

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06503-0 - The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the Most Celebrated Persons of His Time:
Now First Published from the Originals, and Illustrated with Notes, and a New Biographical Memoir of Garrick: Volume 1

Edited by James Boaden

Excerpt

[More information](#)

PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE

OF

DAVID GARRICK.

GILBERT WALMESLEY TO THE REV. MR. COLSON.

[When Davies published his *Life of Mr. Garrick*, he gave such copies of Mr. Walmesley's letters as he found in print. But he did not know the date of the first of the two, and, as the reader will now see, had not more than about half of it to publish. Mr. Garrick's friend, Dr. Sharp, conferred upon him the favour of placing in his own possession the originals themselves, from which they are now correctly printed. The portion which Davies did give, I should add, is not accurately copied, and some of the terms used by the writer affectedly changed.

The claims of the great men of the last age have yet suffered little inattention. We still linger with fond delight upon their excellencies, mental and moral; and their harmless peculiarities as often become the theme of conviviality as the eccentricities of their literary or scientific successors. Among such worthies, the praise of Johnson has assigned a place to the wise and amiable Registrar of the Ecclesiastical Court at Lichfield, Gilbert Walmesley. Such is the return which genius can make for early favours. Walmesley sowed benevolence, and reaped immortality.—ED.]

MY DEAR OLD FRIEND,

Lichfield, Feb. 5, 1736.

HAVING not been in town since the year thirty-one, you will the less wonder at seeing a letter from me. But I have the pleasure of hearing of you sometimes in the prints, and am glad to see you are daily throwing in your valuable contributions to the Republic of Letters.

But the present occasion of my writing is a favour I have to ask of you. My neighbour, Captain Garrick, (who is an honest, valuable man,) has a son, who is a very sensible young fellow, and a good scholar, and whom the Captain hopes, in some two or three years, he shall be able to send to the Temple, and breed to the Bar. But, at present, his pocket will not hold out for sending him to the University. I have proposed your taking him, if you think well of it, and your boarding him, and instructing him in mathematics, and philosophy, and humane learning. He is now

VOL. I.

B

nineteen, of sober and good dispositions, and is as ingenious and promising a young man as ever I knew in my life. Few instructions on your side will do, and in the intervals of study, he will be an agreeable companion for you. His father will be glad to pay you whatever you shall require, that is within his reach; and I shall think myself very much obliged to you into the bargain. This young gentleman, you must know, has been much with me, ever since he was a child, almost every day; and I have taken a pleasure often in instructing him, and have a great affection and esteem for him; and I doubt not but you will soon have the like, if it suit with your convenience to take him into your family. You will be so good, as soon as you have considered of this affair, to write to me.

Having changed my condition of life, (being tired since the death of my brother of living quite alone,) my chances for seeing London are now become more hazardous than ever. But you know I never came thither in my life, without enquiring after you; and therefore I am not without hopes, especially if Davy Garrick comes to be your pupil, but you will contrive to spend a month or six weeks with me at Lichfield in the summer. I shall always have a bed for you, and a stall for your horse; and nothing, I do assure you, in life will give me a greater pleasure.

Captain Garrick, and the young gentleman, beg your acceptance of their compliments; and I am ever, with the greatest truth, Dear Sir,

Your most affectionate old friend, and humble servant,

GILBERT WALMESLEY.

To the Rev. Mr. Colson,

At his house in Rochester, Kent.

By way of London. A single sheet.

GILBERT WALMESLEY TO THE REV. MR. COLSON.

DEAR SIR,

Lichfield, March 2, 1736-7.

I HAD the favour of yours, and am extremely obliged to you; but cannot say I have a greater affection for you upon it than I had before, being long since so much endeared to you, as well by an early friendship as by your many excellent and valuable qualifications; and had I a son of my own, it would be my ambition, instead of sending him to the University, to dispose of him as this young gentleman is. He and another neighbour of mine, one Mr. Johnson, set out this morning for London together: Davy Garrick to be with you early the next week; and Mr. Johnson to try his fate with a tragedy, and to see to get himself employed in some translation, either from the Latin or the French. Johnson is a very good scholar and poet, and I have great hopes will turn out a fine tragedy writer. If it should any ways lie in your way, I doubt not but you would be ready to recommend and assist your countryman.

