

JAMES O'NEILL

1849 – 1920

Yes: Maybe life overdid the lesson for me and made a dollar worth too much and the time came when that mistake ruined my career as a fine actor: I've never admitted this to anyone before lad but tonight I'm so heartsick I feel at the end of everything and what's the use of fake pride and and pretense: That God damned play I bought for a song and made such a great success in: A great money success: It ruined me with a promise of an easy fortune: I didn't want to do anything else and by the time I'd woke up to the fact I'd become a slave to the damned thing and did other plays it was too late: They had identified me with that one part and didn't want me in anything else: They were right too: I'd lost the great talent I once had through years of easy repetition: Never learning a new part: Never really working hard: Thirty Five to Forty thousand dollars net profit a season like snapping your fingers: It was too great a temptation: Yet before I bought the damned thing I was considered one of the three or four young actors with the greatest artistic promise in America: I'd worked like hell: I'd left a good job as a machinist to take supers' parts because I loved the theatre: I was wild with ambition: I read all the plays ever written: I studied Shakespeare as you'd study the bible: I educated my Self: I got rid of an Irish brogue you could cut with a knife: I loved Shakespeare: I would have acted in any of his plays for nothing: For the joy of being alive in his great poetry: And I acted well in him: I felt inspired by him: I could have been a great Shakespearean actor: If I'd kept on: I know that: In 1874 when Edwin Booth came to the theatre in Chicago where I was leading man I played Cassius to his Brutus one night: Brutus to his Cassius the next: Othello to his Iago and so on: The first night I played Othello he said to our Manager: That young man is playing Othello better than I ever did: That from Booth the greatest actor of his day or any other: And it was true: And I was only twenty seven years old: As I look back at it now that night was the high spot in my career: I had life where I wanted it: And for a time after that I kept on upward with ambition high: Married your mother: Ask her what I was like in those days: Her love was an added incentive to ambition: But a few years later my good bad luck made me find the big money maker: It wasn't that in my eyes at first: It was a great romantic part I knew I could play better than anyone: But it was a great box office success from the start: And then life had me where it wanted me: At from thirty five to forty five thousand net profit a season: A fortune in those days: Or even in these: The praise Edwin Booth gave my Othello: I made the manager put down the exact words in writing: I kept it in my wallet for years: I used to read it every once in a while until it made me feel so bad I didn't want to face it anymore:

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*THE
WORLD
IS MINE!*

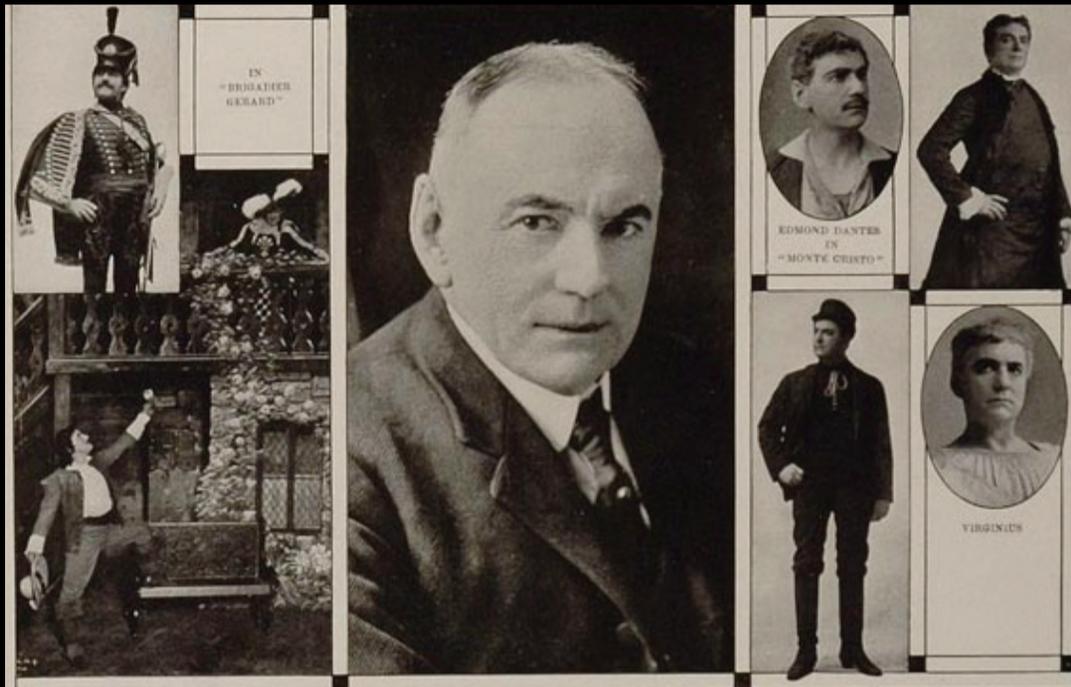
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NOTES:



