

**MEMOIRS OF CHARLES LEE LEWES,
CONTAINING ANECDOTES, HISTORICAL
AND BIOGRAPHICAL, OF
THE ENGLISH AND SCOTTISH STAGES,
DURING A PERIOD OF FORTY YEARS; IN
FOUR VOLUMES, VOL. I**

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Memoirs of Charles Lee Lewes, Containing Anecdotes, Historical and Biographical, of the English and Scottish Stages, During a Period of Forty Years; In Four Volumes, Vol. I by Charles Lee Lewes

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

London:
PRINTED FOR RICHARD PHILLIPS, No. 6, BRIDGE-
STREET, BLACKFRIARS.

1805.

By T. Gillet, Salisbury-square.

MUR

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PREVIOUSLY to my submitting the following pages to the Public, the regard which I feel for departed talents, and the natural impulse which induces me to exhibit the claims of those talents to posthumous fame and admiration, render it expedient that I should explicitly inform the public, that I have neither directly nor indirectly been connected with a late publication which has appeared under the title of "*Comic Sketches*;" and that I am wholly ignorant of the means which were employed to procure the "light and minute trifles" of which that Work is composed.

This declaration will prove the degree of authenticity which attaches to the publication above named; and I

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hope I shall stand justified for having exerted my humble efforts to rescue the fame and talents of my deceased parent from unjust depreciation. The world, I imagine, would deem me wanting in duty and filial obligation, were I silently to look on, while malice, or ignorance, or both, were attempting to lessen that portion of popular regard, to which a character of so much public estimation is entitled.

With respect to the biographical sketch prefixed to the work called "Comic Sketches," it is unnecessary to trouble my readers with a minute detail of each fictitious particular: I shall therefore leave the author to the enjoyment of his superior inventive powers. I will, notwithstanding, be bold enough to say (even in contradiction of this false biographer), that whatever clouds hung over my father's

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latter days, and however great was the contumacy and tyranny which he experienced from managerial Nebuchadnezzars, Mr. Lee Lewes was a man unrivalled in the comic line of his profession : and although doomed at frequent periods of his life to witness the encouragement given to foreigners and adventurers of every denomination, while his native genius was suffered to languish in the very capital of the kingdom, there are many living testimonies who will subscribe to the truth of this assertion ; and I am prompted to make it from a thorough conviction, that his natural requisites, judicious conception, and acknowledged humour, have placed him in the list of celebrated English comedians.

Impressed as I am with the delicacy of the undertaking which I have assigned myself, and sensibly alive to the

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difficulties I have had to encounter in preparing the following sheets for the press, the liberality and candour of the public will, I trust, make allowance for impediments which it was impossible I could anticipate or prevent.

Encouraged by the hope that my motive will be duly appreciated, and having noticed the avidity with which theatrical anecdotes are read, I feel some degree of confidence in presenting these authentic records to the public; and if they should afford satisfaction to the numerous admirers of my late father, I shall have cause to felicitate myself on the success of my efforts, in rescuing these genuine dramatic anecdotes from oblivion.

JOHN LEE LEWES.

Liverpool, June 1805.

PREFACE.

HAVING promised to give a sketch of my own life, as far as it is connected with the stage *only*, it is necessary that I should apologize for saying a little more concerning so unimportant a subject; and as the conductors of the London theatres seem determined that I shall *professionally die* in the metropolis, it may not be improper (by way of my dying speech) to add also my birth, parentage, and education.

Whether I have come naturally by this scenic death, or have been

guilty of *felo de se*; or, whether the managers not having the fear of the public before their eyes, have wilfully and maliciously buried me alive, it is for the coroner of Taste to determine. If I should be able to prove, as I trust I shall, that I have not laid violent hands upon myself, and that *design* only has deprived me of life (by being deprived of "the means whereby I live") it will then not be difficult for me to call to the remembrance of the public many a favourite actor and actress prematurely forced by the divan of a theatre into the hands of the *scenic sexton*; and likewise many that may probably follow, if I may be allowed to judge by the ratio of proportions, founded on