If I cannot be so happy as to see you here this summer, I shall depend upon

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06503-0 - The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the Most Celebrated Persons of His Time:
Now First Published from the Originals, and Illustrated with Notes, and a New Biographical Memoir of Garrick: Volume 1

Edited by James Boaden

Excerpt

[More information](#)

DAVID GARRICK.

3

it the next; and your pupil's coming hither then, will, I hope, be an inducement.
I am ever, Dear Sir,

Your most obliged, and most affectionate humble servant,
GILBERT WALMESLEY.

To the Rev. Mr. Colson,
At his house in Rochester, Kent.
By way of London.

Endorsed, "Mr. Walmesley's Letters about
me and Mr. Johnson."

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

[It is a very pleasing feature in this correspondence, that shows the "graced respect" which opened Mr. Garrick's career, as well as that which, in Sheridan's language, "claim'd him to the last." For this he was partly indebted to the place he came from. The Reverend Thomas Newton (afterwards the celebrated Bishop), had received the early part of his education at the Free-school of Lichfield, and, as Garrick's townsman, very anxiously attended his performances in Goodman's-fields. This learned person, as the tutor to Lord Carpenter's son,* enjoyed an easy and unrestrained intercourse with persons of great distinction; and in these letters we behold him exerting every influence he possessed, to swell the train of his young friend with those whose approbation was the best sort of fame. But highly as he admires the genius of Garrick, he views him with a critical eye, and allows no trivial error to sully long the general merit of his performance.

Mr. Garrick preserved these letters from motives of respect and gratitude; respect for the accuracy of their remarks, and gratitude for the regard which dictated so unsparing a zeal for his perfection. The reader will love the reverend critic for his reproof of the young genius, for not punctiliously obeying a wish, indeed a command, from Mr. Pulteney. He will be entertained too with seeing Grosvenor-square in motion to occupy Goodman's-fields; and admire the charm that could make people of the first distinction send their footmen near four miles, to keep places in a subordinate play-house, rather than lose a look or a gesture of the great actor.

The reverend writer of the letters was at this time reader and afternoon preacher at Grosvenor Chapel, South Audley-street, and assistant preacher at St. George's, Hanover-square, to Dr. Trebeck, whose eldest daughter he married in the year 1747. There is an allusion to his sacred duties in the intimation to Mr. Garrick, that the party cannot attend him on the Saturday evenings. The Editor has a pleasure in showing our bigots, that he, who wrote the dissertation on the *Prophecies*, did not consider Shakspeare and Garrick unworthy of his serious attention.—ED.]

DEAR SIR,

Grosvenor-square, Dec. 16, 1741.

I THANK you for our entertainment last night, for it fully answered report, and my friends' and my expectations. Though your friend, yet I endeavoured to find all the fault I could; but with all my criticisms there are two or three things only, and those hardly worth insisting upon, which I could wish otherwise. As I know you will take in good part what I say, I will mention them. In the fifth act, when Richard lies down upon the couch, I thought you started up rather too soon:

* This young gentleman, in 1748, married Frances Coote, daughter of the Earl of Bellamont; and in 1761, he was made Earl of Tyrconnell and Viscount Carlingford.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-06503-0 - The Private Correspondence of David Garrick with the Most Celebrated Persons of His Time:
Now First Published from the Originals, and Illustrated with Notes, and a New Biographical Memoir of Garrick: Volume 1

Edited by James Boaden

Excerpt

[More information](#)

“ Ha ! what means that dismal voice !”

He is composing himself to sleep, and should not start up as soon as ever he is laid down, but after some little time, as it were between sleeping and waking.—In the last scene between Richard and Lady Ann, there is one thing that I think you did not speak quite properly, though I am somewhat doubtful. She says

“ What have I done ? what horrid crime committed ?

Rich. To me the worst of crimes—outliv'd my liking.”

