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Bernth Lindfors

University of Texas at Austin

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Ira Aldridge with his son Ira Daniel

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Bernth Lindfors

University of Texas at Austin

The Lost Life of Ira Daniel Aldridge (Part 1)

ABSTRACT

The sons of famous men sometimes fail to succeed in life, particularly if they suffer parental neglect in their childhood and youth. Ira Daniel Aldridge is a case in point—a promising lad who in his formative years lacked sustained contact with his father, a celebrated touring black actor whose peripatetic career in the British Isles and later on the European continent kept him away from home for long periods. When the boy rebelled as a teenager, his father sent him abroad, forcing him to make his own way in the world. Ira Daniel settled in Australia, married, and had children, but he found it difficult to support a family. Eventually, he turned to crime and wound up spending many years in prison. The son of an absent father, he too became an absent father to his own sons, who also suffered as a consequence.

ABSTRACT

There are several mysteries surrounding Ira Aldridge's eldest son Ira Daniel. Who was his mother? Why did his father send him away to Australia at age nineteen? What did he do there? Where and when did he die? Are any of his descendants alive in Australia today? Given the lacunae in British and Australian birth, marriage and death records, we may never be able to answer some of these questions, but other documents that have survived provide us with enough hard facts to reconstruct the trajectory of a portion of his life, particularly moments in his childhood and young adulthood that appear to have determined the direction he ultimately decided

to go. It is not an altogether happy story. In a sense Ira Daniel can be seen as a victim of his father's remarkable success as an actor.¹

ENGLAND

By the time the boy was born, his father was forty years old and had been touring the British Isles for more than twenty years as an itinerant performer of tragedies, comedies, melodramas, and farces. An African-American, Ira Aldridge had debuted in London in 1825, playing Othello and other black roles in two metropolitan theatres in a combined run that lasted six months. But further offers of employment in the capital did not materialize, largely because of his race. No theatre could afford the luxury of hiring a black actor as a regular member of its company, so the young thespian, by then known as the African Roscius, began touring the British provinces as a visiting star. He would remain in a city or town for a week or two and then move on to the next engagement, if he could find one. Initially this was a very difficult way to make a living, but eventually, as his fame grew, he was in demand and busy most of the year moving from place to place to take up assignments with local acting companies.

At the end of his first run in London Aldridge had married Margaret Gill, an English woman ten years his elder who normally travelled with him as he made his rounds. She never had any children and would have been about fifty years old when her husband brought Ira Daniel home. We don't know exactly when this happened, and there is some uncertainty about the precise year the boy was born. Aldridge's biographers claim the birth occurred in May 1847, using as evidence a letter the father had written to a friend on 4 June 1860 stating that his son had "just entered his thirteenth year" (qtd. in Marshall and Stock 101 and 249). This dating is confirmed in the manifest of the ship Ira Daniel boarded for Australia early in February 1867, where his age is given as nineteen.² However, in the British census of 1851, which was conducted on March 30th that year, when his father was

¹ I wish to thank Helen Doxford Harris, co-author of *Cops and Robbers: A Guide to Researching 19th Century Police and Criminal Records in Victoria, Australia* (Nunawading: Harriland Press, 1990), for carrying out preliminary research on Ira Daniel Aldridge in Victorian archives and for guiding my own research in Public Record Offices in Victoria and New South Wales. I also want to express my appreciation to Elizabeth O'Callaghan of the Warrnambool and District Historical Society for sending me a list of helpful references to relevant articles in the *Warrnambool Examiner*. And I remain extremely grateful to the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University in Canberra for awarding me a four-month fellowship that gave me the opportunity to conduct my research in ideal conditions.

² Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 7666, Inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) 1852—, fiche B267: 1.

performing in Derby, his age is recorded as two-and-a-half, which would place his birth at around September or October 1848. Also, on most Australian documents that mention his birth, 1848 is the year cited (see, e.g., “Pentridge” 208a). Perhaps these discrepancies were a result of a difference between the date he was actually born and the date he entered Margaret Aldridge’s household. She brought him up as if he were her own son and may have regarded his arrival in her life as a more accurate marker of the beginning of his true existence as a child. It is possible that Ira Daniel knew nothing of the real circumstances of his birth and may have accepted 1848 as the correct year.

