

**THE ROMANCE OF THE
IRISH STAGE, IN TWO
VOLUMES, VOL. I**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649234332

The romance of the Irish stage, in two volumes, Vol. I by J. Fitzgerald Molloy

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J. FITZGERALD MOLLOY

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PREFACE.

THE Romance of the Irish Stage lies in the histories of those who have fretted their hours upon its boards.

During the Eighteenth Century no other country could boast of so many notable players; in themselves adventurous and fascinating personages, admirably fitted by a national temperament for the art in which they excelled. Fiction might borrow from fact such swift and daring transitions, such amazing episodes as these that enliven their careers.

Charles Macklin, abandoning his more Hibernian name and his saddler's trade to gain fair renown as a comedian and playwright; Tom Sheridan, flying in the face of family pride and hostile prejudice, and casting aside his college cap and gown to don sock and buskin; Peg Woffington, orange seller and booth dancer, gaining place as the first actress

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of her day; Spranger Barry, quitting his silversmith's shop to become the idol of Smock Alley Theatre; the beautiful Miss Bellamy, daughter of an Irish peer and heroine of a hundred intrigues, arrested by bailiffs in her gilded sedan chair; Henry Mossop, rival of Garrick and dupe of a gambling countess, dying heart-broken in a garret; Dorothy Jordan, the milliner's apprentice, capturing at first essay the admiration of the town; Richard Daly, the young gentleman out of Galway who fought sixteen duels in three years, and lived to introduce Mrs. Siddons to an Irish audience—all are children of the Celt, the incidents of whose lives clothe themselves in the witching raiment of romance.

In this, as in his former works, the writer has placed the records of the town beside the history of the stage, one being a reflection of the other, a study of each seeming necessary to the understanding of both. And as a picture of social life in the Irish capital during the Eighteenth Century has not heretofore been painted, it is hoped this presentment may please; for no more splendid and varied

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panorama can be imagined than Dublin in its pre-Union days, with its state processions, its parliament, its court festivities, its reckless gambling, duelling, and abductions, its roystering and extravagance, the whole illumined by a gaiety that has become a tradition.

In striving to present the period with vividness, innumerable histories, biographies, news-sheets, playbills, and manuscripts have been consulted. As a hundred exposures of a camera may be necessary to the production of a single animated photograph, so a score or more volumes, at an average, have contributed to the writing of a chapter. A whole library may be said to be condensed in this book, covering a century and describing events connected with the stage and the town.

J. FITZGERALD MOLLOY.



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