In the latter part, *outliv'd my liking*, you spoke with the same voice, only exalting it ; whereas I imagine it should have been with an alteration of voice, more peevishly and angrily.—Richard says to Buckingham, comparing the young Princes to spiders,

“ I would have some friend to *tread upon them.*”

Your action there was only with your hand, but surely it should rather have been with a little stamp of your foot *to tread upon them.* These I cannot call faults, they are omissions which might be occasioned by absence of thought at the instant ; but though it is easy to reckon up these little oversights, for these are all I could observe, it is not easy to count your beauties and excellencies, which are indeed innumerable. All that we wanted was to see more of your face and the expression of your countenance ; and therefore beg you will remember to secure for us that stage-box, where we may see your looks in the scene with Lady Ann, and as you lie upon the couch, that is, that we may sit with the stage on our right hand, and the pit on our left. And I hope in the mean time you will spare yourself as much as you can, till you are recovered from your cold, and your voice may appear in perfection. *Cura ut valeas* is often the conclusion in Latin epistles, and it shall finish that of

Yours in great haste,

THOS. NEWTON.

To Mr. Garrick,
in Mansfield-street, Goodman's-fields.

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

DEAR SIR,

Grosvenor-square, Dec. 28, 1741.

I AM to thank you in the name of our company for our entertainment last Wednesday. Our ladies are almost in love with Richard as much as Lady Ann. And for us men, we like him better the second time than even the first : your voice was more in tune and order ; and I reckon we liked you better too, as we saw more of you than we did above, though really the people upon the stage incommoded us very much. The front boxes, I believe, are the most commodious, and pray let us have one of them for the “ Orphan” and “ Lying Valet,” and let it be taken in the

DAVID GARRICK.

5

name of Mrs. Deanes. She and I are to come from this end of the town, with another lady or two; and Mrs. Porter, with another lady or two in the City, is to meet us. You know it is to be after the holidays, and it might be next week, or rather, if you please, the week following; and be so good to give me as early notice as you possibly can of the day, because no less a man than Mr. Pulteney desires to be of our party, and to have a place in our box; and the earlier notice is necessary, that he may not be otherwise engaged. If I find that one night is more agreeable to our company than another, you shall hear from me again, who am in haste,

Dear Sir,

Your sincere friend and obedient servant,

THOS. NEWTON.

To Mr. Garrick,
in Mansfield-street, Goodman-fields.

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

Grosvenor-square, Monday, Jan. 18th.

DEAR SIR,

I AM sorry it happened so that you could not oblige us with the "Orphan" and the "Lying Valet" last week; and it appears the more unlucky, as you was able to act the Lying Valet and something else almost every night. It would certainly have been a very great honour to you, if of no other advantage, for such a person as Mr. Pulteney to come so far to be one of your audience; and, if I had been in your capacity, I should have thought it worth while to have strained a point, or done almost any thing, rather than have disappointed him. I would have acted that night, if I had spared myself all the rest for it. To-day, you know, the Parliament meets again, and to-morrow an Election of consequence is to be heard at the bar of the House; so that it will be impossible for Mr. Pulteney to attend you to-morrow night, as it is likewise for another principal person of our party, who is engaged to-morrow night in such a manner, that she cannot put off her engagement, and therefore the box need not be kept for us; and, if you please, we will defer the play a week or fortnight, in hopes that one night or other Mr. Pulteney will be able to come with us; but whether we can have his company or not, the rest of us will come, and I hope you will favour us with the play at any time upon two or three days' notice. I am sorry for these disappointments, but I was almost angry with you, to see your name last week in the bills for Costar Pearmain. I am not fond of your acting such parts as Fondlewife, or even Clodio, nor should be of the Lying Valet, if it was not of your own writing. You who are equal to the greatest parts, strangely demean yourself in acting any thing that is low and little; and not only I, but really all who admire you and wish you well, that is all who know you, are grieved and wonder at it.

