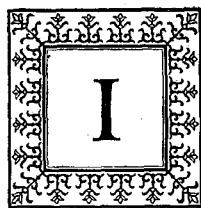


George Henry Boker—Playwright and Patriot

BY ARTHUR HOBSON QUINN

Author of "The Significance of Recent American Drama," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM PHOTOGRAPHS IN THE COLLECTION OF MR. OTIS SKINNER



It is just a century since one of our greatest dramatists, one of the most uncompromising of our patriots, one of the most successful of our diplomats, was born. That his country has shown so little sense of its debt to him on any of these counts may be due to the fact that he was born on October 6, 1823, in Philadelphia. For it is the characteristic of his native city and mine that it combines a profound content with its collective achievements with a great disinclination to express its appreciation in any tangible form. This preference for being rather than for talking or writing about it has been attributed to its Quaker self-repression. It was from a Quaker family of Nottinghamshire, however, that George Henry Boker was descended. They had gone to England, via Holland, from the French town of Nismes, where the name was originally Bôcher. Charles Boker, the dramatist's father, was a banker, who took hold of the old Girard Bank in 1840 after it had been a victim of the panic of 1837, and by his vigorous administration brought it again into solvency.

George Boker grew up in an atmosphere of material comfort and cultivated surroundings. The Philadelphia of his boyhood was still fragrant with the Colonial tradition, classic in its white marble steps and wrought-iron balconies, with the touch of romance in the merchant ships that brought the famous Madeira and other exotic goods to the old docks along the Delaware. His dearest friend was Charles Godfrey Leland, whom he introduced to "Don Quixote," for already

the charm of Spain was upon him. The two boys fed also on Scott's romance together and wove stories of their own of heroes and dragons. Their first separation came when he entered the College of New Jersey, as Princeton was then called, in 1839. Leland did not join him until 1841, when the future author of "Hans Breitmann" became a freshman while Boker was a senior. Boker has left no record of his own impressions of Princeton, but from the later letters of Leland, from the old catalogues, and, best, from his own contributions to *The Nassau Monthly*, of which he was one of the founders, we can sense the effect of his college upon him. It was a simple, straightforward existence, with the total annual expenses varying from a carefully calculated minimum of \$167.37 to a maximum of \$199.00, including rent, board, tuition, and all incidentals, except furniture, books, and personal expenses. Boker evidently had "the best room in college," according to Leland, who tried to persuade his father to let him buy the furniture for forty dollars. He was a tall, handsome boy, well liked and a leader among the element in college that took the narrow curriculum of the thirties and forties as a point of departure for self-education in modern literatures, which were then fighting their way into the college curriculum. Latin, Greek, and mathematics, from plane geometry to calculus and astronomy, were the main diet, with excursions, in senior year, into belles-lettres and philosophy, moral and natural. A faculty of a dozen men taught the two hundred students, who came principally from New York, New Jersey, Maryland, and the Southern States. In one of the catalogues William Gledhill, of the class of '43, has indicated

the later pursuits of Boker's class. Law, medicine, and theology claimed most of them. Boker is the only one who is credited to "letters," although John S. Telfair, of North Carolina, became "an editor." Of the faculty, probably the ones from whom Boker must have gained most were Albert B. Dod, whose chair was mathematics, but who lectured also on architecture and political economy; Joseph Henry, who was an inspiring teacher of science; and James W. Alexander, who lectured on English literature.

College students were probably the same then as now, only less varied in character. There were town-and-gown rows with "Jerseymen," there was a "strike" of the freshman class, and the official catalogue states quaintly: "It is particularly recommended that all students, when practicable, spend their vacations at home with their parents or friends; or when this is inconvenient, that they take boarding elsewhere than in Princeton: since it is found that when a number of young persons are collected together without regular occupation or study the temptations to idleness and dissipation are often too strong to be resisted."

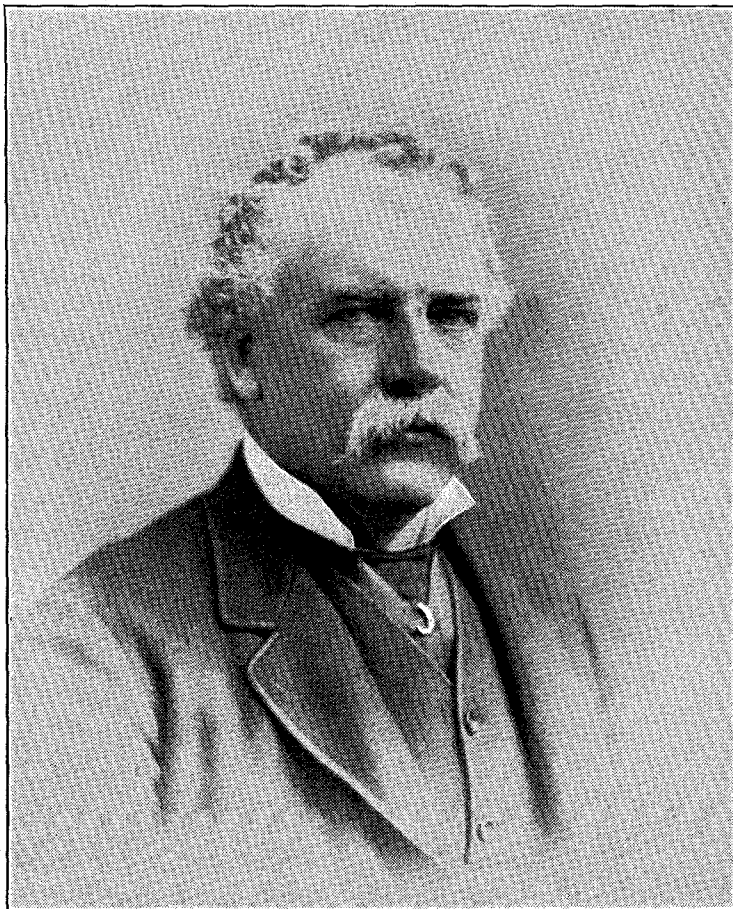
Yet the pages of *The Nassau Monthly* reveal a maturity of thought, a seriousness of tone, and an interest in literature that would do credit to any college journal of to-day. Boker contributed six poems and seven prose articles to the first and second volumes, for he did not lose interest with his graduation. The verse is romantic, and is of no permanent value, but the translation of "The Battle of Brunanburgh" from the Anglo-Saxon shows Boker's sense of form and appreciation of the English spirit, and his sonnets are a prophecy of greater days to come. His prose articles are much better, especially his enthusiastic treatment of Norse legend in "Odin," and his eloquent "Pre-eminence of the Man of Letters." In this essay Boker embodies that aristocratic ideal which was to remain his for life. The man of letters is to be removed from the throng but is to uplift them. And "if there is one offense in a nation which we should willingly forgive it is the undue pride and admiration of its great men" is not a bad sentence for a boy of