No one has discovered who his mother was. There has been a suggestion that she was “an Irish lady” (Scobie 132), and the 1861 census states that he was born at St. Pancras, London, but no birth certificate has surfaced to verify this or to name the mother. Suspicion naturally falls on actresses with whom Aldridge worked in theatres at Margate, Portsmouth, Landport, Wolverhampton, and Brighton approximately nine months before May 1847.

Aldridge may have had affairs with other women even earlier. The 1841 census records for Worksop, a small town southeast of Sheffield, reveal that on the day the census was taken, he was rooming in a boarding house there with a woman identified as Sarah Aldridge. She was said to be five years younger than he was, so this could not have been Margaret under a different name. Sarah also could not have been Aldridge’s sister because she was listed as not having been born in foreign parts nor in Scotland, Ireland or even Nottinghamshire for that matter. Perhaps she was an actress in the theatre troupe Aldridge had joined in Worksop that week. Or maybe she was an old friend he had brought along for companionship on his tour. There is even a possibility that she might have been the woman who six years later gave birth to Ira Daniel, but Aldridge is not known to have had any lengthy affairs at this stage in his life.

As a child Ira Daniel accompanied his parents on their travels. He even came along on Aldridge’s first tour of the European continent, which lasted nearly three years—from July 1852 till April 1855. Ira Daniel would have been almost eight years old by the time this tour ended. Back in London he was placed in the North London Collegiate School, High Street, Camdentown, presumably as a boarder, for his parents started travelling again in the fall and were constantly on the road for the next two years. During this time Aldridge was sued successfully for adultery by a young actor whose wife had given birth to a child evidently fathered by a black man. The child died in infancy but not before Aldridge had promised in a letter to the mother that she and the child would not be neglected by him. News of this court case circulated widely in Britain (see, e.g.,

“Stothard v Aldridge” 9), and one wonders what young Daniel and his classmates made of it.

Aldridge spent most of the next two years touring Sweden, Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Latvia, and Russia, returning to London only sporadically for short engagements. He was performing in some of the largest theatres in Europe and earning lots of money, but he had only limited contact with his son and his wife during this period. As if to compensate for his long absences, he remained in Britain from June 1859 to March 1861, but an active touring schedule kept him away from London much of this time.

Meanwhile, Ira Daniel was doing well at school. Aldridge was very pleased with his progress, proudly telling a friend that the boy “is a great favourite with his masters, who entered a high opinion of his mental capabilities. Out of thirty-seven competitors for two elocutionary prizes . . . Ira Daniel . . . took the second” (qtd. in Marshall and Stock 101 and 249). The son may have been attempting to emulate his father, for a schoolmate recalled some years later “his acting very effectively in an amateur representation of ‘Box and Cox’” (Hill 263), a popular short comedy of that era. Conscious of his father’s spectacular success on the stage, Ira Daniel may have envisioned following in his father’s footsteps.

One reason why Aldridge’s wife Margaret no longer accompanied her husband on his tours is that her health was breaking down. By 1860, when she was sixty-two years old, she was confined to her room for considerable periods, so she stayed at home and looked after Ira Daniel when he was out of school. It may have been during her convalescence that Aldridge, somewhere in his travels, struck up an acquaintance with a young Swedish woman, Amanda Paulina Brandt, who would have been twenty-six years old in 1860, roughly half Aldridge’s age (Sjögren 68–72). Their relationship matured into a serious romance, and in March of that year she presented him with a daughter. Twenty months later, when he was again on tour in Russia, she bore him a son. Both of these children were conceived somewhere in England and born in London. Aldridge, in essence a polygamist, was by then supporting two families. In 1861–62, while Aldridge was away, Margaret and Ira Daniel were living at 4 Wellington Road, Kentish New Town, but not long afterwards he moved them to a larger house, which he named Luranah Villa, on Hamlet Road in Upper Norwood, a growing suburb south of London near Crystal Palace.