There are abundance of people who hit off low humour, and succeed in the cox-

comb and the buffoon very well; but there is scarce one in an age who is capable of acting the hero in Tragedy, and the fine gentleman in Comedy. All who have seen you say you have talents for all this; and when you can reap this field of fame alone without a rival, why should you be content with only surpassing Chapman, or Macklin, or young Cibber? Though you perform these parts never so well, yet there is not half the merit in excelling in them as in the others. If I was an actor, surely I would rather endeavour to be a Betterton, than a Nokes, or Dogget; as if I was a painter, I would rather wish to be a Raphael than a Hogarth; or if I was a poet, I would choose infinitely rather to be a Milton than a Hudibras.* I hope, dear Sir, I need make no apology for the freedom of what I have said; you may be sure I should not have said it, if I had not been

Your affectionate friend and servant,

THOMAS NEWTON.

To Mr. Garrick,
in Mansfield-street, Goodman's-fields.

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

Grosvenor-square, Wednesday, Feb. 17.

DEAR SIR,

LOWE and I were most highly pleased with Bayes: he thinks young Cibber insufferable in comparison; and I think you exceed old Cibber in many things, and fall short of him in nothing; and your imitations of the actors are inimitable. But this was not the purport of my writing. Mr. Pulteney was asking Mrs. Deanes the other night when we were to go to Goodman's-fields; and as they understand that we cannot go till the third night of "Richard," and as it is very uncertain when that will be, and as "Lear" in all probability will be acted before, we beg of you to unbespeak Mrs. Deanes' box for the third time of "Richard," and to take one in her name for the third time of "Lear," or any night after the third; and only be so good to inform me what night, and we will attend you. You will excuse this trouble, and believe me, dear Sir,

Your ever affectionate friend and servant,

THOMAS NEWTON.

* The illustration does not quite meet the demand upon it. Raphael could not have been Hogarth; Milton could not be Butler. The universality of Garrick was his great distinction. It is readily granted that, in higher life, the comedian is seldom ranked with the tragedian. The reason seems to be, that his habits are commonly lower, and that he cannot *ascend*, by any strain, to the dignity of tragic manners. The voluntary descent of the tragedian to comedy only proves, that he has made his studies in all the classes of life; and can put on, for the moment, whatever character he wishes to become. The extent and variety of the power render its exercise *greatness*.

As a commentator, Newton followed his rule,—he illustrated Milton, and left Butler to Grey.—ED.

DAVID GARRICK.

7

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

Monday, April 19th.

DEAR SIR,

I HAVE not had an opportunity before of writing to you, to tell you how highly I was pleased with your acting of *King Lear*; and it is not only my opinion, but several good judges I know, and particularly one of the Masters of Westminster School, and one of the chief Clerks in the Treasury, say that you far exceed Booth in that character, and even equal Betterton.* The thing that strikes me above all others, is that variety in your acting, and your being so totally a different man in *Lear* from what you are in *Richard*. There is a sameness in every other actor. Cibber is something of a coxcomb in every thing; and *Wolsey*, and *Syphax*, and *Iago*, all smell strong of the essence of Lord Foppington. Booth was a philosopher in *Cato*, and was a philosopher in every thing else. His passion in *Hotspur* and *Lear* was much of the same nature, whereas yours was an old man's passion, and an old man's voice and action; and in the four parts wherein I have seen you, *Richard*, *Chamont*, *Bayes*, and *Lear*, I never saw four actors more different from one another than you are from yourself. But at the same time that I commend you so much and so deservedly for this, I must tell you as a friend, that I do not hear you equally applauded for Lord Foppington; and it was my opinion, you know, at the first, that *Sir Charles Easy* was the properer part for you. And I could wish that you had chosen *Jaffier* rather than *Pierre*, that being a part of greater compass and variety; and *Lowe* concurs with me, though he commends you in *Pierre* mightily. I am very sincerely your friend and well-wisher, and I think I show it in the friendly freedoms I take with you. But now to my business. Mrs. Deanes (whose servant is the bearer) and another lady, are very desirous of seeing you in *Richard*, which we hear is to be acted on Wednesday night. I am afraid it is too late to apply for places, but if you can only accommodate us with three tolerable good ones, you will greatly oblige us; and I can assure you, you cannot oblige two better judges, nor greater lovers of fine acting, among all the ladies. We shall come in Mrs. Deanes' coach, but will send a servant before to keep the places, if you can provide any for us; and as this, in all probability, will find you at the house, you will be able to return your answer by the bearer to, Dear Sir,

Your affectionate humble servant,

THOMAS NEWTON.