twenty. His article on "Spenser" shows his knowledge of the English dramatists, afterward to be his models. One is tempted to linger overlong on this formative period of a great man, but since it is the usual fashion in America to attribute our writers' success to any influence rather than to their education, it is pleasant to record the impression of at least the cultivation of comradeship which comes to one from turning over the pages of this old college journal.

Two years after graduation Boker married Miss Julia Mandeville Riggs, of Georgetown, D. C., a woman whose charm enriched in after years the atmosphere of the legations of Constantinople and St. Petersburg. Foreign travel came next, and then a decision to devote himself to writing. He had studied law with John Sargeant in Philadelphia, but he had no aptitude for it. If any one might have felt himself justified in that day in America in choosing a literary career, it was he. He felt no pressure from necessity; he had leisure, and Philadelphia was to a certain extent still the publishing centre. *Graham's Magazine*, *Sartain's Union Magazine*, *Peterson's Magazine*, and even *Godey's Lady's Book* were at their height. But Boker's talent hardly lay in this direction. His first volume of verse, "The Lesson of Life," published in 1848, contained only a hint of his strength. But when "Calaynos," his first play, appeared in the same year, it was at once evident that a new and potent force in our drama had arisen. Dramatic recognition, however, was hard to win. It might have been looked for in Philadelphia more hopefully than elsewhere, for the plays of the group of dramatists who had produced "The Gladiator," "Metamora," "Jack Cade," and "The Actress of Padua" were still being acted with success by Forrest and others. The tradition that a successful lawyer or editor might write a play and even have it acted without harm to his professional reputation was still strong in Philadelphia, even if Doctor Bird, Judge Conrad, and Richard Penn Smith had ceased writing for the stage, and John A. Stone had thrown himself in despair into the Schuylkill River. Boker, however, had not Forrest's encouragement, for his plays were of a different quality. Just as a ro-

bust democracy, fitted for Edwin Forrest's acting, had been the characteristic of that school of playwriting, so Boker's plays strike the key-note of the patrician.

10, 1849, without the formality of securing the author's consent. This English acting version of "Calaynos," preserved among the Boker manuscripts, is much



George Henry Boker.

"Calaynos" is a tragedy, laid in Spain in mediæval times and based on the Spanish horror of any taint of Moorish blood. But the plot is of less importance than the creation of lofty standards of race and conduct, of an atmosphere of inevitable tragedy, clothed in a blank verse already possessed of that distinction which is one of Boker's greatest claims to consideration by posterity.

"Calaynos" had its first recognition in England, where Samuel Phelps, Macready's successor in tragedy, produced it at the Sadlers Wells Theatre, May

changed from the original, and the playwright as he noted the alterations has written on the margin, "Phelps again, O Lord! O Lord!" in the agony of the creator. Some use was made of this revision, however, when James E. Murdoch put on "Calaynos" at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia on January 20, 1851, and later took it to Chicago, Baltimore, and Albany. And G. K. Dickenson, who had played Oliver, Calaynos' secretary, in Phelps' cast, reproduced the play in December on his visit to this country, Charles W. Couldock playing Calaynos.

BROADWAY THEATRE
 LEBRON STAGE MANAGER. MR. E. A. MARSHALL. MR. W. R. BLAKE.
SECOND WEEK OF THE REGULAR SEASON!
 CONTINUATION OF THE ENGAGEMENT OF THE EMINENT
AMERICAN ACTOR!
MR. E. L. DAVENPORT
 FIRST TIME ON ANY STAGE OF
THE TRAGEDY
 By G. H. BOKER, Esq., author of "Calaynos," "Betrothal," &c., called
Francesca da Rimini
 IN WHICH THE EMINENT AMERICAN ACTOR
MR. E. L. DAVENPORT
 Will appear in an entirely
ORIGINAL CHARACTER!
 "This production of a popular and most talented Native Author will be brought forward with the efficient aid of
ESTABLISHED PERFORMERS!
NEW AND APPROPRIATE SCENERY!
COSTUMES, PROPERTIES, DECORATIONS!
APPOINTMENTS, MUSIC and PAGANTRY!
WEDNESDAY EVENING, SEPT. 26, 1855.
 Will be presented the Tragedy, in five acts, by G. H. BOKER, Esq., entitled
FRANCESCA DA RIMINI
 CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.
QUELERS.
 Malatesta, (Lord of Rimini) Mr. E. L. DAVENPORT
 LANCOTTO "his son" Mr. Leavitt
 Paolo, (the Father) Mr. C. Fisher
 Rosalva "Young Woman—cousin of Paolo" Mr. Harcourt
 Malatesta, (Grandfather) Mr. Cutler
 Rosa, (a Frenchman) Mr. Vincent
 Noble, Malatesta, Paolo, Troubadours, Attendants, &c., &c.
CHIEFLINE.
 Guido de Polenta, (Lord of Ravenna) Mr. Canell
 The Cardinal, Yorkshire Mr. Willet
 Forester "Noble of Malatesta's Court" Mr. Josiah
 Rocco, (Captain of the Guard) Mr. Furbush
 Antonio, (a leader of the Forces) Mr. Wright
 Hon. Dismissal of the Church, Soldiers, Pages, Roman Cavalry, Messengers, &c.
 Francesca da Rimini, (Daughter of Guido) Miss Fount
 Ultra, (her attendant) Miss J. Manservant
 To coincide with the popular Piece of
POOR PILICODDY
 Mr. Pilicoddy, Mr. W. A. Chapman; Capt. O'Sullivan, Mr. Seymour
 Mrs. Pilicoddy, Mrs. W. A. Chapman; Miss O'Sullivan, Mrs. S. J. Manservant
 Genl. Bunt, Miss J. Manservant
MR. E. L. DAVENPORT
 Will appear.
 TREASURER MR. P. WARREN
 ASSISTANT TREASURER MR. HADLEY
 "Does open at three o'clock past 5 o'clock—Performances will commence at half past 7, precisely.
 General & Executive, Private, and Public Boxes, Dressing and Baggage—Free."