In an effort to protect both families, Aldridge sought to invest the large sums he was earning abroad by purchasing property in this new neighborhood, but he found he could not do so and bequeath such property to his heirs without first becoming a British citizen. He duly applied for citizenship and was granted it on 7 November 1863, after which he

arranged to acquire as many as six other houses in the vicinity of Hamlet Road (Haddon 35). He also promptly left for Russia again in order to refill the family coffers.

We do not know if Margaret and Ira Daniel knew about Amanda and her children by this time. Aldridge, though not a faithful husband, appears to have maintained a loving relationship with all his dependents, even while he was away on tour. On 27 November 1863, from somewhere in Russia, he sent an affectionate letter to sixteen-year-old Ira Daniel stating that “I received a letter from your Mamma just as I was leaving Moscow. She was as well as could be expected.” He encouraged his son to

go home at Xmas, if so kiss Mamma for me, get your clothes changed, say I will pay the difference on my return—it is the establishment at the corner of Tottenham Court Road, you know it.

How are you progressing in French and your other studies? Well, I hope. Write to Mamma when you have time, tell her you have heard from me.

When you go there see that the gardener properly attends to the garden, and that it is well stocked with vegetables. Write me; I send you an envelope with kisses.

Affectionately yours,

Ira Aldridge, K.S. (qtd. in Marshall and Stock 284–85)

Ira Daniel evidently was now spending most of his time at boarding school, seldom visiting his sick “Mamma,” and having only occasional contact by mail with his father.

Margaret died four months later, on 25 March 1864, while her husband was still away. Ira Daniel signed the death certificate as a witness and may have had to make arrangements for the funeral. Aldridge returned to London as soon as he received the news, but in May he was on his way back to Russia, leaving Ira Daniel on his own at school or at Luranah Villa.

The following year, on 20 April 1865, he married Amanda, who by that time was living at Luranah Villa with her two children. Ira Daniel appears to have continued staying there, as well, for on the day of their marriage he wrote each of them a polite letter of congratulations from that address:

MY DEAR FATHER,—I write to congratulate you on the occasion of your marriage and to wish you and my dear stepmother every joy and happiness in your new relationship.

I am sure that you will find in Madame a true and loving wife, and one who will fill the lonely void so recently left in your home and your heart.

I shall use my best endeavour to continue to deserve your love and shall strive to the utmost of my power to win that of my stepmother by deference to her wishes and brotherly kindness to her children.

That you may be long spared to enjoy ever-increasing happiness is the most earnest wish of

Your dutiful and affectionate son,
IRA DANIEL ALDRIDGE

His letter to Amanda was tied with a blue silk ribbon:

MY DEAR MADAM,—It is with great pride and happiness that I feel now able to address you as Step-mother and I hope most sincerely that you may be long spared to us. I am sure that in you my father will possess a true and faithful wife, and that I myself shall be able to look upon you as a loving mother, worthy of replacing in my affection her whom I so recently lost.

As I have before assured you in conversation on the subject, I shall be very much grieved if you were to feel any apprehension respecting my conduct towards my brother and sister. I again desire you to be convinced that I shall love them as only a brother can love, and that nothing shall ever be wanting on my part which may tend to increase their welfare.

In conclusion I pray that God may bless and prosper you both, granting you many years of enduring happiness.

Such is the most earnest and heartfelt desire of your affectionate
Stepson,

Ira Daniel Aldridge (qtd. in Marshall and Stock, 294–95)

Despite the courteous tone of these letters, one wonders how a young man almost eighteen years old would have regarded his father and thirty-one-year-old stepmother at this point in his life. He would have known his father to have been a philanderer who had left an ailing, elderly wife for a much younger woman, and he may have harbored some resentment toward Amanda for having won his father's love and attention in such circumstances. Amanda's children would have been five and three-and-a-half years old at this time, so Ira Daniel would have been aware that throughout his teenage years he had never been his father's only child. Perhaps he blamed his new siblings for some of the parental neglect he must have felt while growing up. Ira Daniel was facing a major adjustment in his life, for he now found himself in the awkward position of an outsider in his father's home. No longer an innocent adolescent but not yet a man, he was ripe for rebellion.