To Mr. Garrick, at Goodman's-fields.

* From this letter it appears that Garrick's *Lear* was transcendent from the first hour he played it. That he should thoroughly have felt a character of such amazing force and variety, passion and suffering, at five and twenty, is much; but that he should possess such absolute mastery over *himself*, as to preserve the damp of age in the fire of insanity, neither drivel like an imbecile, nor totter like a paralytic,—be in short, then, Shakspeare's own *Lear*, is truly wonderful; and yet I entirely believe it!—ED.

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

DEAR SIR,

Grosvenor-square, Monday, April 26th.

I THOUGHT Richard almost perfect at the first, but every time I find him still better and better; and it is impossible to express the pleasure I felt in seeing you perform so well, and hearing you on all hands so highly applauded; for it was not only a trial of your acting, but in some measure a trial of my judgment. The two ladies who were with me, and my Lord and Lady Carpenter,* and the rest of the company who were with them, all believed that I must be a little partial to my townsman, and no young actor in the world could deserve all the fine things I said of you; but now they are convinced, and are all in raptures; they declare they never saw such acting before, and you have not only answered all their expectations, but have exceeded every thing that they could have conceived. And Mrs. Porter† is no less in raptures than the rest; she returned to town on purpose to see you, and declares she would not but have come for the world. You are born an actor, she says, and do more at your first appearing, than ever any body did with twenty years' practice; and, Good God, says she, what will he be in time! And when somebody in company mentioned your not doing Lord Foppington so well, she made answer, that she was sure it was impossible for you to do any thing ill; you might perhaps excel less in that, but you must excel in every thing. I shall long to see you in that character, and especially as you have been so obliging as to promise the "Lying Valet" with it; and I could wish it might be this week, if it was not inconvenient, because one of our gentlemen goes into the country next Monday; but whenever it suits your convenience there will be enough of us to fill a box, and if we can have one of the stage boxes, we shall choose it rather. I should be glad to know too, whether "Lear" is to be acted again, and when; for my Lady Carpenter and the two ladies who were with me, talk of coming. I give you a deal of trouble, but you can oblige nobody who loves and admires you more than,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate humble servant,

THOMAS NEWTON.

To Mr. Garrick,
in Mansfield-street, Goodman's-fields.

* This was George, the second Lord Carpenter.

† This was Mrs. Porter, the actress, who had retired from London, and the Stage. She spoke a very clever Epilogue at Drury Lane Theatre, written by the Honourable James Noel, on the 28th of April, 1738, after the play of Julius Cæsar, acted gratuitously and gratefully, I may add, by the Company of Comedians there; and the receipts of the Theatre, 200*l.*, were applied towards defraying the expense of the statue erected to Shakspeare in the Abbey Church of Westminster.

Of this great actress, Dr. Johnson told Mrs. Siddons, that "in the vehemence of tragic rage he had never seen her equalled." Her candid opinion of Mr. Garrick was highly to be valued. She had seen what twenty years had done for *others* in the art she professed, and she lived to know what the same probation could do for Garrick, who started with their excellence. She was too wise not to feel that the genius before her must be greater by practice.—ED.

DAVID GARRICK.

9

REV. T. NEWTON TO MR. GARRICK.

Lord Carpenter's, Grosvenor-square,
Monday, Dec. 7.

DEAR SIR,

You need make no apology for your profession, at least to me.* I always thought that you was born an actor, if ever any man was so; and it will be your own indiscretion (and I hope and believe you will hardly be guilty of such indiscretion) if coming upon the stage hurts your reputation, and doth not make your fortune. As great talents are required for acting well, as for almost any thing; and an excellent actor, if at the same time he is an honest worthy man, is a fit companion for any body. You know Roscius was familiar with Cicero, and the greatest men of his time; and Betterton used frequently to visit Bishop Sprat and Atterbury, and other divines, as well as the best of the nobility and gentry, not as a mimic and buffoon, to make diversion for the company, but as an agreeable friend and companion.