Facsimile of the play-bill of the first production,
1855.

How close it brings those days to us to remember that Mr. Couldock only died in 1898!

The stage success of "Calaynos" may surprise those who know Boker only as

the author of "Francesca da Rimini," but from the start he wrote definitely for the stage. His next play, "Anne Boleyn," was intended for Charlotte Cushman, and he had assurances from her that she would produce it. He had overtures, too, from the Haymarket Theatre in London, but neither of these negotiations bore fruit.

Boker next tried romantic comedy. "The Betrothal" was played first at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia on September 25, 1850, and ran for ten nights—a real success in those days of stock companies. It went to the Broadway Theatre in November and had two runs, and was again played in Philadelphia in 1851, where, according to Charles Durang, who saw it, it achieved "as brilliant success as any play within the walls of this edifice." When we remember that the Walnut is the oldest theatre in America, and even then had seen Forrest in "King Lear" and "The Gladiator," the evidence of Durang is at least interesting. "The Betrothal" is a delightful comedy, laid in Tuscany in that pleasantly indeterminate time which may be best described as the age of Romeo and Juliet. The plot is as ancient as human nature. Count Juranio and Costanza di Tiburzzi love impetuously and charmingly in an atmosphere shadowed at first by her obligation to wed Marzio, the rich merchant whose gold is to save her father from ruin. The usual romantic comedy provided such lovers with confidants whose sole excuse for being lay in the necessity of the hero and heroine to have some one with whom to talk. But Filippia and Salvatore, who fill these rôles in "The Betrothal," are real people who carry on the campaign against Marzio, prevent his poisoning scheme, and must have been a pure delight upon the stage. "The Betrothal" was not a success in London. Boker felt it had not been fairly treated, and he might well have been chagrined that the real poetic and dramatic worth of the play could not have been appreciated by audiences that had welcomed with shouts of approval "Yankee Hill" and "Dan Marble," in eccentric Yankee characters, or "Jumping Jim Crow" Rice, in negro burlesque. But English audiences were looking for the peculiar; not the artistic, in American products.



The Lawrence Barrett production of *Francesca da Rimini*, 1882.
Ben Rogers as Malatesto; Lawrence Barrett as Lanciotto; Otis Skinner as Paolo;
Louis James as Pepé.

Among the manuscripts, guarded by the loving care of Mrs. George Boker, the playwright's daughter-in-law, lies "The World a Mask," acted at the Walnut Street Theatre on April 21, 1851, and running for eight nights. The play, which has never been printed, was laid in London in 1851, and is a social satire, in which intrigue provides the motive. Boker's strength does not show in this kind of trifling, but "The World a Mask" is noteworthy among the many social comedies of the period in having in its cast real gentlemen and gentlewomen. "The Widow's Marriage," a much better comedy, written in 1852, was accepted by Marshall, the manager of the Walnut

Street and Broadway Theatres, but he was unable to find an actress capable of impersonating "Lady Goldstraw," the central character.

Boker was passionately fond of the romantic history contained in the Spanish chronicles of the fourteenth century, and from this prolific source he produced his next play, "Leonor de Guzman," which was written for Julia Dean, then one of the leading actresses of the American stage. In a letter from Boker to R. H. Stoddard he tells his friend that "You need not be anxious about 'Leonor.' We had her out last Monday (October 3, 1853), and she was as successful as you or I could hope for." The New York per-

formance came in April, 1854, to houses considerably better even than in Philadelphia. "Leonor de Guzman" is a tragedy whose central character is the mistress of Alphonso XII of Castile, pictured as a noble woman, who had sinned only in her love for the king, and who had worked for the good of the kingdom while her power was at its summit.

