

Previous to this idea my father had again quitted England : he left his wife with assurances of good-will—his children with all the agonies of parental regret. When he took leave of my mother, his emphatic words were these—I never shall forget them—“ Take care that no dishonour falls upon my daughter. If she is not safe at my return I will annihilate you.” My mother heard the stern injunction, and trembled while he repeated it.

I was, in consequence of my wish to appear on the stage, introduced to Mr. Hull of Covent-garden theatre ; he then resided in King-street, Soho. He heard me recite some passages of the character of Jane Shore, and seemed delighted with my attempt. I was shortly after presented, by a friend of my mother's, to Mr. Gar-

rick: Mr. Murphy, the celebrated dramatic poet, was one of the party; and we passed the evening at the house of the British Roscius in the Adelphi. This was during the last year that he dignified the profession by his public appearance. Mr. Garrick's encomiums were of the most gratifying kind. He determined that he would appear in the same play with me on the first night's trial; but what part to choose for my *début* was a difficult question. I was too young for any thing beyond the girlish character; and the dignity of tragedy afforded but few opportunities for the display of such juvenile talents. After some hesitation, my tutor fixed on the part of Cordelia. His own Lear can never be forgotten.

It was not till the period when every thing was arranged for my ap-

pearance, that the last solemn injunction so emphatically uttered by my father, nearly palsied my mother's resolution. She dreaded the perils, the temptations to which an unprotected girl would be exposed in so public a situation; while my ardent fancy was busied in contemplating a thousand triumphs, in which my vanity would be publicly gratified, without the smallest sacrifice of my private character.

While this plan was in agitation, I was one evening at Drury-lane theatre with my mother and a small party of her friends, when an officer entered the box. His eyes were fixed on me, and his persevering attention at length nearly overwhelmed me with confusion. The entertainment being finished, we departed. The stranger followed us. At that period my

mother resided in Southampton-buildings, Chancery-lane, for the advantage of the protection which a venerable and respectable friend offered, at a moment when it was so necessary. This friend was the late Samuel Cox, Esq. the intimate friend of Mr. Garrick, and an honour to those laws of which he was a distinguished professor.

It was Mr. Garrick's particular request that I would frequent the theatre as much as possible till the period fixed on for my appearance on the stage. I had now just completed my fifteenth year, and my little heart throbbed with impatience for the hour of trial. My tutor was most sanguine in his expectations of my success, and every rehearsal seemed to strengthen his flattering opinion.

It happened that, several evenings following, the stranger officer, whose

name, for motives of delicacy towards his family, I forbear to mention, followed me to and from the theatre. It was in vain that he offered his attentions in the box ; my mother's frown and assiduous care repulsed them effectually. But the perseverance of a bad mind in the accomplishment of a bad action is not to be subdued. A letter was written and conveyed to me through the hands of a female servant ; I opened it ; I read a declaration of the most ardent love : the writer avowed himself the son of Lady *****, and offered marriage : he was graceful and handsome ; I instantly delivered the letter to my mother ;—and shortly after he was, by an acquaintance, presented with decorous ceremony.

The idea of my appearing on the stage seemed to distract this accomplished suitor. My mother, who but

half approved a dramatic life, was more than *half* inclined to favour the addresses of Captain *****. The injunction of my father every hour became more indelibly impressed on her memory; she knew his stern and invincible sense of honour too well to hazard the thought of awakening it to vengeance.

After a short period, the friend who had presented Capt. *****, alarmed for my safety, and actuated by a liberal wish to defend me from the artifice of his associate, waited on my mother; and, after some hesitation, informed her that my lover was *already married!* that he had a young and amiable wife in a sister kingdom, and that he apprehended some diabolical stratagem for the enthrallment of my honour. My mother's consternation was infinite: the important se-

cret was communicated to me, and I felt little regret in the loss of a husband, when I reflected that a matrimonial alliance would have compelled me to relinquish my theatrical profession.

I had also at this period another professed admirer; a man of a splendid fortune, but nearly old enough to be my grandfather: this suit I never would listen to; and the drama, the delightful drama, seemed the very criterion of all human happiness.

I now found myself an object of attention whenever I appeared at the theatre. I had been too often in public not to be observed; and it was buzzed about that I was the juvenile pupil of Garrick,—the promised Cordelia. My person improved daily; yet a sort of dignified air, which from a child I had acquired, effectually

shielded me from the attacks of impertinence or curiosity. Garrick was delighted with every thing I did. He would sometimes dance a minuet with me, sometimes request me to sing the favourite ballads of the day ; but the circumstance which most pleased him, was my tone of voice, which he frequently told me closely resembled that of his favourite Cibber.

Never shall I forget the enchanting hours which I passed in Mr. Garrick's society : he appeared to me as one who possessed more power, both to awe and to attract, than any man I ever met with. His smile was fascinating ; but he had at times a restless peevishness of tone which excessively affected his hearers ; at least it affected me so that I never shall forget it.

Opposite to the house in which I resided, lived John Vernon, Esq. an

eminent solicitor. I observed a young inmate of his habitation frequently watching me with more than ordinary attention. He was handsome in person, and his countenance was overcast by a sort of languor, the effect of sickness, which rendered it peculiarly interesting. Frequently when I approached the window of our drawing-room this young observer would bow, or turn away with evident emotion. I related the circumstance to my mother, and from that time the lower shutters of our windows were perpetually closed. The young lawyer often excited my mirth, and my mother's indignation; and the injunction of my father was frequently repeated by her, with the addition of her wish, that I was "once well married."

Every attention which was now paid to me augmented my dear mother's

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apprehensions. She fancied every man a seducer, and every hour an hour of accumulating peril! I know what she was doomed to feel, for that Being who formed my sensitive and perpetually aching heart knows that *I have since felt it.*