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from his Own Papers and Memorandums: Volume 2

James Thomas Kirkman

Excerpt

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THE
LIFE
OF
CHARLES MACKLIN, ESQ.

Chap. I.

IN the year 1767, Mr. Macklin came again from Dublin to London, where he intended to continue during the remainder of his life. He immediately entered into an agreement with the Managers of Covent-Garden Theatre, and on the 28th of November brought out his “*True born Irishman*,” under the new title of “*The Irish fine Lady*.” This was its first representation in London. It was cast in the following manner.

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DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Murrough O'Dogherty,	Mr. MACKLIN.
Count Mushroom,	Mr. WOODWARD.
Hamilton,	Mr. DYER.
Fitzmongrel,	Mr. DUNSTALL.
The Major,	Mr. MORRIS.
Catty Farrell,	Mrs. PITT.
Lady Kinnegad,	Mrs. GREEN.
Mrs. Jolly,	Mrs. WHITE.
Mrs. Gazette,	Miss HELME.
Lady Bab Frightful,	Mrs. EVANS.
Mrs. O'Dogherty,	Miss MACKLIN.

We have already spoken pretty fully concerning the merits of this Piece, which is rather too long, and calculated only for the meridian of Dublin, where it was repeatedly performed with great approbation; and where several local witticisms, which it contains, particularly of a political nature, contributed greatly to its success. Here, however, it was so universally condemned, that Mr. Macklin, at the end of the representation, thought it necessary to make the following apology to the audience.

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“ *Ladies and Gentlemen,*

“ I am very sensible, that there are several
“ passages in this Piece which deserve to be
“ reprobated, and I assure you, that they shall
“ never offend your ears again.”

As soon as Mr. Macklin had finished this address, the audience testified their approbation of his determination, by loud and reiterated plaudits. The Farce was immediately withdrawn, and has not been performed since.

Several disputes having arisen between the Patentees of Covent-Garden Theatre, in the beginning of this year, we shall lay before our readers the following impartial and concise statement of facts, respecting the nature of these differences, and leave the public to decide on the merits of the controversy.

Mr. Harris, (the present amiable and worthy Patentee) and a Mr. Rutherford, having formed a design of purchasing the patent and property of Covent-Garden Theatre, thought it expedient, upon farther considera-

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tion, to invite some third person, of abilities and experience in theatrical affairs, to join with them in the purchase. They therefore invited Mr. Powell. This gentleman strongly urged the expediency of taking Mr. Colman as a fourth; to which Messrs. Harris and Rutherford were at first averse, but afterwards, in consideration of Mr. Colman's talents, as a dramatic writer, and his known familiar intercourse with the stage, they consented. By articles between these parties, dated March 31st 1767, Messrs. Harris and Rutherford were empowered to make the purchase, on the joint account of all four, at sixty thousand pounds, to be advanced in equal proportions, the parties to be not only jointly interested, but to be jointly and equally concerned in the management.

When, in pursuance of this agreement, the contract was made with Mr. Rich's executors, the parties met to settle the form of articles between them, but, to the great surprize of Messrs. Harris and Rutherford, Mr. Colman proposed, that he himself should be invested

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with the whole and sole management of the Theatre, and Mr. Powell consented to embark fifteen thousand pounds, in an undertaking, with the conduct of which, even in the greatest emergency, he was to have nothing to do. Messrs. Harris and Rutherford, though they did not doubt Mr. Colman's capacity or inclination to conduct the Theatre to the best advantage, yet, it being impossible for them to be assured that no sinister accident might render their interposition necessary to secure their property, they would not divest themselves of the power of superintending it. It is also to be observed, that they had given Mr. Colman repeatedly to understand, that as they should engage in no other employment, they intended, in conjunction with him, to make the management of the Theatre their occupation and amusement. Being willing, however, to indulge Mr. Colman in his desire of appearing the acting Manager, articles were at length executed, in which it was agreed, that Mr. Colman should have, "the power of engaging " and dismissing Performers; of receiving and " rejecting new Pieces; of casting Plays; of

