

# Charlotte Cushman in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

**I**N the summer of 1841, Mr. Cornelius A. Logan, a noted comedian, rented Locher's military hall in the rear of the Mechanics' Institute, located at 31 South Queen street, Lancaster, and converted it into a theatre. The hall was a large one for that day, conveniently situated, and could be thoroughly ventilated,—according to a statement in the Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal of Tuesday, June 15th.

The scenery for the theatre was painted in Philadelphia by a talented artist. Mr. Logan had secured a company of capable performers, which included several celebrated players.

The distinguished actress, Charlotte Cushman, then at the beginning of her splendid career, which was to continue until her retirement from the stage in 1875, a year before her death, was, at the time, in Philadelphia, where she was a prime favorite, although but twenty-five years of age. A complimentary performance for her benefit was given in the Chestnut Street theatre, Philadelphia, on Thursday, June 17th. Shortly after this, she came to Lancaster and joined Mr. Logan's company.

The opening performance in Lancaster was on Monday evening, June 21st, 1841. The house was crowded. The play selected was a popular one,—Kotzebue's celebrated tragedy, "The Stranger." It was admirably acted. An appropriate address, from the versatile pen of John W. Forney, the brilliant editor and publisher of the Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal, was delightfully delivered by Miss Cushman.<sup>1</sup> It was as follows:

As the proud Eagle, from his fetters freed,  
Bathes his swift pinions in the morning light,  
Cleaves the bright sunbeam with majestic speed,  
And melts, a vapor, from the aching sight:  
So, from the darkness of the dreary tomb,  
The long-lost Drama bursts upon the stage!  
No more encircled by Misfortune's gloom,  
She floats the day-star of a mighty age;  
Points the clear pathway to the poet's eye,  
Where buried years their priceless jewels hoard;  
Regilds those names "that were not born to die,"<sup>2</sup>  
And flings a halo round the classic board!  
In her pure presence rank Oppression cowers,  
And holy Right again stands nobly free;

Spurns the frail barriers of the tyrant's powers,  
And no more cringes on the bended knee!  
While from her lips, those gems of mighty mind,  
Keen classic Wit, and Eloquence and Mirth,  
The heart's deep recess and its secrets find,  
And call "the Passions" from their slumbers forth.

Here on this stage, this spotless stage of ours,  
Long may we labor in the Drama's cause;  
With priceless Knowledge fill the passing hours,  
And bow contented in your kind applause!  
Here oft may Beauty and her vot'ries come,  
To seek congenial and refreshing themes;  
For this, the student leave his silent home,  
To quench Ambition in the Drama's dreams.  
Here may the Graces, by sweet Virtue led,  
Like bright-winged zephyrs, float before the eyes;  
And Pity's tear for Mercy freely shed,  
Speak of the soul's deep sympathies;  
Here laughter, trembling in ecstatic glee,  
Greet the broad joke with ever-shaking sides;  
Here, where to all the Drama's shrine is free,  
Where high-souled Genius brilliantly presides.

In this brave circle of admiring friends,  
Where Beauty shines the all-bewitching fair;  
And where stern Manhood for a space attends,  
In hope to feel as though he knew not care:  
Here do we seek, and here our answer find,  
And thus contented do confide our cause;  
Where all are fair, or liberal, or kind,  
Where Taste sits judge upon the Drama's laws  
Committed thus to favoring sea and gale,  
Our bark goes gladly o'er the public wave;  
The public favor swells the floating sail,  
And more Ambition would not even crave!  
Lit by your smiles, our path shall onward be;  
Cheered by your plaudits, we will brave the storm;  
Though danger howl and bellow on our lee,  
We'll ride the tempest without fear or harm!

A second performance was given on Wednesday evening, June 23rd,—Bulwer's "The Lady of Lyons" being the attraction. Claude Melnotte was acted by Mr. Conner, while the part of Pauline was taken by Charlotte Cushman. The entertainment concluded with a farce never played in Lancaster before, entitled, "The Maid of

Croissy," in which Mr. Porter and his daughter appeared in Lancaster for the first time.