The climax of Boker's dramatic work came with "Francesca da Rimini." A long period of preparation culminated in the intense fever of composition in which such masterpieces are perhaps best created. Coming to the work with his plan perfectly matured, he began to write at nine o'clock at night, and at four o'clock in the morning he would retire for five hours' sleep. The day was spent in thinking over his next night's labor. The result was the greatest play that was written in English during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, a play which was revived with success in the twentieth, and which could be played to-day without alteration. For the passions that move Lanciotto, Paolo, and Francesca "are not of an age—they are for all time." Their story has been a favorite one since Dante described his meeting with the lovers to whom the gates of hell were merely an incident so long as they were not divided. Silvio Pellico had written a dramatic version in Italian and Leigh Hunt a narrative version, but Boker's conception of the characters was his own. He skilfully blended historical facts and tradition to create a situation in which two noble natures, Paolo and Francesca, are tricked by the machinations of two wily lords of the rival Italian states of Ravenna and Rimini, first into love and then into crime and death. Human sympathy goes out to the unhappy wife and brother of Prince Lanciotto of Rimini, who loved each other and who died by his hand. But Boker was the first to create in Lanciotto what Francesca calls "the noblest heart in Rimini." Misshapen in body, but with a great soul, he is morbidly sensitive, and loves his brother not only with natural affection but also with admiration for that physical perfection that has been denied him. Delicately Boker depicts that craving for affection on the part of a man no longer young which, when made concrete by being centred upon a young and

beautiful woman, becomes one of the most real motives of life and of art. Delicately, too, is Francesca introduced to us, not a mere receptive character, as in Leigh Hunt's earlier narrative version, or in Stephen Phillips' later play, but alive and with a great capacity for love. She is ready to love Lanciotto, and when she mistakes his deputy, Paolo, for him, she gives her heart. Her girlish attempt to hide her pain, when she discovers how she has been duped, is of the essence of drama, for the words seem wrung out of her soul:

"I'm glad I kept my heart safe, after all.
There was my cunning. I have paid them back
... On my faith,
I would not live another wicked day,
Here in Ravenna, only for the fear
That I should take to lying, with the rest.
Ha! Ha! it makes me merry, when I think
How safe I kept this little heart of mine!"

Those who have seen "Francesca da Rimini" upon the stage will hardly forget the scene in the third act when Francesca discovers the cheat and when Lanciotto, misconstruing her apparent willingness to go on with the marriage, believes that she is beginning to care for him. Almost at once, however, he is led to suspicion by the jester, Pepé. Pepé's motive is revenge for insults offered him by Lanciotto and by Paolo. He is a human instrument and a natural one, by which the catastrophe is brought about. In Hunt's version the murmurs of Francesca in her sleep bring about the revelation. In Phillips's the prophecies of a blind nurse, aided somewhat by the jealousy of Giovanni's cousin, are the means to the end. The nurse of Phillips is probably due to a suggestion in Boker's play, that a nurse in the Malatesta family has prophesied that some day the blood of Guido da Polenta would mingle with theirs. Boker only uses this supernatural suggestion in its proper place, the background. In D'Annunzio's later version a third brother is invented to bring about the catastrophe, while in Marion Crawford's French version, written for Sara Bernhardt, a daughter of Francesca unconsciously betrays the lovers. But Pepé is the best of all the agents of the tragedy, which moves on inevitably. Lanciotto's absence is naturally accounted for by the incursion of the Ghibellines,



Otis Skinner as Paolo, 1882.

and thus the way is left open for the great love scene between Paolo and Francesca, in which they read of the love of Lancelot and Guinevere, how

"Each heart was listening to the other beat" until passion overcomes them and they read no more.

Francesca is a real mediæval Italian. She cries to him:

"Take me all,—
Body and soul. The women of our clime
Do never give away but half a heart:
I have not part to give, part to withhold,
In selfish safety."

The final scene rises even beyond this one in dramatic effectiveness. Paolo decides to go, but overnight Francesca's nature has deepened through sin's experience and she begs him not to leave her to the torture of Lanciotto's unloved caresses. Then Lanciotto enters. Pepé has run to camp to betray the lovers, and Lanciotto, with the honor of his house ever before him, kills the messenger of shame for his reward, and hastens to Rimini.

The lovers refuse to defend themselves, though he begs them to deny their crime, longing to believe them even against the

evidence of his senses. Then he kills them, and when the two fathers reproach him he says:

"Be satisfied with what you see. You two
Began this tragedy, I finished it.
Here, by these bodies, let us reckon up
Our crimes together. Why, how still they lie!
A moment since, they walked, and talked, and
kissed!
Defied me to my face, dishonored me!
They had the power to do it then; but now,
Poor souls, who'll shield them in eternity?
Father, the honor of our house is safe:
I have the secret."

And then the great love for his brother overcomes him and he bursts out:

"O God! I cannot cheat myself with words!
I loved him more than honor—more than life—
This man, Paolo—this stark, bleeding corpse!
Here let me rest, till God awake us all!"

Comparisons between plays in different languages are usually idle, but there can be no question of the superiority of Boker's "*Francesca da Rimini*" to any other version in English. Stephen Phillips gave us a spectacle in which some charming abstractions, buffeted by fate, belong to no time or place. Boker placed us in the midst of Italians of the thirteenth century, and yet their joy and sorrow appeal across the centuries to us to-day.

"*Francesca da Rimini*" was performed for the first time at the Broadway Theatre, New York, on September 26, 1855. E. L. Davenport played "*Lanciotto*," Madame Ponisi "*Francesca*," and James W. Lanergan, "*Paolo*." Mrs. John Drew played "*Francesca*" in Philadelphia. It was revived by Lawrence Barrett in 1882, the original performance taking place at Haverly's Theatre, Philadelphia, September 14. Mr. Barrett played "*Lanciotto*"; Otis Skinner, "*Paolo*"; and Miss Marie Wainwright, "*Francesca*." The play proved one of the greatest successes of Lawrence Barrett's career. On August 22, 1901, Otis Skinner again revived the play, at the Chicago Opera House, taking the part of "*Lanciotto*," Aubrey Boucicault playing "*Paolo*," and Miss Marcia Van Dresser, "*Francesca*." This revival, which visited the principal cities in the United States, forms one of my imperishable stage memories. In fact, I can remember nothing that overtops it, except Booth in "*King Lear*" and Irving in "*The Merchant of Venice*."

