

LIFE OF MRS. SUMBEL,

LATE

W E L L S.



London :--Printed by Ballantine & Byworth, Duke-strect, Adelphi.

776

MEMOIRS
OF THE
LIFE OF MRS. SUMBEL,
LATE
WELLS;

*Of the Theatres-royal, Drury-lane, Covent-garden,
and Haymarket.*



IN THREE VOLUMES.

WRITTEN BY HERSELF.

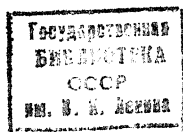
INCLUDING
HER CORRESPONDENCE WITH MAJOR TOPHAM,
MR. REYNOLDS THE DRAMATIST,
&c. &c. &c.

V O L. I I.

" My soul abhors
The man, who breaks through Nature's sweetest laws;
Whose heart so callous to each tender tie,
So deaf to gratitude, to pity's sigh,
Can see that form he vilely has betray'd
Now pine in want, and never lend his aid.
Alas! much-injur'd, , gen'rous WELLS,
How oft on thee my thought with sorrow dwells!
Accept a tear---'t is all I can bestow---
That, and to hate the author of thy woe."

Vide ANTHONY PASQUIN's "Pin-basket."

L O N D O N :
PRINTED FOR C. CHAPPLE, PALL-MALL,
OPPOSITE ST. JAMES'S-PALACE.
1811.



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MEMOIRS AND CORRESPONDENCE

OF

MRS. SUMBEL.

Now commenced a scene of embarrassments, as new as they were perplexing. I changed one of my guineas, and proceeded towards Lincoln, where I endeavoured to take some rest, with the flattering dream that my anxieties would speedily be alleviated : but, alas ! it was not a *golden* dream ; for I found that warm professions may spring from cold and unfeeling bosoms. Happy would it be for me had this been the

only instance in which I had experienced the duplicity of pretended friendship! But as this short tour will present a sufficient number of calamities, I shall not take a retrospect of past inquietudes, but proceed.

After paying for my supper and lodgings, my finances presented no means of travelling as the wife of a noble Moor: I therefore thought it most advisable, as well as most rational, to take my seat in one of those cumbersome flying vehicles, called a stage-coach. Fortunately, there were two other passengers besides myself; whose presence secured me from a repetition of charioteering insolence. I had only four shillings to pay there, and eight

for the two following stages, till I arrived at the ferry, where I found that I had eight shillings more to pay; and at the same moment, to my inexpressible chagrin, recollected that I had not one remaining. Here, of course, I expected to receive letters, with a remittance: moments appeared like ages while I continued in this state of mortifying suspense. The tide seemed to conspire with my ill fortune, and the waves flowed as tardily as the fountain of humanity in the heart of my illustrious husband.

Previous to our embarkation, I informed my stage-coach companions of my awkward situation. One of them kindly proffered his services, and pro-

posed paying my share of the day's expenses, amounting to about eleven shillings. I promised to return this sum as soon as I had crossed the Humber. At the ferry I was advised to go to the Cross-keys inn ; but, to oblige the friendly traveller's wife, I agreed to go to the NEPTUNE ; and happier would it have been for me had I paid a visit to the sea-god in the deepest cavern of old Ocean !

It is the custom of innkeepers in this part of the country to visit the opposite shore, to take a survey of the passengers. I know not how it is, but this circumstance reminds me of the wild coasters, who fly to a wreck with the humane hope of a profitable plun-

der. Here I was, for the first time on my journey, recognised as Mrs. Wells.

The name of "mine hostess" of the Neptune happened to be WINTER;—and a *harder* winter I never remember to have met with! I observed symptoms of commiseration interchanged in the looks and uplifted eyes of the lady who was a passenger in the ferry-boat and the *northern* hostess. Would to Heaven we had been

"Far as the *poles* asunder!"

The lady politely addressed me, by expressing her fears that I was cold. I informed her that, not expecting to pass the water so late in the evening, I had left my great-coat behind me.

“ You have been on a visit in Lincolnshire ?” said the lady.

“ Yes, madam ; I have just left Doctor Willis’s, and expect my husband to follow me.”

This undisguised reply only tended to augment the consternation ; and I cannot but confess that my appearance naturally served to confirm their conjectures : I wore a muslin gown, *without any cloak* ; and the perturbation of my mind was strongly visible in every feature of my countenance. Anxiety on account of receiving no remittance, hope mingled with fear while I looked forward to my journey, and the dear objects who occasioned my undertaking it, perplexed my mind, and

preyed upon my feelings. I was now *really* almost frantic !

The instant I arrived I requested the host with the freezing name to pay my obliging fellow-traveller the eleven shillings which I owed him : he complied. I told the lady and her husband I should proceed to the Wolds that night. The landlord informed me that he had no chaise ready ; but that in an hour I should be accommodated with one. The lady, concluding that I should immediately continue my journey, took her leave and departed.

After supper I found my spirits extremely depressed—my fortitude was nearly exhausted ; yet Hope presented a faint gleam of the long-looked-for

golden ray which my husband might have directed towards me. Alas! no such enlivening prospect came that night; and I resolved on resting at the Neptune, with an intention of continuing my route at five in the morning. The chaise was ordered; and my vexations I knew would prevent my oversleeping that period.

I rose soon after the sun, which did not shed its lustre on a being more unhappy! When mine host of the Neptune presented his bill, I thought I should have fainted; and blest should I have been at that moment to have exclaimed with Isabella—

“ My death will pay ye all ! ”

I now hesitatingly enquired whether

I might be permitted to send the money back by the driver, or whether the host would take my watch as a security for his bill. I wished rather to have been indulged with credit, and to have parted with my watch nearer to the Wolds; but the wary provident man greedily grasped at my last treasure; and the *tablet of time* will never fail to record the transaction.

The avidity with which he snatched at my watch disgusted my feelings, and awakened my indignation. I blushed for his indelicacy more than for my own vexations; and, with a sudden impulse of resentment, I darted from the carriage-door, informing him, at the same time, that I should take a chaise

from the Cross-keys, and immediately redeem my watch from his possession.

He now followed me along the street ; begged, for God's sake, that I would return, for I must pay for the chaise, the horses being put to it. I refused to hear him. He now begged my pardon ; and, to my extreme astonishment, informed me that his wife had received a letter for me. My joy was indescribable.

On our return to the Neptune, I eagerly enquired after my letter, concluding that it came from my husband with the long-looked-for remittance. I was shewn into the bar. The hostess was yet sleeping. My solicitude was torturing. I repeatedly demanded my let-

ter, and was informed that the host was walking in the street, but that his wife would rise speedily. To the street I hastened, and again conjured the man to give me my letter. I represented the anxious state of my mind—my wish to proceed on my journey ; but to no effect. The mysterious paper was still invisible. There seemed a combination to distract me.

I now repaired to the house of a Mr. Tedman, a person whom I had known some years before. I begged Mrs. Tedman's permission to remain with her till I could receive my letter : but I grew every instant more impatient, and therefore waited on the traveller who had recommended me to the

Neptune, and requested that he would demand it. He readily acquiesced; but no letter could be produced.

I now went to Mr. Sykes (mayor of Hull), and desired him to investigate the mystery: but, strange to relate, upon minute enquiry, he discovered that *no letter had arrived!* and that this artful stratagem was put in practice merely to prevent my exposing the conduct of the host. The consternation and the indignation which followed may easily be conceived. The host was severely reprimanded, my watch restored to me, the bill paid, and a chaise ordered from the Cross-keys;—Mr. Tedman having procured money, by leaving my watch as a security, as