

**MEMOIRS OF THE LATE THOMAS  
HOLCROFT, WRITTEN BY HIMSELF. AND  
CONTINUED TO THE TIME OF HIS DEATH  
FROM HIS DIARY, NOTES, AND OTHER  
PAPERS. IN THREE VOLUMES. VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649646586

Memoirs of the Late Thomas Holcroft, Written by Himself. And Continued to the Time of His Death from His Diary, Notes, and Other Papers. In Three Volumes. Vol. II by Thomas Holcroft

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Cover @ 2017

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*Edw. A. Duyckinck*  
*London - 1839*

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**VOL. II.**

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London :

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND  
BROWN, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

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1816  
WCH

THE LIFE  
OF  
THOMAS HOLCROFT.

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BOOK III.

CHAP. I.

MR. HOLCROFT, as he had intended, let part of his house, in Southampton Buildings, to lodgers. Among other inmates, were Miss Kemble (afterwards Mrs. Whitelocke) and his friend N—. Holcroft used to take frequent opportunities of urging this gentleman to devote his talents to works of taste and imagination, and his mind teemed with the plots of comedies and subjects of novels, which he wished his friend to write. But as Mr. N—'s pursuits

were of a totally different kind, it generally happened, that Holcroft himself, in the end, executed the works which he had planned for another. Of this kind was his first novel, entitled *Alwyn, or, the Gentleman Comedian*, which it was originally intended that Mr. N. should compile from materials to be furnished by Holcroft, but of which he, in fact, only wrote a few short letters, evidently very much *against the grain*.

This novel came out in the year 1780, in two small volumes, and was printed for Fielding and Walker. What terms he procured for it with the bookseller, I do not know; its success was very moderate; and it was to his own novel that Mr. Holcroft alludes, when he complains, in *Hugh Trevor*, that *Wilmot's* novel had been characterized in the *Monthly Review*, as "a vulgar narrative of uninteresting occurrences."



The most curious part of it is the account which Mr. Holcroft has inserted of some of his own adventures as a strolling actor; for he himself is not the *Gentleman Comedian*. He has disguised his own name under that of Hil-kirk, and Alwyn is the hero of the piece. The story is as follows: Alwyn, a young man, who is patronized by a Mr. Stamford, in consequence of the friendship which had subsisted between him and Alwyn's father, who had saved his life, falls in love with Maria, the daughter of his guardian or master. His passion preys upon his health; and, in order to conceal it from the family, and to try what absence may do towards effecting a cure, he determines to leave his patron's house, and commence comedian. Young Stamford, Maria's brother, is alone in the secret, and is the person to whom Alwyn addresses the account of his sub-

sequent adventures. Mr. Hilkirk, on whose story our author has chosen to ingraft his own, in like manner, falls in love with his master's niece, is on this account, and for his frequenting spouting clubs and billiard rooms, discarded from his service as a clerk, and betakes himself to the stage. These two romantic youths correspond together, and endeavour to console one another, by comparing their mutual mishaps,—the pains of absence, poverty, and hopeless love. Alwyn proceeds to Kendal, where he is received by the inhabitants with extraordinary marks of attention; is supposed to be a gentleman in disguise; is envied by the players; and being invited to the assembly (a distinction never before allowed to any comedian), dances with a young, rich, lively widow, a West-Indian, who falls in love with him, and makes him an offer of her hand and

fortune. This the youth politely declines, his affections being irrevocably engaged to another; and, in consequence of this, the lady being piqued by his refusal, enters into a plot against him in concert with one of the players (a veteran in the corps, who was offended that the part of Romeo, which he had played *for fifty years*, should be taken from him, and given to Alwyn). His pocket-book is searched; the name of the lady's rival is discovered; and a letter is dispatched to old Stamford, informing him of the liberties which Mr. Alwyn is said to have taken with his daughter's name, and the equal presumption he had shewn in paying his addresses to the anonymous writer of the epistle. This letter, which is believed, gives a death-blow to his hopes. Maria Stamford, who had secretly returned his passion, is ashamed of her folly; the father is shocked; and the brother is