His father remained in England for several months after the marriage but chose not to resume touring the provinces. He performed only three

nights in August at the Haymarket Theatre in London and spent the rest of his time relaxing with his family at Luranah Villa. However, tempting offers continued to pour in from abroad, so in the fall of 1865 he set out once again, this time stopping in Russia, Ukraine, Crimea, Turkey, and Poland before returning to London at the end of August 1866.

He may have been called back to deal with Ira Daniel's misbehavior, for something had gone dreadfully wrong at home while he was away. Amanda, who was pregnant when he left, had given birth to their third child, a daughter, in March. In a letter to her husband written half a year earlier she had reported that all was well at Luranah Villa (qtd. in Marshall and Stock 277 and 314), and in March Aldridge had received a satisfactory account of Ira Daniel's schoolwork from his headmaster (Marshall and Stock 317). But during and after Amanda's pregnancy, she could not control her stepson, who evidently was not treating her with the love and respect he had promised. Aldridge's biographers believe he became "wild, pleasure-loving and irresponsible" while his father was away (Marshall and Stock 300).

Aldridge did not remain long in London this time. By October he had embarked on a tour of France, but he continued to monitor what was going on at home. He had told Ira Daniel to leave England, and when he heard a month later that the boy had not yet done so, he wrote on 30 November from Rouen to a trusted friend, the theatrical publisher Thomas Hailes Lacy, complaining of Ira Daniel's "innately bad disposition" and asking for help in ensuring that he be compelled to ship out as soon as possible. The tone of his letter reveals that he was thoroughly disgusted with his errant son:

From what has transpired I can place no confidence whatever in what he says or promises, I have written to my friend and Executor Mr. J.J. Sheahan of *Hull*, 43 *Francis St west* requesting him to receive him, and if possible procure him a berth to go abroad for a time in the hope of amendment for on that only depends his hope of any future help from me. I will direct my agent Mr. H.F. Ray of Upper Norwood to call and repay you the advance made him for which I thank you, but do not let him impose upon you, he is such a hypocrite that he would deceive the most wary. Will you further take the trouble to let him know the contents of this letter, and to make his way immediately to Hull, or send his address directly to Mr. Sheahan or give it to you for that purpose, and also to say whether he is content to do as I request or be lost to me forever. I will send him no money but will make arrangements for his journey to Hull as soon as I hear from you that he accedes [*sic*] to my wish . . .³

³ T.O. Mabbott collection, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The letters from Ira Aldridge to Thomas Hailes Lacy (cited here) and from Ira

We do not know exactly what led to this rupture between father and son, but clearly it had something to do with the way Ira Daniel had treated his young stepmother. He had never behaved inappropriately while his “Mamma” was still alive. He had been a dutiful son, a good student, and his father had been proud of his accomplishments at school. But now his father regarded him as a liar and hypocrite, a prodigal son who had to be sent away.

Aldridge did not specify where Ira Daniel should go. Perhaps he left that decision entirely to his son, who may have wanted to get as far away as possible from his father’s household. Ira Daniel departed from Gravesend, London, on 21 February 1867 as a steerage passenger bound for Australia aboard the *Merrie Monarch*. His “profession, occupation or calling” was recorded on the ship’s manifest at “Gent.” Most of the other fourteen passengers on board were in their teens or twenties and were headed, as he was, for Melbourne.⁴

MELBOURNE

The voyage took 112 days, with the *Merrie Monarch* arriving at Hobson’s Bay on 13 June 1867. Ira Daniel immediately set out to look for work, and on the strength of his name alone quickly secured an engagement at the Theatre Royal to perform as Mungo, a negro servant in Isaac Bickerstaff’s eighteenth-century farce, *The Padlock*. This was one of his father’s most famous roles, considered by some to be even better than his masterful rendering of Othello. Ira Daniel must have seen him in it countless times, so he would have had a good model on which to base his own performance. However, he may not have been familiar with the script, for though he was originally billed to appear on June 22nd, his debut was postponed until a week later, supposedly to allow him to recover “from the effects of a long Sea Voyage” (“Theatre Royal” 22: 8). It is likely that he may have needed more time to rehearse his part.

