

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled
from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

THE
LIFE
OF
CHARLES MACKLIN, ESQ.

Chap. I.

THAT the history of long life can please without instruction, by merely flattering our hopes, may be concluded from the avidity with which the very dull and uninteresting memoirs of PARR and JENKINS are universally read. These memoirs present us a picture of uniform and barren days; and the reader is only astonished, that so much time should have produced so very little incident.

The person who is the subject of the following pages, long exceeded the usual pe-

B

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

2

THE LIFE OF

riod of the life of man. His life too, was, for the most part, spent in public and applauded exertions, and was more varied than that of most of his contemporaries. His biographer considers himself, therefore, as discharged from the necessity of apologizing for the subject he has undertaken.

As Mr. MACKLIN was never sensible that he had occasion to blush at any part of his conduct, he was always much less fearful of being exposed, than of being misrepresented; and as he considered that it was more than probable the uninformed and the necessitous might attempt to write an history of his life, and relate anecdotes of him, when falsehood could not easily be detected; he, for these reasons, as well as in conformity with the frequent sollicitations of his friends, had determined, while his mind was yet in full vigour, to give the world an authentic history of his life; for which purpose, he had prepared, and partly arranged the materials; but finding that a work of that magnitude would be too laborious an undertaking, at his time of life,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled
from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHARLES MACKLIN.

3

and too great an encroachment on the business of his profession, he resolved to give the materials to some person, on whom he could depend, for the purpose of compiling and throwing them into form.

With this view he made choice of the author, conceiving, as it is hoped the reader will, that a near relation, bred up, and living for upwards of twenty years with him; acquainted from his infancy with his descent, family, and connections; and enabled by daily observations to trace out, and truly delineate his character, would be more likely than any other person to write an history recommended by truth and fidelity; objects, in Mr. MACKLIN's opinion, far superior, in intrinsic value, to all the graces and beauties which the highest embellishments of style could bestow upon it.

The propriety of choosing a person of this kind will be more obvious to the reader, when, on perusing the following sheets, he will find few subjects, that have for a long time

B 2

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

4

THE LIFE OF

occupied public attention, into which more of vulgar error and injustice have found their way, than into the character and life of Mr. MACKLIN.

That he has been in many important points of view misrepresented, and misunderstood; and that it is only by a constant observation of his heart and disposition, as disclosed in the diurnal discharge of domestic duty, his real character can be developed.

From his situation with respect to Mr. MACKLIN, and visiting him constantly, the author has had means, which no person but himself could have had, of tracing and noting the gradual decline and enfeeblement of the old gentleman's mind; neither could his habits or manner of living have been so accurately, or indeed at all, described by a stranger.

He hopes, therefore, that these advantages will counterbalance the deficiency of his style, and the richness of the subject

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHARLES MACKLIN.

5

atone for the poverty of the vehicle, by which it is conveyed.

Had the historian of Mr. MACKLIN written towards the beginning instead of the close of the present century, it might have been necessary for him to have encountered public prejudice, and illiberality, with a defence of the profession of an actor.

He must have repeated the praise of ROSCIUS from CICERO; and shewn, that neither the wisdom of SOLON, nor the virtue of BRUTUS; the magnanimity of CÆSAR, nor the sagacity of AUGUSTUS, rendered them hostile to the stage; but that, on the contrary, all the wise, and all the virtuous, of GREECE and ROME—their greatest moralists, statesmen, philosophers, and warriors, countenanced and supported the drama and its performers, as highly serviceable to the cause of virtue, and conducive to the well-being of a state.

But this is become unnecessary in these liberal and enlightened days, when a GARRICK,

B 3

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

6

THE LIFE OF

a BARRY, and a HENDERSON lie interred in the same Abbey with the Kings of England, and mix their dust with the remains of the first poets, philosophers, and divines of this country.

