Fanny Kemble Papers: Finding Aid

Processed by The Huntington Library staff in February 1977; supplementary encoding and revision supplied by Brooke Dykman Dockter and Diann Benti.

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Overview of the Collection
Title: Fanny Kemble Papers
Dates (inclusive): 1824-1892
Collection Number: mssHM 45049-45144
Creator: Kemble, Fanny, 1809-1893
Extent: 96 pieces in 1 box
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Abstract: This collection consists of 96 manuscript poems, documents, and correspondence by and related to English actor and author Fanny Kemble (1809-1893). Correspondents include: Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts, Charles John Kean, John Mitchell Kemble, John Poole, Adelaide Kemble Sartoris, and Charles Mayne Young.
Language: English.
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item]. Fanny Kemble Papers, The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
Provenance
46 pieces purchased from Doris E. Harris in March 1966; 50 pieces purchased from Mrs. Fraser Bonnell in November 1976.
- Fanny Kemble letter to [Mr. Heath?], ca. 1854? (Call number: mssHM 63349)
- Kemble, Fanny. Poems (including: Lines After A Summer's Walk ...; Lines on a Young Woman ...; On Reading with Difficulty Some of Schiller's Early Love Poems; Ode Written on the 22d of August--the Berkshire Jubilee; Sonnet: "Thou art to me, like one in a dream"; Lines Written by the Sea Side; Morning by the Sea Side; Noon Day by the Sea Side; and Parting) (Call number: mssFI 724) in James Thomas Fields papers and addenda
- Kemble, Fanny. Sonnet Written among the Ruisn of the Castle at Heidelberg (Call number: mssSL 232) in Spence and Lowell families papers
- Kemble, Fanny. "The voice of childhood blesses me and methought" (Call number: mssSY 219) in William Sotheby letters
Biographical Note
Frances Anne Kemble (1809-1893) was born in London, England, on November 27, 1809, one of five children of Charles and Marie Thérèse (De Camp) Kemble. A niece of Sarah Siddons and the daughter and granddaughter of actors, Frances followed her forebears into the theatre, achieving dramatic success under the better-known name of Fanny Kemble. After acting for three years in Covent Garden and throughout the British Isles, she travelled to the United States in 1832, making her American acting debut on September 18. This American tour marked the first of many trips she would make between England and the U.S. during her lifetime. First appearing in plays and later presenting evenings of dramatic readings, Kemble continued to be in great demand for as many performances as she would consent to give.
Fanny's first American tour came to a close when she married Pierce Mease Butler on June 7, 1834, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Kemble and Butler had two daughters: Sarah (Butler) Wister, born in 1835, and Frances Anne (Butler) Leigh, born in 1838. The family lived first at Butler Place, just outside Philadelphia, and later in the South, where Fanny observed firsthand the institution of slavery on her husband's plantation lands, her view influenced by abolitionist sympathies. Her anti-slavery feelings contributed to the break-up of her marriage and evoked much comment in 1862 upon the publication of her Journal of a Residence on a Georganian Plantation. The years of her marriage were years of tensions and misunderstandings, of separations and reconciliations, for Fanny and her husband. By the time of their final separation,
when Kemble was in England, she had begun appearing on the stage once more.
In 1849 the granting of a divorce decree ended Kemble's marriage to Butler, whereupon she resumed using her maiden name, returning to her dramatic readings now as Mrs. Fanny Kemble. From this time until 1877, she continued to divide her time between England and the United States, making the voyage at frequent intervals, as well as travelling to Italy. During these years Kemble continued her seasons of reading engagements and also turned to writing, publishing a series of articles entitled Old Women's Gossip in the Atlantic Monthly and gathering material for her memoirs.
Late in 1877, Kemble left America for England for the last time and embarked on an active life of writing, social engagements and travel until her death on January 15, 1893.

Scope and Content
The collection consists of manuscript poems, documents, and correspondence by and related to English actor and author Fanny Kemble. Correspondents include: Angela Georgina Burdett-Coutts, Charles John Kean, John Mitchell Kemble, John Poole, Adelaide Kemble Sartoris, and Charles Mayne Young.
Manuscript include:
• Kemble, Frances Anne - poems:
  Autumn - written after a ride by the Schuylkill (HM 45058)
  "Silence - instead of thy sweet song my Bird" (HM 45059)
  Lines Written by the Sea Side (HM 45060)
  Morning by the Sea (HM 45060)
  To Shakespeare (HM 45060)
  Written at Trenton (last ten lines only, HM 45061)
Documents include:
• Kemble, Frances Anne: Ticket of admission for Readings from Shakespeare for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, [1849] (HM 45062)
Correspondence (notable persons and those represented by 3 or more pieces):
• Coutts, Angela Georgina (Baroness Burdett-Coutts): 3 pieces, 1858-1872, to Mary Harness; 1 piece, 1867, Mar. 26, to William Harness
• Kean, Charles John: 3 pieces, 1842-1857, to William Harness
• Kean, Ellen (Tree): 1 piece, 1866, June 5, to William Harness
• Kean, Mary (Chambers): 1 piece, 1840, Dec. 9, to Mary Harness
• Kemble, Frances Anne
  • 6 pieces, 1858-before 1893, to [Unidentified]
  • 1 piece, 1858, Dec. 25, to Bellows
  • 2 pieces, 1869-1877, to Ellen M. Camac
  • 1 piece, 1884, Mar. 3, to Frances Power Cobbe
  • 1 piece, 1853, July 28, to Anna (Shaw) Curtis
  • 3 pieces, 1857-1858, to George William Curtis
  • 15 pieces, 1877-1889, to Blanche Donne
  • 2 pieces, 1877, to Valentia Donne
  • 2 pieces, 1858-1862, to William Bodham Donne
  • 1 piece, 1853, Dec. 25, to Mrs. Filsbee
  • 1 piece, 1844, Apr. 27, to James H. Hackett
  • 5 pieces, 1841-1879, to Mary Harness
  • 25 pieces, 1863-1892, to Polly Hogge
  • 1 piece, 1876, June 20, to William Dean Howells
  • 1 piece, 1865, to Miss Mitchell
  • 1 piece, 1869, to T. B. Pugh
  • 4 pieces, 1862, to Dora Sedgwick
  • 1 piece, 1849, Feb. 8, to George H. Whitney
  • Kemble, Harry: 1 piece, 1859, Jan. 31, to MaryHarness
• Kemble, John Mitchell: 1 piece, 1840, to William Harness
• Poole, John: 1 piece, 1856, Apr. 18, to William Harness
• Sartoris, Adelaide (Kemble): 3 pieces, 1873->1879, to Mary Harness
• Sartoris, Edward John: 2 pieces, 1873->1879, to Mary Harness
• Young, Charles Mayne: 1 piece, 1824, Dec. 23, to Charles Kemble

**Arrangement**
Arranged alphabetically by author.

**Indexing Terms**
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the [Huntington Library's Online Catalog](https://www.huntington.org).  

**Subjects**
Kemble, Fanny, 1809-1893.  
Actresses -- Great Britain -- 19th century -- Archives.  
Actresses -- Great Britain -- 19th century -- Correspondence.

**Forms/Genres**
Letters (correspondence) -- Great Britain -- 19th century.  
Poems -- Great Britain -- 19th century.

**Alternate Authors**
Burdett-Coutts, Angela Georgina.  
Kean, Charles John, 1811?-1868.  
Poole, John, 1786?-1872.  
Kemble, Adelaide.  
Young, Charles Mayne, 1777-1856.

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**Box 1**  
**mssHM 45049-45144**