The principal lessee at the Theatre Royal in those days was Joseph C. Lambert, an elderly British comic actor who was nearing retirement “after a career extending over forty years, during which he has taken part in no less than 10,000 performances in Europe, America and Australia.”⁵

Daniel Aldridge to his stepmother Amanda Aldridge (cited in footnote 6) are reproduced with the permission of Harvard University Library’s Theatre Collection.

⁴ Public Record Office Victoria, VPRS 7666, Inward Overseas Passenger Lists (British Ports) 1852—, fiche B267: 1.

⁵ Unidentified cutting in a file of “Theatrical Newspaper Cuttings,” Q792/I, held at the State Library of New South Wales, Sydney. The other five lessees of the Theatre Royal were named Vincent, Harwood, Stewart, Hennings, and Bellair (Stewart 13).

He had lived and worked in Australia since 1855, specializing in old men's parts, of which it was said "he had no rival in this part of the world" ("The Late J.C. Lambert" 71). In his younger days in Britain he had performed in London as well as on the provincial circuit, so he certainly would have known of Ira Daniel's father and may have crossed paths with him occasionally. Indeed, there is evidence in surviving playbills suggesting that they appeared on stage together at Dublin's Theatre Royal in December 1832, and they may have performed together elsewhere in Britain as well.

Lambert was pleased to add the son of the African Roscius to his troupe, and to spark public interest in this new performer he advertised him in the press as "Son of the Chevalier Ira Aldridge, Knight of Saxony, holder of the Ernestinschen House Order of Prussia; also of the Orders of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, Austria, Russia, the Swiss Cross, &c.; who has appeared before nearly all the Crowned Heads of Europe" ("Theatre Royal" 20:8). Lambert also encouraged Ira Daniel to include in his performance two of the songs his father had popularized: "Dear heart, what a terrible life I am led" and "Opossum up a Gum Tree." Newspapers publicized the upcoming event, but one of them did not express high expectations of the outcome, noting only that "what Artemus Ward calls 'a kullered gentleman' is shortly to appear in the mouldy old part of Mungo in "The Padlock"" ("Theatrical" 2).

The reviews of Ira Daniel's debut on 29 June 1867 were devastating. The most positive appraisal appeared in the *Argus*, which spoke of his performance as "very tolerable, but . . . certainly very far removed from excellence; indeed, the admiration of the audience seemed chiefly excited not by the fact of his good acting, but by his ability to act at all" ("Monday, July 1, 1867" 5). The *Herald* stated bluntly that "Mr. Aldridge junior does not appear to have inherited the histrionic talent of his father, and his debut on Saturday night was a signal failure. He apparently knows nothing about acting, and still less about singing. He does not possess a particle of humour, or anything in the shape of facial expression" ("Theatres" 1:3). The *Age* dismissed him as "evidently a novice, [who] has much to learn before he can obtain a position" ("The Theatres" 5), and the *Leader* excoriated the managers of the theatre for allowing Ira Daniel and other inexperienced youths like him "to show their faces before the public at all," for they were "as much fit for the stage as wild boars would be for guests at a spinners' tea party" (Autolycus 22). The *Australasian* also took the managers to task for casting a rank amateur as Mungo when there were four or five professionals in their acting company who could have played the role ten times better; Ira junior, the critic complained, "made the dullest, poorest, feeblest attempt at being funny I ever remember to have seen." Moreover, he "can no more sing than he can act, and if the management have made

a long engagement with him, the best thing they can do is to pay him for doing nothing" ("The Theatres, &c" 17).

Lambert took this advice to heart. After allowing Ira Daniel to play Mungo once more, which he did "without much success" ("The Theatres: Theatre Royal" 5), but with "much more ease and spirit than on his first appearance" ("Theatres" 2:3), Lambert withdrew him from the stage, even though a third appearance had already been announced. Ira Daniel never performed in Melbourne again. *Bell's Life in Victoria* reported that he had

retired, probably to go through a probation in the up-country districts to enable him to acquire a slight knowledge of what is necessary in order to attain anything like a respectable position on the metropolitan boards. I believe Mr. Aldridge possesses education and accomplishments, therefore probably he may, at some future time, make a better show than on his first appearance in Melbourne. (Surface 2)

Hardly a ringing endorsement, this must have made Ira Daniel even more painfully aware that as an actor he had failed completely.

