

Macready, the Tragedian

The following instance presents a pleasing specimen of Mr. Macready's courage and humanity: "When Mr. Macready was performing at the Birmingham Theatre, in August 1823, he had left the house after the Tragedy of *Hamlet*, in which he had delineated, with his accustomed ability, the philosophic Prince, and was proceeding on foot to his lodgings, when he approached a small Cottage in flames, surrounded by a concourse of people, eager to look on, but loth to assist: a cry of distress was heard from within; he instantly threw off his coat and waistcoat, and with the agility of a harlequin, sprung into the parlour window, from whence he soon issued with an infant in his grasp, and was received by the speechless mother in an agony no words can describe. The hat, coat, and waistcoat of the adventurous hero were gone, and he darted through the crowd as he was, towards his lodgings; no one could tell the name of him who had so gallantly ventured his life; and a pecuniary reward of considerable amount was offered to the unknown by a committee of gentlemen. A circumstance occurred which brought him forward against himself; a fellow was apprehended selling a handsome coat, in the sleeve of which was Mr. Macready's name; he was sent for by the police Magistrates, and identified the coat stolen from him at the fire. The papers now lauded his modesty more than his intrepidity, and the thunders of applause that greeted him on his re-appearance at the Theatre must have been the most grateful tribute to a feeling heart. Mr. Macready's goodness did not stop here: his Benefit took place shortly after, and it was a complete *bumper*. He received in an anonymous letter a bank-note for ten pounds, as a tribute to his humanity and courage in rescuing the Cottager's child from the flames. Mr. Macready instantly called upon the unfortunate couple, who had lost their all in the flames, and presented them with that sum, saying, he had been only the mean instrument in the hand of God, in procuring it for them: he also promised to assist the infant as it advanced in years, and we have no doubt but that he will fulfill his word.["]

The [PA] Casket, or, Flowers of literature, wit & sentiment. v. 2, February 1827