SOME PARTICULARS

OF

THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

T. Gainsborough pinx. *I. Hall sculp. Engraver to his Majesty.*

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SOME PARTICULARS

OF

THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

Written by himself,

AND DELIVERED BY HIM TO

RICHARD JACKSON, Esq.

(One of his Executors,)

FOR PUBLICATION AFTER HIS DECEASE.

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUN. AND W. DAVIES,
(SUCCESSORS TO MR. CADELL)
IN THE STRAND.

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SOME PARTICULARS

OF

THE LIFE

OF THE LATE

GEORGE COLMAN, Esq.

Richmond, Dec. 4th, 1787.

FOR some years past I have entertained an idea of leaving behind me some particulars of my life, which I flattered myself might not be quite uninteresting, or unentertaining; or at least prove more satisfactory than the anecdotes retailed by some chance biographer, who might perhaps be induced to confer on me the honours that have lately been as liberally bestowed on persons of as little importance. Much business, much illness, and perhaps

 some

ſome idleneſs, have from time to time protracted my commencement of the work, and thinking it not impoſſible, nor indeed improbable, that the ſame cauſes may ſtill prevail, ſo as at leaſt to hinder the completion of it, I now ſit down to give an account of ſome circumſtances, touching what has been commonly ſuppoſed to be the leading feature in my character; but in which the world has been moſt groſsly deceived, and miſtaken, as the following narration and documents will ſufficiently teſtify.

It has, I know, long been taken for granted, that ſuch was the ſtrength of my predilection for theatrical poſſeſſions, that I would in ſpite of all competition, and without heſitation, forego all other expectations, however magnificent or alluring; and that at a certain æra of my life, about

twenty

twenty years ago, this poſition was moſt fully verified.

Nothing but my reſpect and gratitude for the memory of thoſe, from whoſe bounty I ſtill derive a conſiderable part of my income, determined me to abide and patiently endure the contempt and obloquy that ſuch a received opinion brought upon me, leſt by vindicating myſelf from cauſeleſs ſlander, I might appear willing to throw a ſtain on thoſe who had done much for me, merely becauſe they had not done more.

This opinion of my character has been chiefly founded on two propoſitions, both of which, with as much delicacy as the truth will admit, I ſhall ſhew to be groundleſs.

The firſt of theſe propoſitions is, that by my literary purſuits, and dramatic compoſitions,

positions, I lost the favour and affection of the Earl of BATH.

The second is, that by my purchase of a fourth of the patent of Covent Garden theatre, I knowingly and voluntarily forfeited the intended bequest of the Newport estate under the will of General PULTENEY.

That I had an early taste and relish for polite literature, and particularly for compositions of the stage, is most true; nor will I pretend to deny that I was betrayed into youthful follies and irregularities, which involved me in temporary inconveniencies and distresses. To extricate myself from the embarrassments that those follies, ill suited to narrow circumstances, brought upon me, I had recourse to my pen, which was then rarely used, dramatically,

tically, or otherwiſe, but with a view to profit: the Earl of BATH, however, was ſo little diſpleaſed with theſe efforts, that he even countenanced and encouraged them, and often deigned to conſider them as the earneſt of ſomething better that was to follow. So dear, indeed, did he hold me, that he has not only in words and in writing told me that he conſidered me as his ſecond ſon, but, in ſeveral wills and teſtaments executed during that period, and during the life of my dear friend and kinſman, Lord PULTENEY, abſolutely teſtified that he regarded me in that light; nor did any of my theatrical productions abate his affection, or in the leaſt tend to alter his intentions. A more fatal event was the cauſe of ſuch alterations; I mean the early and unexpected death of Lord PULTENEY. From that moment he new modelled his will, in which he ſtill made

a hand-

a handſome proviſion for me, but left it to the diſcretion of General PULTENEY to conſign, or not conſign to me the eſtate, which he had, in many preceding wills, abſolutely deviſed to me, in caſe of the death of his only ſon, Lord PULTENEY.