Francesca was the height of Boker's

dramatic achievement. "*The Bankrupt*," laid in Philadelphia in 1850, in which Julia Dean acted at the Broadway Theatre in December 1855, is the poorest of his plays. "*Königsmark*," written in 1857 but not published until 1869, was never acted. Theatrical conditions, under the influence of Dion Boucicault, who developed the travelling company and the long runs of dramatized novels, became less favorable to work like Boker's. He had the satisfaction of knowing, however, that the two volumes of "*Plays and Poems*," published in 1856, contained lyrics that rank with the best in this country, and sonnets which had been selected by Leigh Hunt for inclusion in his anthology.

Boker had an especial gift for the sonnet treating of public affairs, and at the time of the Crimean War, when Russia seemed to be a menace to the peace of Europe, he began the series of sonnets to England, some of which were reprinted during the Great War on account of their strong sentiment for Great Britain. His vigorous sonnets to America, beginning "*What, cringe to Europe?*" gave earnest of that power that was to be turned to great service in the Civil War. The limits of such an article as this forbid any critical analysis of his love sonnets, with their haunting beauty of phrase, or his narratives, such as the exquisite celebration of faith in "*The Ivory Carver*," or the vivid study of the supernatural in "*The Legend of the Hounds*." Boker had the satisfaction to possess the critical approval as well as the personal friendship of Bayard Taylor, Richard Henry Stoddard, Charles Godfrey Leland, and others of that group of writers of the Middle States who grew up, unfortunately for themselves, under the overwhelming shadow of the literary supremacy of New England. But for a few years after his father's death, in 1857, Boker was making a brave and successful fight to rescue Charles Boker's name from calumny and his property from seizure. It was not until 1873 that a final decision was made which established the justice of Boker's cause and proved that his father had saved, not wrecked, the Girard National Bank. And soon there came an issue which turned the forces of Boker's nature into a sterner channel.

When the Civil War broke out Phila-

delphia was too near Mason and Dixon's line not to be debatable ground. Across the intricate web of her social, financial, and commercial interests the issue of Union or Disunion ran in an uncertain line.

It was natural that many of her citizens, tied to the South by family relationship, should already feel the agony of decision. It was hard, too, for the man who loved his country, but who felt that no sovereign State should be coerced, to act wisely; for the sharp logic of events was fighting on the side of those to whom right or wrong knows no middle ground. While the mob were harassing the houses of those who were suspected of siding with the South, Boker was exerting his influence in the sphere where it was most needed. At that time probably the oldest and best-established families were adherents of the Democratic party. Boker was a Democrat who

guardian, and how "that Copperhead" declined to sign his papers!

Boker was one of those to whom the most definite action seemed best. He left his party, joined the Republican, and be-

came one of the most prominent in its councils. With others he formed a club which at first met secretly, then more openly became the "Union Club," and resulted finally in the "Union League," the first, I believe, of the many organizations of the kind. As its secretary he threw the great weight of his social and financial prestige in the scale of his national duty, and he made the club the centre of the most uncompromising Union and party sentiment. The Union League of Philadelphia is now more famous for its social and gastronomic qualities than its political flavor, though it still parades on occasions of Republican national victory, sometimes even be-



Otis Skinner as Lanciotto, 1901-1902.

had voted for Buchanan, and he belonged also to the patrician element. He saw the party divided, the great majority becoming "War Democrats" and placing their partisan devotion below their devotion to the nation, the minority becoming "Copperheads." So bitter became the divisions in social and business life that long associations were disrupted; even the Wistar parties discontinued their meetings. Families, too, were divided in their allegiance. My father has told me how as a boy of sixteen he volunteered for service in the army and was told he could be taken only with the consent of his

fore the returns are entirely in! But in '61 it was the emblem of a great crusade, and only those who have read the records of those stormy days in Philadelphia can estimate the significance of the work that George Boker and his associates did in holding the inner trench in a city where social influence counts so much as it has always done in Philadelphia. Years afterward, in an address made at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Union League, Boker showed that the memories of that bitter conflict still rankled in his soul.

Dramatist as he was, it was natural

that he should select scenes of conflict in the Civil War for poetic treatment, and that he should visualize events both from his experience and his imagination. His volume, "Poems of the War," published in 1864, contains the best of his martial verse. Much of it, like all war verse, was struck out hastily on the demand of an occasion and has perished with it. But enough remains to place him, with Lowell, Brownell, and Mrs. Stowe, in the front rank of Northern Civil War poets. Boker was in Washington during the first battle of Bull Run and he described well the rout and the shame of that defeat, and also the hope that McClellan's leadership soon gave to the Union. It is interesting to read of the "war-wise hero of the West," who had grown up with him in Philadelphia and whom he attacked so bitterly later in his verses, "Tardy George," when, in company with the impatient nation, he failed to realize the handicaps under which McClellan was struggling. "Tardy George" broke up a friendship of long standing, and it is significant that Boker did not reprint it in "Poems of the War," while he left his earlier tribute intact. Among the war verses there stands out his touching "Dirge for a Soldier," written in memory of General Philip Kearny; while his stirring "Black Regiment," celebrating the attack of the colored troops on Port Hudson in May, 1863, has also the simplicity of true art. Best of all is the "Ode to America," written March 6, 1862, in a time of discouragement over defeat at home and fear of foreign intervention, but shot through with the lofty courage of the high heart that would not despair of the Republic. Outside of Lowell's great "Commemoration Ode," written three years later, there is no poetry wrung out of our great conflict more exalted than the close:

"Resume thy place, unchallenged now,
Nor bow thy glories to the haughtiest brow
That wears a royal crown!
False prophets scowled thee down,
And whispered darkly of thy coming fate:
The cause, the way, the date,
They wrote for thee with the slow augur's hand,—
Their lies were scrawled in sand!
They perished utterly!
What is the splendor of the diadem,
The gilded throne, the brodered carpet-hem,
The purple robe, the sceptre, and the strain
Of foregone kings, whose race

Defies the Herald's trace,
Before thy regal steps on land and main?
There are some deeds so grand
That their mighty doers stand
Ennobled, in a moment, more than kings;
And such deeds, O land sublime,
Need no sanctity from time;
Their own epoch they create,
Whence all meaner things take date;
Then exalt thee, for such noble deeds were thine!
Envy nothing born of earth,
Rank nor wealth nor ancient birth,
Nor the glittering sorrows of a crown.
O Nation, take instead
Thy measureless renown,
To wrap thy young limbs like a royal stole,
And God's own flaming aureole,
To settle on thy head!"

