from the window Mary dead, with a white cloth tied around her neck and chin. I saw her distinctly, a dozen times at least.

My conduct hastened her death, and when she heard that I—her all—was lost to all sense of decency and respect for her—her feeble spirit sank.

Although my love was deep-rooted in my soul yet I could never *show* it.

Starring around the country is sad work.

I wish to God I was not an actor. I despise and dread the d—d occupation; all its charms are gone and the stupid reality stands naked before me. I am a performing monkey, nothing more.

He played Pescara, a bloody villain of the deepest red, and he presented him—not underdone but rare enough for the most fastidious beef-eater...I am happy to state that he is full of the true grit...and when time and study round his rough edges he'll bid them all 'stand apart!'

I'll struggle—I'll fight—I'll conquer too, with God's help.

The news is indeed glorious. I am happy in it, and glory in it, although Southern-born. God grant the end, or rather the beginning, is now at hand.

While mourning, in common with all other loyal hearts, the death of the President, I am oppressed by a private woe not to be expressed in words.

You know...how I have labored to establish a name that all my friends would be proud of; how I have always toiled for the comfort and welfare of my family—and how loyal I have been from the first of this damned rebellion.

You must feel deeply the agony I bear in thus being blasted in all my hopes by a villain who seemed so loveable and in whom all his family found a source of joy in his boyish and confiding nature.

At last the terrible end is known—fearful as it is, it is not withstanding a blessed relief.

My Fellow Citizens, It has pleased God to lay at the door of my afflicted family the lifeblood of our great, good, and martyred President. Prostrated to the very earth by this dreadful event, I am yet but too sensible that other mourners fill the land. To them, to you, one and all, go forth our deep, unutterable sympathy; our abhorrence and detestation for this most foul and atrocious of crimes. For my mother and sisters, for my remaining brothers and my own poor self, there is nothing to be said except that we are thus placed without any power of our own. For our present position we are not responsible. For the future—alas, I shall struggle on in my retirement bearing a heavy heart, an oppressed memory, and a wounded name.

I have huge debts to pay, a family to care for, and a love for the grand and beautiful in art to gratify. Hence my sudden resolve to abandon the dreary, aching gloom of my little red room where I have sat so long chewing my heart in solitude, for the excitement of the only trade for which God has fitted me.

At the earnest solicitation of my mother, I write to ask you if you think the time is yet arrived for her to have the remains of her unhappy son. If I am premature in this I hope you will understand the motive which activates me, arising purely from a sense of duty to assuage, if possible, the anguish of an aged mother. If at your convenience you will acquaint me when and how I should proceed in this matter, you will relieve her sorrow-stricken heart and bind me ever.

Put it on the fire with the others....That's all, we'll go now.

It's a terrible blow indeed but not the worst that I have felt. The loss of money (so long as God grants me the health to work) does not disturb me much; but the fear of being misjudged by my creditors and the disappointment in not being able to establish the true Drama in New York—those are very painful reflections.

*If your lips you'd keep from slips,
Of these five things beware:
Of whom you speak,
To whom you speak,
And how, and when and where.*

How often, Oh! How often have I imagined the delights of a collegiate education... What a world of never-ending interest lies open to the master of languages!... I have suffered much from the lack of that which my father could easily have given in my youth, that I am all the more anxious you shall escape my punishment in that respect; that you may not, like me, dream of those advantages others enjoy through any lack of opportunity or neglect of mine. Therefore, learn to love your Latin, your French, and your English grammar; standing firmly and securely on them, you'll have a solid foothold in the field of literature.

I can give you very little information regarding my brother John. I seldom saw him since his early boyhood in Baltimore.... We regarded him as a good-hearted, harmless, though wild-brained boy, and used to laugh at his patriotic faith 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 re-election, 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...

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

I am sorry I can afford you no further light on the subject.

Very truly yours, Edwin Booth.

Memories are hard on one in the lonely hours.

Let us drink from this loving cup, this souvenir of long ago, my father's flagon. Let us now, beneath his portrait, drink to the Players' perpetual prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your great kindness. I hope this is not the last time I shall have the honor of appearing before you...I hope that my health and strength may be improved so that I can serve you better, and I shall always try to deserve the favor you have shown me.

What I want now is to stay in one place with things I like around me...Here is my bed, and here is the fire, and here are my books, and here you come to see me. I suppose I shall wear out here.

How are you yourself, old fellow?

Quotation from the book, *Good Brother, Bad Brother*

To show his support for his war-torn homeland, Edwin obtained an American flag and hung it like a canopy over Mary's bed, thus making sure in his own way that their child would be born under the Stars and Stripes.