The little that has been already ſaid on this ſubject, is, perhaps, more than ſufficient to refute the charge contained in the firſt propoſition; but it may not be amiſs to ſpeak of one or two circumſtances, before we entirely diſmiſs it. I have mentioned, that Lord BATH conſidered me as his ſecond ſon; and, indeed, his avowed partiality for me, induced many perſons, not intimately acquainted with the hiſtory and connections of the family, to think me really ſo, and of conſequence to report it as a fact. Not to dwell on the groſſneſs of the ſuppoſition, implying a criminal intercourſe

tercourſe between his lordſhip and his wife's ſiſter, there were certain phyſical impoſſibilities in the caſe. My mother went over to my father, who was reſident at Florence, four or five years before I was born. Mr. PULTENEY and his family were in England; I had a ſiſter born there two years before me, ſo that neither of us, natives of Florence, could derive our origin from my mother's brother in law, conſidering the unfortunate intervention of the Alps and the Mediterranean. We had, indeed, each of us, the honour of a royal godfather and godmother, as children of a Britiſh plenipotentiary, from whom we took our ſeveral names of GEORGE and CAROLINE.

The other circumſtances referred to above, come cloſer to the point in queſtion, and, indeed, form a neceſſary chain

in

in the ſucceeding narrative; and it gives me no ſmall ſatisfaction to be able to ſeize this opportunity of paying a due tribute of affection and reſpect to a moſt ingenious, learned, and worthy man. The ſtory will ſpeak his elogium. The man I mean was my moſt eſteemed and honoured friend the late Mr. BOOTH of Lincoln's Inn.

It was Mr. BOOTH who firſt acquainted me, very ſoon after the irretrievable loſs of poor Lord PULTENEY, of the new arrangements of Lord BATH's affairs. His lordſhip, however, ſays he, aſſures me he has taken care of you; but that care, I dare ſay, will be very unequal to his original intentions. The world ſuppoſes, that the death of Lord PULTENEY is a great event in your fortune. You and I know the contrary; and if you have a mind, I will ſtill endeavour to enable you

to

to make your fortune another way. Though you are my neighbour in Lincoln's Inn, and have your chambers in the next ſtair-caſe to mine, yet I believe you have not hitherto thought of the law ſo ſeriouſly as I have done. If you have talents for the bar, you may make much more money than ever I have made; my religion has prevented my appearance there; yet my gains have not been inconſiderable, though leſs than what they have been rated. If you do *not* attend the bar, ſtill the law is no mean reſource. I will, if you pleaſe, give you a plan of ſtudy; I will ſhew you every caſe I ever anſwered, and explain to you the principles on which I founded my opinions. *My life is wearing; and as I go out of buſineſs, I will make it a point to bring you into it.*

This was the ſubſtance of what this good friend ſaid to me on this occaſion. I

have every where endeavoured to clothe the matter as near as poſſible in his own expreſſions, and to the laſt words I could almoſt venture to ſwear.

Though he had for ſome time ſhewed me many civilities, and even marks of friendſhip, yet I muſt confeſs that this touching inſtance of it almoſt overcame me.

Penetrated with his kindneſs, and ſtruck with the nicety of my ſituation, I ſeriouſly determined to avail myſelf of his moſt friendly offer, and to follow his advice. Lord BATH, to the day of his death, continued his favour and protection to me. I entered his houſe as familiarly as my own chambers, and occupied without invitation a place at his table.

On his death, his brother, General PULTENEY, received me as a friend, and gave me

me to underſtand that I was *un enfant de famille*, that muſt not be overlooked or neglected. He told me, that he ſuppoſed I ſhould no longer think of the profeſſion to which I had been deſtined, and made me a preſent of his chariot. Such a call *from* the bar was too tempting to be reſiſted, and I accordingly quitted my tye wig, gown, and band, and my chambers at Lincoln's Inn.