On July 20, 1865, Boker read the Phi Beta Kappa poem at Harvard, his topic being "Our Heroic Themes." In it he paid one of the earliest and one of the most sympathetic of the many tributes to Lincoln.

"Nor in your prayers forget the martyred Chief,
Fallen for the gospel of your own belief,
Who, ere he mounted to the people's throne,
Asked for your prayers, and joined in them his own.
I knew the man. I see him, as he stands
With gifts of mercy in his outstretched hands;
A kindly light within his gentle eyes,
Sad as the toil in which his heart grew wise;
His lips half parted with the constant smile
That kindled truth, but foiled the deepest guile;
His head bent forward, and his willing ear
Divinely patient right and wrong to hear:
Great in his goodness, humble in his state,
Firm in his purpose, yet not passionate,
He led his people with a tender hand,
And won by love a sway beyond command.
Summoned by lot to mitigate a time
Frenzied with rage, unscrupulous with crime,
He bore his mission with so meek a heart
That Heaven itself took up his people's part;
And when he faltered, helped him ere he fell,
Eking his efforts out by miracle.
No king this man, by grace of God's intent;
No, something better, freeman,—President!
A nature modeled on a higher plan,
Lord of himself, an inborn gentleman!"

That Boker was one of the very first to understand the great patience of Lincoln with the slow justification of events is shown in his pamphlet "The Will of the People," published early in 1864 and now quite rare. After an illuminating analysis of Lincoln's political philosophy he says: "It has been not the least of Mr. Lincoln's merits that he has been content to learn with us. . . . Taking each step as the voice of the people demanded it, he has never been forced to retrace his position. Supported by and supporting the popular feeling, he has moved onward in unison with it, and each new develop-



Aubrey Boucicault as Paolo, 1901-1902.

ment has afforded sure foothold for further progress."

Curiously enough, Lowell read his "Harvard Commemoration Ode" on the next day, July 21, after Boker had delivered his Phi Beta Kappa poem. In a letter to R. W. Gilder Lowell wrote that "two days before the commemoration I had told my friend Child it was impossible. But the next day something gave me a jog and the whole thing came out of me with a rush." Lowell was probably at the Phi Beta Kappa exercises, for he was, of course, a member of the society. Did Bo-

ker's poem give him the "jog"? We know that Lowell's magnificent apostrophe to Lincoln was not read on July 21, but was added later. I like to think that Boker inspired the great New Englander to write the poem with which, as Mr. Brownell so well says, "we can front the world."

Boker had shown by his services during the war, not only in the ways already indicated but also in his labors with the Sanitary Commission and other war industries, that the poet might also be the efficient man of affairs. He was next to prove his fitness for the more delicate art

of diplomacy. We fancy that his services to the party weighed even more with President Grant than his distinction or his fitness, for instead of the missions to England or Spain, where his sympathies would have made him at once at home, he was appointed November 3, 1871, minister to Turkey. In this post he showed his vigor, promptitude, suavity, and sense of the fitness of things. He negotiated two treaties, one securing for the first time recognition by the Ottoman Government that Turkish subjects, when naturalized according to American law, became American citizens, and the other referring to the extradition of criminals. It was among the more intangible phases of diplomatic life, however, that Boker's keen sense of social values made him a valuable representative of a government which needed to impress that characteristic upon European foreign offices. His poise was tested at once, for on the occasion of his presentation to the Sultan, on March 25, 1872, he was horrified to see his son, George Boker, his private secretary and military attaché to the legation, grasp the Sultan's hand and shake it! George Boker also gave his father an early opportunity to show his decision of character. There was no ministerial residence such as the English, French, and Austrian embassies possessed, to represent concretely the power of the United States. But Boker had a keen sense of what was due his country's representatives. Not long after their arrival, his son and his bride were walking along one of the narrow streets of the *Pera*, or foreigners' quarter of Constantinople, when some Turkish soldiers met them and rudely tried to push them aside. Young Boker met the charge firmly and jostled the men out of the way, then reported the incident to his paternal chief. Boker at once ordered his *caïque* and drove to the Porte, to lodge his protest against this treatment of the representative of the republic. He was assured that the incident would not be repeated and orders were immediately issued forbidding Turkish soldiers from entering the *Pera*, and from that time the foreign quarter was free from them.

The Bokers, in default of a residence, engaged a suite at one of the hotels at *Thérapia*, and found the city fascinating in its Oriental quality. It was still old

Constantinople in 1872. Stamboul was the centre of Turkish life, the foreigners were limited to the *Pera*, and over in Asia lay a region to which visitors went at their peril unless well attended, and where they were still "Franks" or "Giaoours" to the inhabitants. On the day after the first excursion of the Americans to this new quarter, from which they returned safely, the Austrian consul and his wife were seized by bandits, he was tied to a tree and his wife was about to be carried off when their screams brought some British soldiers to their assistance.