The *Intelligencer and Journal* of Tuesday, June 29th, contained the following:

"The theatre has been very largely attended for the past week, and the satisfaction expressed by those who have enjoyed the pleasure of witnessing the performances, is universal. The company of Mr. Logan has won high credit, and we venture to say, will continue to be well encouraged by our citizens. The Misses Cushman are ladies of decided talent. The performances of these ladies have called down much deserved applause. Miss Charlotte Cushman is an actress of rare and versatile powers and sustains all her characters with success. A woman of undoubted talent off the stage, she shines conspicuously in all she undertakes. She is a great favorite, and we hope to-morrow evening will have a full house at her benefit. Her performance of Emilia on Saturday evening was perfect. Her sister, Susan, though of less general powers, is an actress of great merit; her beautiful face always calls down applause. Her performance of Pauline was a fine piece of acting. Mr. Conner has elicited much and deserved approbation. We confess ourselves better pleased with this gentleman's acting than we had expected to be. He has improved vastly in the last few years, and sustains the heavier characters of his profession with much judgment and faithfulness. His Claude Melnotte, his Damon, and his Othello, were excellent and highly spoken of. Mr. Conner is a gentleman of much worth and talent.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Henkins is also an actor of merit, and has many friends. The other members of Mr. Logan's company are respectable in their parts, and have done much worthy of praise. The accession of Mr. Porter and his daughter to Mr. Logan's company was quite acceptable—they are both good. This company is one that deserves the patronage of a community of intelligence and taste; and as it is Mr. Logan's intention to produce a succession of attractions, it is to be hoped that he will be properly rewarded. He has now a company better than any we have had here since the days of Jefferson."

A benefit performance for Miss Cushman was given in Lancaster on Wednesday evening, June 30th, when Buckstone's then popular drama, "Isabelle, or The Three Eras of Woman's Life", was staged for the first time in this city. Mr. Conner volunteered his services and played the part of Henry. The role of Isabelle was filled by Miss Cushman, while her younger sister, Susan, portrayed Sophie.<sup>4</sup> Following this, a musical olio was given by the Cushman sisters and Mr. A'Becket. The evening's entertainment concluded, by request, with a farce entitled, "The Lottery Ticket." The part of "Capias" was taken by Mr. Conner, "Susan" by Miss Charlotte Cushman, and "Wormwood" by Mr. Logan.

The Lancaster County Historical Society has in its collections a play bill dated July 2nd, but, unfortunately, no year is given, on which the name of Miss C. (Charlotte) Cushman appears.<sup>5</sup> This play bill advertised that at the new theatre on South Queen street, in Lancaster, on the *seventh* night of performance, a benefit would be given for Mr. Henkins. There is no doubt that this advertises a performance given on Friday evening, July 2nd, 1841. The first performance by Mr. Logan's company was given in Lancaster on June 21st, the second on the 23rd, the third and fourth on the 25th and 26th respectively, the fifth on the 28th, the sixth on the 30th and the seventh on July 2nd, 1841. The date of the play bill is also confirmed by a news item which appeared in the Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal of Tuesday, July 6th, 1841. It was as follows:

“Good houses, during the past week, have repaid the enterprise of Mr. Logan. Mr. Henkins had a respectable benefit on Friday evening; though his performance of Rob Handy, and Miss Cushman's Henry, in ‘Speed the Plough’, in addition to Mr. Logan's capital Sir Abel, deserved a better house. Mr. Logan himself is not less a favorite as an actor than he is a manager—his presence always calls down applause. He performed Lord Duberly in the ‘Heir at Law’ with decided success. The Misses Cushman also increase in public favor.”

The characters in the fine old comedy “Speed the Plough”, were portrayed as follows:

Sir Philip.....	Mr. Porter <sup>6</sup>	Gerald.....	T. B. Johnson <sup>10</sup>
Mornington.....	Mr. Johnson	Postboy.....	Tom
Sir Abel.....	Mr. Logan <sup>7</sup>	Miss Blanford...	Miss S. Cushman <sup>11</sup>
Bob Handy.....	Mr. Henkins <sup>8</sup>	Lady Handy.....	Miss Porter <sup>12</sup>
Henry.....	Miss C. Cushman	Susan.....	Miss Logan
Farmer.....	Mr. A'Becket <sup>9</sup>	Dame.....	Mrs. Logan

The evening's entertainment concluded with the amusing farce of “The Intrigue, or Married Yesterday.” The roles were filled as follows:

Varnish.....	Mr. Porter	Tom.....	Mr. Logan
Rambleton.....	Mr. Henkins	Ellen.....	Miss Cushman

The Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal of Tuesday, July 6th, 1841, informed the public that Mr. Logan had effected an engagement with the then popular favorite, James E. Murdoch, of Philadelphia, who would appear for the second time in Lancaster on Wednesday evening, July 7th, as Claude Melnotte.<sup>13</sup> The evening's entertainment concluded with the then favorite farce entitled, “Married Rake.” The part of Flighty was acted by Mr. Murdoch, while that of Mrs. Flighty was taken by Miss Charlotte Cushman.<sup>14</sup>

The last performance in Lancaster in which the talented Murdoch and the charming Cushman sisters appeared, took place on Monday evening, July 12th, 1841. The Lancaster Intelligencer and Journal stated that the performance was a fine one and that the public parted with the actors with regret.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lancaster Examiner and Democratic Herald, Wednesday, June 30th, 1841.