I did not, however, roll long in the general's carriage without ſome rather diſagreeable jolts in it. Malice ſoon began her operations, and endeavoured to prejudice him againſt me; yet he continued my friend, and in anſwer to a letter to him at Tunbridge, (of which I have no copy) he returned me the following comfortable epiſtle.

Vox audita perit, litera ſcripta manet.

Dear

Dear COLMAN,

I eſteem you very much for your acknowledgment and grateful ſenſe of poor Lord BATH's affection and kindneſs to you, which has urged you at preſent (in writing to me,) to expreſs yourſelf (with the overflowings of an honeſt heart) in ſo very obliging a manner, that if I had no other motive, it would be ſufficient to make me love you with great cordiality and kindneſs to my life's end; but I will over and above aſſure you, that I have ever loved you, and am perſuaded that nothing will alter my affection and opinion of your deſerving from me all the good that Lord BATH has viſibly deſigned and wiſhed you to enjoy; all that can be ſaid further, muſt be ſuperfluous and unneceſſary; but, let me add, that I ſhall always be glad of a viſit from you: the reaſon that after the eleventh was menti-

oned

oned to you for coming here, was from an engagement about that time to the Biſhop of ROCHESTER, and would be an hindrance to your being at the ſame time with me, as my houſe would be quite full; but as he makes no longer a ſtay than a day or two, you then may take your own time and conveniency of obliging me with your company; being,

Dear COLMAN,

Your's very affectionately,

H. PULTENEY.

Tunbridge, Friday,
Aug. 3d.

The publication of private letters I have ever thought exceptionable, unleſs ſome very particular circumſtances render it proper and neceſſary to produce them. In the preſent inſtance, I do not ſee how I can otherwiſe vindicate my character; and therefore

therefore I truſt that my memory will not be loaded with reproach, merely for an act of ſelf juſtification.

Nothing could be more open and direct than the contents of the above letter; yet ſome ſubſequent events, too ſtrong not to be noticed, but yet too minute to be recapitulated, made me conceive it more than barely poſſible that the General would on ſome pretence, render void his moſt explicit and voluntary declaration. Under this perſuaſion I thought it adviſable to ſecure to myſelf, if poſſible, ſome advantages more ſolid and permanent, than an annuity which was to vaniſh with my life, and might render it impoſſible for me to provide for any ſurivor,

At this critical time, an offer was made me of a ſhare in Covent Garden theatre, and I had before had the refuſal of Mr.

GARRICK'S

GARRICK's ſhare at Drury Lane. Still, however, I did not enter haſtily into theſe undertakings, without attention to the aſſurances I had received, and which were now put to the teſt. In March 1767, I ſigned an agreement with my friend POWELL, and the other intended purchaſers of Covent Garden theatre, under a penalty of three thouſand pounds, in caſe of non-performance. I afterwards went to Bath, where I received a letter from General PULTENEY, in anſwer to one of mine, of which I have no copy, but of which the ſubſtance may be collected from his anſwer, and my reply.

London, Mond. April 27, 1767.

Dear COLMAN,

I have received your letter from Bath, which ſurpriſes me not a little, to find in your letters the ſame jealouſy and reproach

as

as I met with the laſt year, from Bath, which were, as I told you then, falſely grounded from malice and curioſity, and now again I am the more convinced of it, for I declare to you, that I never gave any cauſe, to any one whatſoever, that from any report in your disfavour that I had the leaſt thought of paying any regard to it, nor indeed have any perſons, by miſrepreſenting you, ever taken that liberty to ſpeak of you diſadvantageouſly; for it is well known the veneration I have for every thing Lord BATH has recommended, and I will aſſure you over and above, that I have a long rooted diſpoſition in me to befriend you in all things; yet I can ſee ſome things that are not greatly pleaſing, as moſt certainly the letter which you ſpeak of was rather too ludicrous to be writ to an old gentleman, and your friend, which I found fault with, and I did not

expect

expect to find it juſtified, by urging that I went to counſell in diſaproving of it, for I think the impropriety of it, would have been diſaproved off by a weaker judgem^t. Y^r jealouſy about your connection may be founded with reaſon, but however that may appear to the world, and may give me a concern, I had not deviated from my own good will, nor from Ld BATH's intention. I have thus far explained my affection to you this once; but I hope you will give no farther attention to the malice or curioſity of Bath acquaintance, but to diſregard them, as I ſhall do, if it continues; but otherwiſe, reſt aſſured y^t I am inclined and very deſirous of being always, your faithful Friend and ſerv^t,