Much curiosity was excited by the American group on the part of the Turks of all grades, and soon an invitation came, via Madame Dannenhof, the wife of the Swedish minister, from a neighboring Pasha who wished to see the "new American bride," as Mrs. George Boker was called in the diplomatic circle. The visit included, of course, an inspection of the harem, and, after chatting with the first or favorite wife, young Mrs. Boker was somewhat surprised to find Madame Dannenhof requesting that the "second wife" should also be summoned. It was etiquette that the second wife should appear only when her superior officer expressed a wish to that effect! As the visitors were leaving, Mrs. Boker was even more startled by hearing the request that the "new bride" should remain when Madame Dannenhof departed! A determined negative and an equally determined clutch at the skirts of her chaperon ensued, even though the request was endorsed by Madame Dannenhof, who took, Mrs. Boker tells me, a somewhat malicious pleasure in teasing her young charge. It is half a century ago, and yet as these incidents arise in her memory she seems still "young Mrs. Boker" in the perennial youth of the spirit.

But these personal trials were forgotten when General Sherman, who was making a tour of inspection of the military establishments of Europe, came to Constantinople and brought to the minister a new crop of problems. Chief among these was young Frederick Grant, just out of West Point, who came as an aide to General Sherman, and who was a very attractive young man of twenty-one. The Sultan, hearing that the President's son was coming, conceived of the event as



Scene from the third act of the Otis Skinner production of 1901-1902. Otis Skinner as Lanciotto (centre); Aubrey Boucicault as Paolo (left); Marcia Van Dresser as Francesca (right centre).

Lanciotto: "There's not a blessing in the cup of life
I have not tasted of within an hour."

Francesca (aside): "I have betrayed the noblest heart of all!"

a visit from the Crown Prince of the United States, and he insisted upon considering General Sherman in the light of a caretaker to the young sovereign. It took all Boker's tact to handle the situation, for General Sherman was touchy and Lieutenant Grant contributed, now and then, thoughtlessly to the *contretemps*. On one occasion the Sultan was taking the air on the Bosphorus and his boat passed that of the visiting party. The Sultan at that time never spoke to any one, but his gaze was in itself a salute, and he fixed that gaze unmistakably upon Lieutenant Grant. When the boat passed, Grant turned impulsively to Sherman and cried out: "He spoke to me! I saw him!" Sherman was disgusted. "Yes, he did," he growled, "and I'd like to spank you!"

That Boker, notwithstanding these difficulties, had made his mark in Constantinople is shown in the note in "*Le Mémorial Diplomatique*" of May 29, 1875:

"Il a bel air et s'exprime avec une douceur et un calme auxquels ses manières distinguées donnent un charme de plus. Sous ces formes tranquilles, M. Boker cache une volonté que les détours et les lenteurs, souvent calculées, de la diplomatie turque, n'ont jamais pu faire plier."

Despite other limitations, the Turk knew a gentleman when he saw one.

In May, 1875, Mr. and Mrs. Boker left Constantinople for St. Petersburg, Boker having been promoted in January to the post of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia. He was presented to the Emperor July 24, 1875, and from that time to the date of his recall in January, 1878, he was one of the personal favorites of Alexander II. So fond was the Emperor of Boker that Gortchakoff, the Chancellor, came to him at his recall and begged him to prepare his successor for a frigid reception. The Emperor, he said, was unable to understand why the political necessities of a President required the recall of an Envoy so perfectly satisfactory to the sovereign to whom he was accredited. Boker's first accomplishment was the reestablishment of cordial relations between the two countries, which seem to have grown lukewarm. There was even doubt whether Russia would participate in the Centennial Exposition to be held in Philadelphia in 1876, and Boker felt an espe-

cial satisfaction in securing Russia's cooperation in that event. The account in the *Journal de St. Petersbourg* of the dinner given in Boker's honor by the commission in charge of the Russian section of the Exposition on March 10, 1877, reveals him in that happy attitude and tactful expression which won friends everywhere for himself and for his country. Especially significant seem these words of our envoy in 1877, as he referred to the aid of Russia in our time of trouble during the Civil War. My translation does not reflect the excellence of Boker's French.

"A government of which I have already forgotten the name had proposed to Russia to declare null and void the blockade of the Southern ports by the Northern navy. Russia responded by an emphatic 'No.' The same government then suggested that Russia should at least make no opposition if the nation in question declared the blockade null and void. Again Russia replied by an equally categorical negative. *In return Russia, if it is ever necessary, may count upon our support, our assistance, always and at once.*"

In the light of this promise the activities of the American Relief Expedition and the pronouncement of the "Colby Doctrine," that the territory of Russia should not be dismembered, are pleasant to contemplate.

The accomplishment of an American minister in those days may be estimated quite as much in terms of pitfalls avoided as of deeds accomplished. It was a disturbed and suspicious Europe, sowing already the seeds of future ruin; and Boker's letters at the time speak of endless correspondence, of hurried visits to the Emperor at Gortchakoff's suggestion. These may have been official or social, of course, and invitations to Mrs. Boker reflect the form and ceremony of the Imperial Court, whether at the "Blessing of the Neva," at the Winter Palace, or at some more mundane occasion. There is a friendly warning to wear "robe montante et chapeau" at that quaint religious ceremony when even the Emperor and the Grand Dukes had to shiver in the January cold while a large hole was cut in the ice, and the great golden cross was dipped in the river by the Metropolitan of St. Petersburg.

The American diplomat was in many respects a puzzle to the Eastern mind. The

Khedive on one occasion indicated that in return for a certain service Boker had rendered him, a very large sum of money was at his disposal. Boker quietly declined the offer. Then the word came that the transaction would be secret and that recently a European diplomat had accepted a similar offer, and the Khedive expected to pay it. But Boker again refused in such a way that neither his personal dignity nor the Khedive's pride was hurt.