<sup>2</sup> Halleck's "Marco Bozzaris."

<sup>3</sup> Mr. Conner, whom I have little doubt was E. S. Conner, with the exception of Miss Cushman and James E. Murdoch, was the most distinguished of the band of players at Lancaster. He was born in Philadelphia September 19th, 1809, where, according to T. Allston Brown, who wrote a history of the American Stage, he made his debut at the age of twenty. With good taste, fine manners, graceful person and excellent elocutionary powers, he was a great favorite. He made his public appearance March 23rd, 1829, as "Young Norval," at the Walnut Street theatre, Philadelphia. He married his cousin, Mrs. Amanda Maria Sorber, of New York, who died a few years later. He married, the second time, Charlotte Mary Sanford Barnes, December 29th, 1847. He was manager of the Arch Street theatre, Philadelphia, in 1850.

<sup>4</sup> Nineteen at the time. She subsequently played Juliet to her distinguished sister's Romeo.

<sup>5</sup> This playbill was presented to The Lancaster County Historical Society by Mr. John L. Herr, the well-known auctioneer.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Porter, according to Francis Wemyss, actor and manager, was born in Philadelphia and made his first appearance on the stage in his native city, at the Walnut Street theatre, on January 27th, 1837, in "Rolla." He retired from the stage, and in May, 1852, was on a whaling voyage to the South Seas.

<sup>7</sup> Cornelius Ambrosius Logan was born in Baltimore, Md., May 4th, 1806. He was of Irish parentage and was educated for the priesthood. Subsequently, he adopted the stage as a profession. He was called to Philadelphia after the death of Jefferson to fill his place. He wrote several successful plays, various tales and poems, one of which, "The Mississippi," attracted favorable notice.

His daughter Eliza, born in Philadelphia, August 18th, 1829, was educated in Lancaster, Pa., and became an actress.

<sup>8</sup> Henry Henkins (right name Hincken) was born in New Jersey, in 1809. He made his first appearance on the stage in September, 1840, at the Chestnut Street theatre, Philadelphia, as "Lionel Lynx," in "Married Life." He was the leading man at the Walnut Street theatre for some time. In "villainous" characters, he was very good. He died suddenly January 17th, 1853, while a member of Barnum's Museum company, New York.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas A'Becket was born in Chatham, England, March 17th, 1808, and came to this country in 1837, arriving June 12th. He soon after gave lessons on the flute and piano, and was afterwards in the orchestra at the Franklin theatre, New York city. He made his first appearance on the stage April 10th, 1838, as "Dandini," in the opera of "Cinderella," with the Abbott and Nathan Opera company in Buffalo, with which he remained three years. He first appeared in Philadelphia in September, 1840, at the National theatre. Afterwards, he played in various cities throughout the country. He left the

drumatic profession and appeared with S. S. Sanford's celebrated "burnt cork" minstrels in Philadelphia. As a musical composer, he enjoyed an enviable reputation.

<sup>10</sup> T. B. Johnson was born in Philadelphia in 1815. He made his first appearance on the stage in 1840, at the Arch Street theatre, Philadelphia, as "Wilkins," in "The Green Mountain Boy," and "Mr. Singleton" in "O.K." In September, 1848, he appeared at Burton's Chambers Street theatre, New York, as "Wigler," in "Valet de Sham," being his first appearance there. He afterwards appeared at several other theatres in that city. He died at his residence in New York on May 27th, 1861, while attached to Laura Keene's theatre. He possessed considerable comic talent, but was careless, indifferent or unambitious, and did not make that mark in his profession to which he might have attained.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Webb Cushman, sister of Charlotte, was born in Boston, Mass., March 17th, 1822. She made her first appearance on the stage in April, 1837, at the age of 15, at the Park theatre, New York, as "Laura Castelli," in Epes Sargent's play, "The Genoese," and achieved an immediate success. She played "Desdemona" to George Vandenhoff's "Othello;" "Grace Harkaway" to her sister Charlotte's "Lady Gay Spanker," and took other prominent roles in New York and Philadelphia. In "Satan in Paris" her success was remarkable; in England, her impersonation of "Ophelia" was regarded as of the highest order; and her "Juliet" ran for two hundred nights. Her acting was greatly admired for its grace and delicacy. In 1847 she retired from the stage, at the age of 25, after a most successful career. In March of the next year she married Dr. James Sheridan Muspratt, of Liverpool, a distinguished chemist and author. She died in Liverpool, England, May 10th, 1859, at the comparatively early age of 37.