H. PULTENEY.

I am juſt going out of town for a day or two.

Dear Sir,

Pleaſe to accept my warmeſt acknowledgments of your kind letter, and give me leave to aſſure you that I ſhall ever entertain the moſt lively ſenſe of your goodneſs to me on this and every other occaſion. The ſole meaning of my laſt was to acquit myſelf of diſreſpect or ingratitude: I was conſcious that I had never conſulted lawyers on the ſubject there mentioned, which I underſtood had been inſinuated to you, and I thought myſelf bound in duty to you to wipe off the reproach that ſuch an imputation carried with it.

I am, &c.

From this reply it is evident that the General miſunderſtood what I had ſaid in my firſt letter, concerning the conſultation of counſel; yet my unhappy attempts

at

at raillery and pleaſantry, always ſo well received by Lord BATH, were rather injudiciouſly directed to his brother, and my inexperience and want of due knowledge of the world, muſt be my only apology. It is likely too, that I might be more anxious than ordinary, from a ſenſe of the covenant I had recently, and, perhaps, too haſtily entered into, juſt before I left London. And before my return from Bath, early in May, the expected revolution in the ſtate of Covent Garden had become a ſubject of public converſation, and of courſe furniſhed materials for ſundry paragraphs in the news papers. I waited immediately on General PULTENEY, who received me as cordially as ever. We had a full and free converſation on the ſubject. He expreſſed neither warmth nor anger on the occaſion; but on the whole ſeemed rather to diſapprove of the undertaking. In conſequence

of

of which, the following letters paſt between us.

Dear Sir,

It is almoſt impoſſible to conceive or expreſs the uneaſineſs I have ſuffered ſince my return from Bath. The late alteration in my circumſtances was of itſelf ſufficient to make me very indifferent about the engagements I had entered into, whatever advantages they might promiſe; but the hint you gave me of your diſapprobation of them, made me earneſtly endeavour to extricate myſelf. The difficulties that attended thoſe endeavours have only ſerved to add to my uneaſineſs; but it is now confidently ſaid, that other bidders will appear, and this, or ſome other unforeſeen circumſtance will, I hope, ſtill defeat the purchaſe; if not, I have no reſource but to break through my engagement, and ſub-

mit

mit to a penalty of three thouſand pounds. Judge then of the diſtraction of my mind, between the fear of diſpleaſing you, and ſo diſagreeable an alternative.

I will not ſay any thing in vindication of the undertaking. It ſeems to be diſagreeable to you, and that is enough to make me repent of having thought of it. Before it was propoſed to me, I knew that Sir WILLIAM DAVENANT was the original proprietor of this very patent; that Sir RICHARD STEELE had received from the Crown a favour of the ſame nature; that Sir JOHN VANBURGH not only built the theatre in the Hay-market, but was actually engaged in the management of it, as well as Mr. CONGREVE in that of Lincoln's Inn Fields; not to mention ſeveral gentlemen now living of rank and fortune ſuperior to my own, who had formed the like intentions;

intentions; ſo that I really did not think of bringing any reflections on myſelf, or thoſe who had honoured me with their countenance and protection. Any thing that might carry the ſlighteſt appearance of diſreſpect to you was the fartheſt from my thoughts, and I cannot but be miſerable while I ſuppoſe myſelf liable even to the ſuſpicion of it. As to my precipitation in this affair, I feel the conſequences of it but too ſenſibly.