On 7 August, less than six weeks later, his father died on tour in Poland. This news did not reach Australia until mid-October, and Ira Daniel did not know of it until he read an obituary in a Melbourne paper (probably "Death of Ira Aldridge" *Age* 7, although the same obituary had appeared a few days earlier in the *Leader* 19). He immediately wrote a lengthy letter to his stepmother:

MA CHERE MADAME,—I scarcely know how to commence my letter. To say that I am deeply grieved is not sufficient. I can hardly believe that it is true my dear, dear father is no more. Oh Madame! I have indeed a great deal to blame myself with, for I feel I have not acted as I ought to have done towards so good a parent.

[How] truly I lament it now it is too late. I hope he forgave me for all the uneasiness and trouble that I caused him. I have never received a line from him or you since I left England for here. My father promised me that he would write; perhaps he was too ill. Was it so? How is it, my Dear Madame, that neither Mr. King or anyone did not write and let me know of my Dear Father's death. I should have been ignorant of it had it not been for the newspapers.

Now Madame, what I am about to say, believe me, comes from my heart. I have deeply wronged you and have always taken your good advice as hatred towards me, in fact, I did not understand the full meaning of your kindness. Mind, my Dear Stepmother, I am not asking you to call me back to England, far from it; but if you think that I could be of any service whatsoever to you or the Poor Children, say so, and if I do not get the money to return I will work my passage over. I can assure

you I am quite altered and with God's assistance will never go wrong again. I have not been at all fortunate since I have been here for I was doing nothing for eleven weeks and now have only obtained a situation as money taker at the Haymarket Theatre at one Pound a week. I am indeed very thankful for even this. I hope soon to get something better.

How are you, my Dear Madame, and how is Luranah, Fred and the Baby? Please kiss them for me and tell them not to forget that they have a Brother who often thinks of them and who will also be their protector. Will you write to me? Yes, I am sure you will. I do not know where you are at present, therefore send this to Mr. King's care. Let me know all respecting my dear Father, did he leave me any particular message or not? If He did, I will do his bidding and shall feel happy to think that I have strictly obeyed his commands once. Was he long ill? Did he suffer much; I see by the papers that you, my Dear Step-mother attended him the whole time. I am glad that you were with him. I had no idea that he was going to Russia again as I also saw in the papers that he was going to visit America shortly. I know what a fearful blow this must be to you, but I think, my Dear Madame, it is a debt one must all pay sooner or later. Do you intend remaining at Norwood or going to France? If you have any pity for me, Madame, I am certain you will write, and let me know your whereabouts.

I really cannot understand why I have never had a letter from someone to tell me of my Dear Father's death. Why, I cannot tell. I see it occurred on the 7th of August at Lodz in Poland. Well, the Mail did not leave England for here until the 26th, surely there was sufficient time to write. I hope though next mail will bring me some news. I have though begun to despair for so many mails have already arrived, with no news for me. I have not much to write except, my Dear Madame, to condole and sympathize with you in your and my heavy loss, for indeed a better or kinder Father I know never existed. Try and bear up in this indeed great trial, and think if possible that you have a Stepson who although he may have wronged you is truly penitent and will ever as long as he lives do his best to atone for the injury he has already done you.

In conclusion, I again ask you to write me, pray do not keep me in suspense, and if you only say that would like me to return I will do so instantly. So God bless you, my Dear Madame, and the Children whom you, I pray, kiss for me. I cannot scarcely realize that the past is all true. Would to Heaven it were not. Good-bye, my Dear Stepmother, and believe me,

Ever your affectionate Stepson,
Ira D. Aldridge (qtd. in Marshall and Stock 300-02)

Amanda Aldridge never replied to this letter. One of her daughters told Ira Aldridge's biographers that "she had been advised against it by friends, and in later life regretted the decision" (qtd. in Marshall and Stock

302). But there may have been another reason for her silence as well. Frederick King, the land and estate agent in London through whom Ira Daniel forwarded his letter to his stepmother, had written on 2 September to Lacy expressing concern about the settlement of the actor's estate:

My dear Sir,

Just previously to poor Aldridge leaving England he consulted me about his property and his affairs and as to how he should provide for Ira and asked me if I should have any objection to act as one of his Executors with Mr. Bone his Broker to which I assented and he left me to go to London to give instructions for his Will and told me in the Evening on his return that his Sol^s suggested that Madame should also be Executrix with us and said he should execute the Will in the morning which I presumed he did and then left England.—I have not heard a *word* from Madame since he left England but my impression is that she thought my sympathies were with Ira and that she induced him to make a subsequent Will in Paris by which I fear she prevailed on him to make a Will intirely [*sic*] in her favour leaving Mr. Bone and herself Ex^{or} & Ex^x.—Whether it was a Will or a codicil I don't know but whatever it is she has it as a Mr. Waters wrote from Paris to Mr. Bone as also did the Manager of the Theatre at Lodtz where he died to say so and that he Mr. Bone was one of the Ex^{ors}.—I am therefore at a loss to know in what position poor Ira is left until I hear more.—I fear Madame was a little offended at my dictating to her her duty towards Ira, and perhaps also telling poor Aldridge the *just* way he should dispose of his property and I fear Aldridge became quite a child in her hands after he left England and made another will entirely at her dictation and with what effect to poor Ira I do not know.

I have waited to hear before writing Ira but will write him next mail if only to give him the above information.

I will give you a call on my return.

I am, My dear Sir,
Yours faithfully
Frederick King⁶

King's fears proved to be correct. Aldridge had written a new will in Paris on 25 June 1867, six weeks and a day before his death, naming Amanda and Mr. Bone as his executors, and leaving the bulk of his estate to Amanda. He did however make some provision for Ira Daniel, bequeathing him "the sum of five hundred pounds sterling absolutely on his attaining the age of twenty five years" (qtd. in Marshall and Stock 326). The will was proved in London on 4 November 1867, and one assumes that King was told of it and tried to communicate the news to Ira Daniel. Aldridge

⁶ T.O. Mabbott collection, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University.

left an estate valued at under £9,000, so Amanda gained a great deal and Ira Daniel relatively little by comparison. But there is some doubt about whether this legacy ever was passed on to Ira Daniel five years later. Perhaps Amanda, Mr. Bone and Mr. King no longer knew where in Australia he was. Amanda's refusal to communicate with him suggests she wanted to have nothing further to do with the boy who had given her so much trouble earlier. She certainly had no intention of calling him back to England.

Ira Daniel left Melbourne not long after writing his stepmother. He had been working at the Haymarket Theatre for about a month when he wrote her, but the job didn't pay much and may have been given to him purely out of sympathy for his plight as the unemployed son of a great actor. The lessee and manager of the Haymarket Theatre at that time was William Hoskins, another British actor who had had considerable experience on stage in London and the provinces before emigrating to Australia in the 1850s. He too would have known of the African Roscius and, like Lambert, may even have performed with him occasionally, so it is not surprising that he offered a helping hand to Aldridge's son.

Ira Daniel, however, had had a good secondary school education, and he decided to put that to use by seeking employment as a tutor. He found such a position in Lilydale, a village (population ca. 250) twenty-four miles east of Melbourne, where he met and fell in love with a young seamstress, Ellen Huxley. They were married on 10 January 1868 at the Registrar's Office in Fitzroy, a section of Melbourne, and one wonders if this was an elopement, for no one from her family appears to have been present; the only witnesses to sign the marriage certificate were Mary Mortimer and Margaret Selina Mortimer, who may have been relatives of the Registrar, N.W. Mortimer. Ellen's father was then serving a four-year term in prison for forgery and uttering ("Forgery" 2), so he wouldn't have been able to attend, and her mother, who ran a grocery store in Melbourne, may have been too busy to come and witness the ceremony, but some of Ellen's seven siblings who lived in the area surely would have been there had they known that their sister was getting married. When the couple's first child was born the following year, Ellen and Ira Daniel were living in Carlton, where he was now teaching. The child, a daughter, survived only two hours, dying after vomiting blood due to an accident involving her mother.

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