<sup>12</sup> Miss Sarah Porter, daughter of Joseph Porter, was born in Philadelphia. She made her first appearance on the stage as "Virginia" on December 17th, 1838, the occasion being her father's benefit.

<sup>13</sup> James Edward Murdoch was born in Philadelphia on January 25th, 1811. At the age of eighteen he appeared in the Arch Street theatre in his native city as "Frederick," in Kotzebue's play, "Lovers' Vows." He appeared on the stage in most of the large cities in the United States. His best efforts were in the line of genteel comedy and juvenile tragedy. He wrote a book having the stage for its subject.

<sup>14</sup> Charlotte Saunders Cushman was born in Boston, Mass., July 23rd, 1816. Her father was a West India merchant, who subsequently lost his fortune. She was a remarkably bright child, with a voice of unusual compass and richness. Her first appearance on the stage was in the Tremont theatre, Boston, as the "Countess Almaviva," in the opera of the "Marriage of Figaro;" and her second, as "Lucy Bertram," in "Guy Mannering." On each occasion she met with gratifying success.

The young singer went with the opera company to New Orleans, where her voice, which had been strained by the soprano parts assigned to her, failed. She determined to become an actress, and studied Shakespeare's *Lady Macbeth*. In this tragic role she made her appearance, with remarkable success, in 1835, while still under twenty years of age. She was engaged to appear in different characters at the Park theatre, New York, and was soon recognized as an actress of unusual ability. This engagement lasted from 1837 to 1840. Two years later, she became manager of the Walnut Street theatre, Philadelphia, where she remained until 1844. In that year she accompanied the celebrated actor Macready on a tour of the Northern states, during which time she acted several tragic roles successfully.

This great actress was an ardent student and rapidly rose to distinction. She was thrilling in tragedy, masterful in the delineation of passion, and highly successful in Shakesperian characters. In her younger days she was distinguished as a performer in high comedy parts. In the autumn of 1844, she went to England, where, in London, her acting was received with every mark of approval. She added greatly to her professional reputation, and made many warm friends in the higher social life of England. Her home in Mayfair became a centre of artistic and literary gatherings. During the dramatic season in London her acting was received with enthusiastic applause. A part of her winters was passed in Rome.

During the last six years of her life, Miss Cushman devoted much time to dramatic readings, giving scenes from Shakespeare, and reciting ballad and dialect poems, and humorous selections, with a success not less marked than her histrionic triumphs. She died in the city of her birth, Boston, Mass., February 18th, 1876, the year after she retired from the stage.

<sup>15</sup> The Lancaster Examiner and Democratic Herald of Wednesday, July 14th, 1841, stated that they closed their engagement on "Tuesday evening last."

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## Public Meetings Against Supporting Schools at Public Expense

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

**T**HE Legislature of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, at the sessions of 1821-2, passed an act to provide for the education of children at public expense within the city and incorporated boroughs in the county of Lancaster.

A meeting of citizens of Leacock, Earl, Manheim and Lampeter townships, in the county of Lancaster, convened at the public house of Michael Johns, in Leacock township, on Saturday, January 25th, 1823, for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of petitioning the Legislature for the repeal of the act referred to in the above paragraph.<sup>1</sup>

John Graff was called to the chair, and George Bear and Isaac Carpenter were appointed secretaries. The following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted:

"Viewing as we do the disadvantage to the citizens of the different townships not included in such school districts,

"Resolved, That in the opinion of this meeting, it is highly necessary to petition the Legislature of this Commonwealth praying to alter and repeal the act entitled an act relative to certain school districts in the city and different boroughs in this county.

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<sup>1</sup> Lancaster Journal, Friday, January 31st, 1823.