I am, Dear Sir,
With the utmoſt gratitude and reſpect,
Your moſt obliged, and obedient
Humble ſerv',
G. COLMAN.

June, 7th, 1767.
General Pulteney.

To this letter I was favoured with the following anſwer.

Dear

Dear COLMAN,

Altho' we have lived in friendſhip for many years together, yet I cannot expect you will relinquiſh an agreement in hand at the expence of three thouſand pounds, nor ſhall I ceaſe to be

Your friend & ſerv^t,

H. PULTENEY.

June 10*th*. 1767.

Richmond, Monday, June 29*th*, 1767.

Dear Sir,

When I left London on Saturday, I fully intended to ride to town this morning in order to pay my reſpects to you before you ſet out for Tunbridge, but having been ſeized with a little feveriſh diſorder laſt night, I am adviſed not to ſtir out to day, which reduces me to this method of ſending you my beſt wiſhes for your good

journey,

journey, and your receiving all poſſible benefit from the waters.

The affair of Covent Garden muſt now very ſoon be determined; and, let it turn out which way it will, I ſhall ever retain the moſt grateful ſenſe of your kindneſs on this occaſion. Knowing your ſentiments, I had rather not embark in it; but, ſhould I be driven into it againſt my inclination, I have ſtill the conſolation of reflecting that my ſincere reſpect for you induced me to offer not only to forego all lucrative views in it, but to ſubmit to a penalty that would have ſwallowed almoſt the whole of my little fortune; and that you, with the ſame ſpirit of generoſity that you have ever exerted towards me, declined ſuch a ſacrifice, and reconciled me to myſelf

by

by aſſuring me of the continuance of your friendſhip, the loſs of which I ſhould feel as the heavieſt misfortune that could befall me.

I beg my beſt reſpects to Mr. & Mrs. BURRARD, to whom I wiſh every pleaſure and benefit that Tunbridge can afford, and I remain, with the trueſt attachment,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt obliged,

And obed^t ſerv^t,

G. COLMAN.

Dear Sir,

Before this reaches your hands, you will have been appriſed, by the papers, of the completion of an affair, which I do aſſure you, I have taken every method to avoid, ſince I underſtood it was at all dif-

agreeable to you. The other bidders talked ſo very confidently of advancing upon our price, that, till laſt Thurſday was over, I was never thoroughly perſuaded that our party would be the real purchaſers; and if our opponents had ever produced the money to back their aſſertions, it would have afforded me an opportunity to recede, which I ſhould moſt certainly have embraced. As the matter ſtood, nothing but the penalty could have procured me that opportunity. I hope you will at leaſt be convinced that I have, on all occaſions, told you the truth, and that, in this inſtance, I have acted with due reſpect to your opinion, ſince I have been acquainted with it; only availing myſelf of the kind aſſurance you were pleaſed to give me of the continuance of your friendſhip, without exacting my ſub-

miſſion

miſſion to a very heavy penalty. Of this and all your other favours, I ſhall ever retain the deepeſt and moſt grateful ſenſe, and remain with the warmeſt wiſhes, for your health and happineſs,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt obed^t ſerv^t,

G. COLMAN.

July 2^d, 1767.

In the tranſcribing the letters of General PULTENEY, the abbreviations, punctuation, and orthography, have been religiouſly preſerved; not from any deſire of noting any peculiarities, but merely to mark the ſtrict exactneſs of the copies. The originals are depoſited with my executors, who I hope will as ſpeedily as poſſible, after entering on the office they have kindly taken upon them, lay theſe ſheets before the public.

