

MEMORIES OF FIFTY YEARS

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Memories of fifty years by Lester Wallack & Laurence Hutton

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LESTER WALLACK & LAURENCE HUTTON

**MEMORIES OF
FIFTY YEARS**



WILLIAM S. NOYES

MEMORIES OF
FIFTY YEARS

BY
LESTER WALLACK

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LAURENCE HUTTON

WITH PORTRAITS AND FAC-SIMILES

NEW-YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1889.

College
Library

FM
S. J. P.
W. E. A. I.

PREFACE.

The best talk, proverbially, is that which escapes up the open chimney, and cannot be repeated. The following papers are simply the result of an effort to catch and preserve the familiar talk of a veteran of the stage on its way to the fireplace of a certain front room in Thirty-fourth Street, New York: They do not pretend to be complete or consecutive; or even to be what is termed literature: merely the Social and Professional Memories of Half a Century, affectionately inscribed to the audiences the speaker had addressed in other days, and in other ways.

Too feeble in health during the last winter of his life to perform the manual labor of writing his reminiscences or even to attempt studied dictation, Mr. Wallack was able only to recount in familiar conversation with a responsive listener, and from time to time, these stories and incidents of his long

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career, which were taken down by a stenographer literally and without omission. His sudden death left the work in its present fragmentary and unfinished state, and although he revised and corrected the greater part of it, certain portions he never saw after they were transcribed. The matter has been arranged as far as possible in chronological order, but in other respects it stands here as it fell from his lips.

The Biographical Sketch, the Illustrations, the Appendix, and the Index have been added by the Editor. The portraits of Mr. Wallack and of his friends and contemporaries are reproduced, with one or two exceptions, from original drawings and life photographs, nearly all of which have never before been engraved. The List of Characters Played by Mr. Lester Wallack—some three hundred in number—is believed to be complete. It has been compiled from the records of Wallack's Theatre and from many files of old playbills in different collections, and in its preparation the Editor has been assisted by Mr. Henry Edwards, Mr. John Gilbert, Mr. Joseph N. Ireland, Mr. Charles C. Moreau, Mr. William Winter, Mr. Charles E. Wallack, and Mrs.

Lester Wallack, to whom he wishes here to express his thanks.

How much of the charm of these papers has been lost in the transcription only those familiar with Mr. Wallack's powers as a story-teller can ever know. The warmth and the brightness of the narration have been preserved, but the accents, the modulations, the gesture and the expression—a very great part, if not the best part, of his talk—the open chimney has received and dispersed forever.

LAURENCE HUTTON.

"The Players."

January, 1889.

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*. The portraits of actors and actresses are from rare life photographs in the collection of the Editor.

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