IN "THE MUSKETEERS"

MR. JAMES O'NEILL

IN "THE MANXMAN"

ALTHOUGH James O'Neill is one of the most admired and forceful actors of mature parts on the American stage today and he is best known to this generation for his many performances of "Monte Cristo," his beginnings were at the elbow of the giants of the classic period of our theatre's history, and the variety and prominence of his own accomplishments in his prime furnish one of the inspiring records in that same history.

Mr. O'Neill was born in Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1849. He was brought across the Atlantic when young and during the Civil War he sold uniforms in his brother-in-law's store in Norfolk, Virginia. His desire to become an actor was fired by the wartime performances he saw at the old theatre in the Virginia seaport. In those days the great stars traveled alone and played with stock companies in the principal cities. Mr. O'Neill first acted with one of these companies at the National Theatre in Cincinnati, then with Ford's in Baltimore,

and with McVicker's in Chicago as leading man at twenty-three. During these engagements he supported Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Forrest, Edwin Booth and Adelaide Neilson who said he was the best Romeo she had ever had. His next move was to Hooley's Theatre, in the same city, as a stock star and thence direct to San Francisco where, at the Baldwin, he was for three years the most admired actor in the city.

Here, much against his will, he participated in one of the turbulent sensations of stage history. The Passion Play was produced and he was persuaded to play the part of Christ. For this the whole country was aroused and he was imprisoned. He was released shortly and fined fifty dollars "for a misdemeanor" and Henry E. Abbey engaged him to come to New York and act the same rôle. But public protests prevented and instead Mr. O'Neill entered upon a three years' stay at A. M. Palmer's Union Square Theatre in leading parts. The fame of this theatre was then at its height. Mr. O'Neill made his debut there in a revival of "The Two Orphans," October 2, 1876. Among the rôles he

created were Maurice in "Miss Moulton," with Clara Morris, and Vladimir in "The Danicheffs." As early as April 21, 1875, when a stock star at Hooley's Theatre in Chicago, he acted the leading rôle in Fechter's version of Dumas's "The Count of Monte Cristo" and in 1883 he acted it again in San Francisco with only three rehearsals. The critics damned it, but he later rehearsed it carefully and produced it in such a way as to make it the extraordinary success it has been. No American actor has played one rôle oftener than James O'Neill has played Edmond Dantes unless Joseph Jefferson rivaled his record with Rip Van Winkle.

Mr. O'Neill's later efforts have all been in the way of releasing himself from the demand for this character and he has given many fine and interesting performances, notably D'Artagnan in "The Musketeers," in "The Manxman," "Brigadier Gerard," and "Virginius." His latest performance is in support of Viola Allen in Marion Crawford's "The White Sister," as Monsignore Saracinesca, which reveals a beautiful and ripened art.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_O%27Neill_%28actor%29

The high spot of *The Count Of Monte Cristo* occurred when James O'Neil as the escaped wrongfully imprisoned convict Edmund Dantes discovering a cave full of treasure screams:

THE WORLD IS MINE!