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“ appointing what exhibitions should be per-
 “ formed ; and of conducting all such things
 “ as are generally understood to be compre-
 “ hended in the dramatic and theatrical pro-
 “ vince. But that he should, however, *com-*
 “ *municate* and *submit* his *conduct* to Messrs.
 “ Harris and Rutherford, and, in case they
 “ should *signify* their *disapprobation* thereof in
 “ *writing*, the *measure* so *disapproved*, should
 “ not be *carried* into *execution*.” It was also, by
 a subsequent writing, mutually agreed be-
 tween the parties, “ that Mr. Powell should be
 “ employed as an Actor, during seven years, at
 “ the salary of four hundred pounds per annum,
 “ and a clear benefit, but that if any other Per-
 “ former should be engaged at a larger salary,
 “ then such addition should be made to the
 “ salary of Mr. Powell, as would exceed the
 “ salary of such other Performer.” Also, that
 any of the parties producing a new play, farce,
 or exhibition, or any alteration of an old play,
 or farce, should be entitled to the usual emo-
 luments, and that none of the parties should be
 concerned in any other Theatre.

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On the first of July the purchase money was paid, and Mr. Powell having only personal security to offer for the sum, he was, on this occasion, obliged to borrow. Mr. Harris agreed to give the lender real security of his own.

The principal articles of complaint exhibited against Mr. Colman, subsequent to these agreements, are as follow :

Mr. Colman did not properly introduce all the principal actors to his brother Patentees ; but, on their first appearance at the Theatre, before it opened, as they were advancing to speak to him, he being seated on the middle of the Stage, he petulantly desired them to withdraw, lest they should interrupt the rehearsal, leaving them to introduce themselves to the company, and take their own seats where they thought proper.

Though Mr. Colman had engaged to submit his conduct to Messrs. Harris and Rutherford, he soon grew impatient even of the appearance of control ; and though, after much

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exposition, he assented to a weekly meeting for advising about the business of the Theatre, it lasted only a few weeks, nor was it of any effect while it did last, as he neither would lay open his whole plan, to know the opinion of his Colleagues, nor act in conformity when he did know it.

On the 29th of October, he openly disclaimed their right to lay him under any restraint, and declared, in positive terms, that he would never disclose to them any of his future intentions, but would be responsible to the Public only.

Though he did afterwards, under his hand, engage to submit his measures to Mr. Harris and Mr. Rutherford, and declared the same in the presence of several Performers, yet, on his own authority, and without their knowledge or consent, he engaged Mr. and Mrs. Yates; Mr. Yates at ten pounds a week, with a benefit, and Mrs. Yates at five hundred pounds a season, with a benefit; notwithstanding, in a consultation held a few days before on the subject, it

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had been unanimously declared by all the Proprietors, that, as the company then stood, it was impossible, without breaking through the established rules of the Theatre, to avail themselves properly of the services of those excellent actors.

Mr. Powell justified this action of Mr. Colman, and did so for this substantial reason, because, in consequence of Mrs. Yates's receiving a salary of five hundred pounds a year, he became entitled to an addition of one hundred pounds a year to his salary.

Mr. Colman, having inserted a few lines in *The Rehearsal*, and intended an alteration of *King Lear*, proposed to take between sixty and seventy pounds out of the Treasurer's hands on that account, and, not being opposed, did take out such sum; though, with respect to *The Rehearsal*, what he did was no more than a customary liberty taken with this Play in the representation, for which Mr. Garrick never made any charge; and with respect to *King Lear*, the service was not yet performed.

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Some time afterwards, when he was required by Messrs. Harris and Rutherford to produce the Play, with the alterations, or repay the money, he did not think proper to do either.

As Mr. Powell had readily acquiesced in this measure of Colman---Colman, in return, insisted that he should be allowed a benefit, to indemnify him for not acting at Bristol the ensuing summer, though the parties had previously engaged not to be concerned in any other Theatre.

Mr. Colman not only acted without the concurrence of his fellow patentees, but against their express remonstrances. The play of *Cymbeline*, on account of some personal altercation with respect to casting the parts, had, by mutual consent, been some time laid aside; the duty of the Patentees, however, requiring the exhibition of it for one night, Mr. Colman ordered its repetition; this being disagreeable to Messrs. Harris and Rutherford, as tending to revive disputes, they, first by letter, requested that the representation of it should, for the present, be