Few subjects have been canvassed with more confidence, and, at the same time, been less known, or understood, than the origin of Mr. MACKLIN.—No sooner had he, by the indefatigable exertion of many years, emerged from that obscurity, to which the rigour of fortune, and the prejudices of an illiberal world, had endeavoured to consign him, and raised himself up to public notice and approbation, than curiosity was busily employed in the enquiry of *who he was?*—and *whence he was descended?* as if to measure his title to the favour and applause he received, by the rank and quality of his progenitors.

As this was a subject, on which Mr. MACKLIN had not given any avowed communication to the public, recourse was had to conjecture. The whispers of surmise were received as the assertions of truth.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHARLES MACKLIN.

7

The loose stories of convivial hours were carefully hoarded up, and unwarrantable inferences drawn from them; supposition and malevolence by turns supplied the place of *fact*; and Mr. MACKLIN, because it did not suit his leisure, or his disposition, to proclaim to the world his genealogy, was at first suspected, and afterwards concluded, to have sprung from the very lowest order of the people.

This, however, was a great mistake, which, nevertheless, Mr. MACKLIN seems not to have been very anxious to rectify; sustained throughout by the vigour of his mind, and by a laudable confidence in his own strength, he disregarded such trivial considerations. It did not require half his sagacity to be convinced, that respect, power, or influence, could not be claimed by hereditary descent, unless the source of all power—*money*—descended along with it; and that if he could only acquire the latter, the former would follow of course.

B 4

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled
from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

Besides, he had too much true pride ; and preferred the consciousness of owing all to himself, to the pitiful expedient of drawing upon the merits of his ancestors.

He wished rather to gain new honors for himself, than to transmit the impaired honors of others ; and acted upon the persuasion, that so unimportant a consideration as his birth, could neither confer credit on him, if he did not deserve it, nor withhold it from him, if he did.

The progenitors of Mr. MACKLIN, whose real name was *M^cLaughlin*, were, both on his father's and mother's side, highly respectable in the estimation of their age and country. Of the motives that induced him to change his name, from *M^cLaughlin* to *Macklin*, we shall hereafter inform the reader.

His grandfather, *Terence M^cLaughlin*, inherited from an old stock of gentry, from which he was descended, an handsome landed property in the county of Down, in Ireland,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled
from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

CHARLES MACKLIN. 9

and intermarried with ANNE O'KELLY, the daughter of a family of considerable rank and fortune in the county of Galway.

At that time family pride ran as high in Ireland, as it ever did in any part of the world; and the families of M'LAUGHLIN, or O'KELLY, would not have thought themselves very much honored by an union with those of LLEWELLIN, DOUGLAS, or HOWARD. In fact, it was carried to such excess, that, in the estimation of the Irish, the supposed dignity of blood atoned for the utter want of wealth; while no imaginable share of riches could confer dignity without it. Mr. MACKLIN's ancestors were not obliged to supply the deficiency of either. They, in fact, possessed an honorable sufficiency of both.

WILLIAM M'LAUGHLIN, the father of the gentleman whose life we are about to record, was the eldest son of TERENCE M'LAUGHLIN, and inherited from his father, not only an estate, but an increased share of con-

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06466-8 - Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin: Principally Compiled
from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 1

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

[More information](#)

10

THE LIFE OF

sequence in the county of Down. He married ALICE O'FLANAGAN, the daughter of JOHN O'FLANAGAN, of *Black Castle*, in the county of *Westmeath*, who was proprietor of that place, with a large estate which lay around it: a son of whom was married to the daughter of JOHN SHAW, of *Somerstown*, in the county of *Meath*, a man of immense landed property, including not only *Somerstown* itself, but the estate of *Rathmullion* and part of *Summer-hill*, now belonging to the family of Rowley.

All these families possessed extensive landed estates; but in the various revolutions of church and state, which, in the last century, convulsed that unhappy country, the property was transferred from the descendants of the old possessors, and the rights of immemorial prescription gave way to the more irresistible claims of confiscation; while the families themselves have become almost extinct.