Boker returned to Philadelphia in 1878, but not to rest. In 1882 he pilloried his father's enemies in his "Book of the Dead." But his interest in the stage was reawakened by the production of "Francesca da Rimini" in 1882, and he wrote in 1885 and 1886 two more plays, "Nydia" and "Glaucus." Both of these are dramatic versions of "The Last Days of Pompeii," owing, however, nothing but the main plot to Bulwer's story. "Nydia" seems to be the stage version and was written for Lawrence Barrett, but was never played. These later plays contain some of the finest poetry he wrote. The hopeless passion of Nydia, the blind girl, for Glaucus is revealed in a striking passage, in which she describes a conflict in another's soul:

"Lost in the splendor of the man she loved,
Her passion was the secret of her breast,
She dared not tell it to an earthly thing,
Lest gossip Echo, from her hollow cave,
Should spread her story to the jeering land.
O no, she whispered to the mystic skies,
Distant and voiceless,—to her mother's soul,
Silent as death, that stood between their lives,—
The bitter story which she knew too well.
Nothing was pitiful. The raging clouds,
With thunder upon thunder, shouted, fool!
Her mother's voice, as fine and thin as songs
Sung to an ailing infant, murmured, fool!
And her own heart . . . there was the hopeless
pang . . .
Muttered forever, fool! and fool! and fool!"

Among the manuscripts are carefully prepared revisions of all his plays, which he evidently intended to print in a collected edition of his works in 1886. But to the loss of our literature, this was not done; and when his death came, on January 2, 1890, renewed interest in his poetry resulted simply in the fifth edition of the two volumes of 1856 and a reprint of the "Poems of the War."

That Boker has never received adequate recognition as a man of letters is apparent to any one who reads his work.

It is not so easy to assign reasons for this neglect. Perhaps one explanation is to be found in the volume which records the reception tendered him by the Union League in 1871, when he was about to depart for Turkey. The speeches and letters of appreciation were many, but they fall sharply into two groups. The letters from out of town, from Bryant, Holmes, Lowell, Longfellow, Whipple, Aldrich, Stedman, Curtis, and others, all pay their tribute to the poet and dramatist. But to the speakers from his native city and State, that sphere of his activity seemed to be almost unknown, except to Bayard Taylor, who paid him a graceful tribute in verse. Aldrich put the whole thing in a nutshell when he wrote: "It is pleasant to see Philadelphia treating one of her own distinguished men of letters as if he were a distinguished man of letters from somewhere else." But Aldrich did not hear the speeches at the reception!

In an age when so much that is worthless is printed and reprinted it is a grim commentary on our national taste that the work of one of the greatest of our dramatists should be practically unavailable except for "Francesca da Rimini." The foreign atmosphere of his plays cannot account for this condition, for we have never hesitated to prefer the exotic, and, in any case, "Hamlet" and "The Merchant of Venice" provide him sufficient justification. His real and strong love for his country rings in the lyrics of the Civil War and in his sonnets to America. His native verse is all the more significant because it has none of the parochial whoop in it. It is the deep and sincere patriotism of one who has known other lands and races but remains content with our own inheritance and culture. Much as he loved European literatures and peoples he never hesitated to criticise shortcomings when he saw them, and he had the social courage to love his own country best.

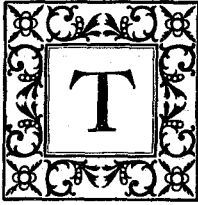
Perhaps when we are weary of discovering and rediscovering what is base or banal in our civilization we may turn back for comfort to the poets who wrought for the sake of the beauty that is universal and with the art that defies the limitations of time or space. And if that day ever dawns, George Boker may come at last into his own.

From Immigrant to Inventor

BY MICHAEL PUPIN

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X.—THE FIRST PERIOD OF MY ACADEMIC CAREER AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



THE new "Department of Electrical Engineering in the School of Mines of Columbia College" had announced its courses of instruction quite a number of months before I arrived in New York. The late Francis Bacon Crocker, at that time the newly appointed instructor in electrical engineering and my future colleague and lifelong friend, had been consulted with regard to these courses, and he was most liberal to the theoretical side, which was to be my share of the instruction. He attached much importance to the fundamental theory, although he was a practical engineer. The new department was to be independent from the other scientific departments. We had some difficulty, however, in maintaining that independence; the older departments of engineering showed a disposition to claim some right of guardianship over the new infant department. For instance, many chemists thought that electrical engineering was largely chemistry on account of the storage batteries, the galvanic cells, and the electrochemical processes which formed an important part of the electrical operations in the early history of applied electricity. Others claimed that, since mechanical engineering attended to the design and the construction of electromagnetic generators and to the power plant which furnished the driving power, electrical engineering was, therefore, largely mechanical engineering.

Crocker and I maintained that there was an electrical science which is the real soul of electrical engineering, and that every other abstract science or its application was an incident only in electrical engineering. We won out in spite of the

fact that at other institutions of higher learning in the United States electrical engineering was taught in the departments of physics or of mechanical engineering. But it was not an easy matter in those days to persuade people that the electrical science with its applications was then, or that it ever would be, big enough to need a department of its own, like, for instance, civil engineering.

A small brick shed, a temporary structure, had been built at Columbia College to accommodate the new department. The students called it the "cowshed," and the boy who invented the name did not indulge in any stretching of his imagination. It certainly looked like a cowshed. The laboratory equipment consisted of a dynamo, a motor, and an alternator, with some so-called practical measuring instruments. When I compared the facilities of the new "Department of Electrical Engineering at Columbia College" with that of the Polytechnic School in Berlin, I felt somewhat humbled, but not discouraged. I said to Crocker: "Our guns are small and few in number; the men behind the guns will have to expand much beyond their present size if this department is to make any impression upon the electrical art." "Pupin," said Crocker, "you have no idea how rapidly a young fellow grows when he tries to teach a new subject to poorly prepared beginners."

Crocker and I were given to understand that any additional equipment during the first year would have to be bought from contributions outside of the university. We raised some money by giving a course of twelve popular lectures for which we charged ten dollars per person. Each lecture lasted two hours; we were somewhat dubious about their quality, and so we provided a generous quantity. We raised in this manner three hundred dol-