I am sorry for your cold, and that we cannot have "Richard the Third" so soon as desired; for the greater part of our company fix upon Richard, and there being three or four young ladies of the party, you need not be told that they are very impatient of delays and disappointments, when their hearts are set upon any pleasure. You will, therefore, be so obliging as to secure one of the stage boxes for us, as soon as ever they can be at liberty; and only write me a line of information, and we shall be ready to attend you any night except Saturday, for a reason that you may easily conceive. But it may probably happen that I shall see you in the mean time, intending to take the very first opportunity I possibly can of coming to Lothario and the Lying Valet; and I make no question I shall be pleased both with the tragedy and comedy, and equally approve the actor and author, being his friend, countryman and servant,

THOMAS NEWTON.

To Mr. Garrick,
in Mansfield-street, Goodman's-fields.

TO MR. GARRICK.

IN a book called "Recherches sur les Théâtres de France," printed at Paris in 1735, are the two following passages:—

The author, speaking of Baron's appearing again on the French stage, says, "Sa rentrée en 1720 fut doublement avantageuse à ses camarades, elle leur attira de nombreuses assemblées, et les guérit de cette déclamation forcenée que Beaubourg avoit introduite, et qui avoit passé jusqu'aux femmes: il faut en excepter Mademoiselle Le

* The first sentence of the present letter is honourable to the writer, who places, however, his own liberal feeling in admirable company. ED.

Couvreur, qui, forcée par la foiblesse de ses organes à s'en tenir à la déclamation naturelle, devint excellente, parce qu'elle ne pouvoit devenir mauvaise." 2 Tom. p. 424.

In another place, speaking of Monsieur La Grange, he says, "Quoique sa taille ne passât guères la médiocre, elle étoit bien prise. Il avoit l'air libre et degagé: c'étoit un bon acteur, soit pour le serieux, soit pour le comique. Il n'y avoit point de rôle qu'il n'exécût de bonne grace."* 3 Tom. p. 369.

To Mr. Garrick,
in Mansfield-street, Goodman's-fields.

TO MR. GARRICK.

THE alterations made in Shakspeare's Plays have rarely been judicious. Even the character of Richard the Third, as now drawn, is not quite consistent. However, it must be owned to be better adapted than the original to give scope to that inimitable action that has so charmed the public, and at once triumphed over all the impotent efforts of ignorance, prejudice, and envy, to lessen its merit.

Notwithstanding that summons,

"Awake, Richard, awake, to guilty minds
A terrible example—"

ought not he to lie asleep some little time after the disappearing of the ghosts, and give signs of farther commotions in his mind? for must we not here suppose, as is usual in dreams, the scene then suddenly to change, presenting to his fancy himself engaged in battle? because, on his waking, he breaks out into that exclamation—

"Give me a horse—bind up my wounds—"

IGNOTO TO MR. GARRICK.

Jan.

IF I had resolved, Sir, to communicate to you all the beauties that I observed in your acting the part of Hamlet to-night, the task would be almost infinite; but my present design of telling you what I disliked is so very short, that I am tempted by that consideration to execute it; so, without the preamble of any apology,

* Mr. Garrick himself thought fit to preserve some of the anonymous criticisms, with which he was privately honoured. A few such papers follow, and discover no mean talent in the writers. The Irish critic who censures Mr. Garrick for pronouncing an *a* like an *e*, is merely himself unacquainted with the long and slender sound of the former letter peculiar to the English.

In my youth, our literary coffee-houses rang with debates upon the true way of sounding the name of the great patriot Cato—whether it should be Cāto, as in Kate, or Cāto, as in cart? The lovers of "Imperial Tragedy," and its turgid declamation, found more dignity in the open-mouthing of the word; but Cāto has at length undisturbed possession of the scene.—ED.