From

From theſe letters, and my anſwers, of which the rough draughts are alſo left with my executors, I think will moſt evidently appear the falſehood and abſurdity of the ſecond propoſition. I ſhewed the General's letter of June 10th, in anſwer to mine of the 7th, to ſeveral friends, GARRICK in particular, who all congratulated me on the contents. Truth, however, obliges me to mention, that honeſt JOSHUA PEELE, a chancery ſolicitor, long employed and deſervedly eſteemed by the family, waiting on General PULTENEY on buſineſs, ſoon after his return from Tunbridge, the General ſaid to him "So, COLMAN has got the playhouſe at laſt;" "Yes, ſays honeſt PEELE, (who had ſeen the General's letter) but I am glad to find that you will not ceaſe to be

his

his friend;" "No, replied the General, I will not ceaſe to be his friend, but I will not be *ſo much* his friend." The General had certainly a right to ſay and do as he pleaſed; but it might, perhaps, not unreaſonably have been expected that he would have ſaid thus much in his anſwer to my letter of the 7th June, an anſwer written ſcarce three weeks before the purchaſe was completed. In that anſwer, he in few, but ſtrong words, ſtates our long friendſhip, his leave and conſent that I ſhould not incur the penalty of my agreement, and his aſſurance that he would not ceaſe to be my friend. This aſſurance, connected with his preceding letters, letters particularly ſhewing *how* he would be my friend, was ſurely not to be received as a forerunner to his ſubſequent conduct. Nor can I conceive that General PULTENEY wrote his letter of the 10th of June

under

under ſuch an idea. But however that may be, his laſt will entirely cancelled all that part of Lord BATH's that he had promiſed to confirm, relative to my ſucceſſion to the Newport Eſtate, which the General commuted for an annuity of four hundred pounds per annum. Soon after General PULTENEY's death, I received a letter from Mr. PULTENEY, which I ſubjoin, together with my anſwer; only for the ſake of having an opportunity to declare, that I moſt intirely acquieſce in the truth of the declarations made in his letter, as well as to teſtify the ſincerity of the ſentiments expreſſed in my anſwer.

Cleveland Row, 28th *October*, 1767.

SIR,

I am very ſenſible that as Lord BATH had named you for Mr. NEWPORT's Eſtate,

tate, the change made by General PULTENEY's will, tho' in favour of his right heirs, muſt have been a great diſappointment to you. I do aſſure you, that I had not the leaſt knowledge, till the will was read, in what manner the General had ſettled that eſtate, or that he had done me the honour to mention my name at all in relation to it; and I further aſſure you, that I never in my life mentioned you to the General, or did you the ſmalleſt prejudice with him.

I eaſily conceive what I myſelf ſhould feel in your ſituation, and it will give me great pleaſure if by any attentions, or by any good offices in my power, I can contribute in any degree to diminiſh your regret, which I am ſenſible it is impoſſible entirely to remove; and Mrs. PULTENEY,

I can

I can venture to aſſure you, entertains exactly the ſame ſentiments.

If you will give me leave, I will wait upon you, as ſoon as the neceſſary attentions upon this occaſion are over, and I ſhall take every opportunity to convince you, that I am,

SIR,

Your moſt obedient humble ſerv^t,

WILLIAM PULTENEY.

SIR,

I am much obliged to you for the kind attention you have been pleaſed to ſhew me in your letter: did I imagine that you would believe me, I would ſay, that I was not at all ſorry for General PULTENEY's reverſal of Lord BATH's nomination of me for the Newport Eſtate; but, ſorry or not

ſorry,

ſorry, I do moſt ſolemnly aſſure you, that I am not in the leaſt diſappointed; and if I feel any regret on this occaſion, it is out of regard to the memory of the General, as I could have wiſhed he had not taken the needleſs trouble of ratifying more than once under his hand a promiſe, which upon reflection he did not think it proper to fulfil. Be that as it may, be aſſured, Sir, that nobody congratulates you on your good fortune more ſincerely than myſelf. I took the liberty of ſending to enquire after your health and Mrs. PULTENEY's the day before yeſterday, and propoſed waiting on you the firſt opportunity. Pleaſe to preſent my beſt reſpects to Mrs. PULTENEY, and believe me,

SIR,

Your moſt obed^t ſerv^t,

G. COLMAN.

FINIS.