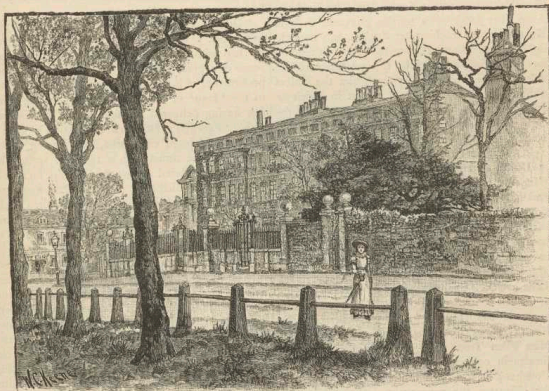


Kean had one weakness common to the members of his precarious profession: he was often heard to declare that he was born upon St. Patrick's day (*i.e.*, 17th March), 1787. Yet, latterly, he as positively affirmed that his birth took place in November, 1790! His parentage was also continually questioned by himself; and he frequently, to many persons who were not particularly in his confidence, affirmed his belief to be that Mrs. Carey was not his mother, but that he owed his

reciting Satan's "Address to the Sun," and occasionally acting "Shylock," &c., but who concluded his efforts by a failure in "Richard III." at Covent Garden Theatre, in September, 1815. Edwards was only five or six years older than Kean, and the "boy" was so much "elder than his looks" that they became constant companions. Edwards to his death affirmed that "he had taught Kean all he knew:" this was but the idle expression of a clever but disappointed man; how-



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existence to a lady who through life assumed the title of his aunt; that lady was, towards the end of the last century, under the protection of the Duke of Norfolk, and was introduced by him to Garrick, who gave her an introduction to the then managers of Drury, where she appeared soon after the death of the British Roscius.

About 1800, at the Rolls Rooms, Chancery Lane, young Kean, then described as "the infant prodigy, Master Carey," gave readings; amid other things, he actually read the whole of Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice." Many of the persons who were then stage-struck were attracted by the singularity of a child making such an attempt; among others, one Edwards, who at one time appeared at various benefits in the metropolis,

ever, it is worthy of remark that Edwards, in common with all others who knew Kean intimately as a boy, always declared that he was then "a splendid actor, and that many of his effects (at the age of fourteen) were quite as startling as any of his mature performances." Byron, who mingled at the time in all ranks of theatrical society, says, "Kean began by acting 'Richard the Third' when quite a boy, and gave all the promise of what he afterwards became." * That such was the case there is abundant evidence. Cobham, an actor long known at the minor theatres, who was a playmate of Kean, remembered hearing all the amateur or private actors of the time (1802) say that "Carey

* See Moore's "Life of Byron."