

# **The Case of Mrs. Clive**

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IN order to put an End to some false Reports, which have been raised in Relation to my not acting this Season, as well as to bespeak the Favour of the Publick, I have, by the Advice of my Friends, ventured to address my self to them, from whom I have received many and great Marks of Favour, and whose further Protection I now stand in need of.

I know Appeals of this Nature, which relate to Disputes that happen at a Theatre, are by some thought presuming and impertinent, supposing they are too trifling to demand Attention: But, as I persuade my self, that Injustice and Oppression are by no means thought Matters of Indifference by any who have Humanity, I hope I shall not be thought to take too great a Liberty. I am the more encouraged to hope this from Experience; it having been observed, that those Performers, who have had the Happiness to please on the Stage, and who never did any thing to offend the Publick, whenever they have been injured by those who presided over Theatres, have seldom, if ever, failed of Redress upon representing the Hardships they met with: And, as I at this time, apprehend my self to be greatly oppressed by the Managers of both Theatres, I hope I shall be justified in taking this Method of acquainting the Publick with my Case, submitting it to their Determination.

Before the Disputes happened betwixt the Manager of *Drury-Lane* Theatre and his Actors, I had articted for Five Years to receive Three Hundred Pounds a Year, tho' another Performer on that Stage received for Seven Years Five Hundred Guineas, *per* Year; and at the Expiration of my Agreements the Manager offered me an additional Salary to continue at that Theatre.

And since I have mentioned those Disputes, which ended so greatly to the Disadvantage of the Actors, I must beg Leave to endeavour to set that Matter in a clear Light, which hitherto has been misrepresented to the Publick: I think my self obliged to this, as the Hardships I at present labour under are owing to that Disagreement; if any think I treat this Matter too seriously, I hope they will remember, that however trifling such Things may appear to them, to me, who am so much concerned in 'em, they are of great Importance, such as my Liberty and Livelihood depend on.

As only two Theatres were authorised, the Managers thought it was in their Power to reduce the Incomes of those Performers, who could not live independant of their Profession; but in order to make this appear with a better Face to the Town, it was agreed to complain of the Actors Salaries being too great, and accordingly a false Account was published of them in the daily Papers, by whom I will not say: Whether, or no, some particular Salaries were so, I will not pretend to determine; yet, in the whole, they did not amount to more than had been allowed for many Years, when the Theatre was under a frugal and exact Regulation; when the Managers punctually fulfilled, not only all Engagements to their Actors, but to every other Person concerned in the Theatre, and raised very considerable Fortunes for themselves.

But supposing the Expence of the Theatre too high, I am very certain it was not the Actors refusing to submit to a proper Reduction of them, which made so many of them quit the Stage, but from great Hardships they underwent, and greater which they feared would happen from an Agreement supposed to be concluded betwixt the two Managers, which made 'em apprehend, that if they submitted to act under such Agreements, they must be absolutely in the Managers Power; and the Event has proved that their Fears were not ill-grounded, as I doubt not but I shall make appear.

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When the Actors Affairs obliged 'em to return to the Theatres last Winter, under such Abatements of their Salaries as hardly afforded the greater Part of them a Subsistence, I was offered, by the Manager of *Drury-Lane* Theatre, such Terms as bore no Proportion to what he gave other Performers, or to those he had offered me at the beginning of the Season. They were such as I was advis'd not to accept, because it was known they were proposed for no reason but to insult me, and make me seek for better at the other Theatre; for I knew it had been settled, by some dark Agreement, that Part of the Actors were to go to *Covent-Garden* Theatre, and others to *Drury-Lane*; I did, indeed, apprehend I should meet with better Terms at *Covent-Garden*, because that Manager had made many Overtures to get me into his Company the preceding Season, and many times before: But when I apply'd to him, he offered me exactly the same which I had refused at the other Theatre, and which I likewise rejected, but was persuaded to accept some very little better, rather than seem obstinate in not complying as well as others, and yielded so far to the Necessity of the Time, as to Act under a much less Salary than several other Performers on that Stage, and submitted to pay a Sum of Money for my Benefit, notwithstanding I had had one clear of all Expence for Nine Years before; an Advantage the first Performers had been thought to merit for near Thirty Years, and had grown into a Custom.

When I was fixed at that Theatre I determined to stay there; I did, in all things which related to my Profession, submit intirely to that Manager's Direction, and, with the help of other principal Performers, did greatly promote his Interest, as was evident from the Audiences after we went to Act there; but I found, by his Behaviour to me, it was designed I should not continue with him, but return the next Season to *Drury-Lane*.

The Agreements betwixt that Manager and me were verbal, but made before two Gentlemen of Character and Fortune, on whom I must depend for the fulfilling of them; they were for one Year. At the end of the Acting-season the Manager sent an Office-keeper to me with some Salary that was due, who required a Receipt in full; I told him a very great Part of my Agreements were yet due, and requested to see the Manager, who came and acknowledged them, and promised to bring one of the Gentlemen who was present at our Ingagements in a Day or two and pay me, and then he said he had done with me; but he has not paid me, nor have I ever seen him since, or as much as heard from him.

It has always been a Custom in Theatres, that if ever any Actor or Actress was to be discharged, or their Allowance lessen'd, they were acquainted with it at the End of the Season; the Reason of this will appear to be the giving them a proper Notice to provide for themselves: This the Manager of *Covent-Garden* did to all his Company whom he designed to discharge, or whose Allowance was to be lessen'd, except to me, which made me actually then conclude he deter- mined I should continue with him, 'till I was undeceived by his Play-Bills with the Names of other Actresses in Parts I used to perform; so that he had not only broke thro' the Customs of the Theatre, but those in practice almost every where, in dismissing me, and has done me a real Injury in such an unprecedented Act of Injustice; for had I been informed of his Design at the End of the Season, I could have made Terms to have acted in *Ireland*, where I had met with most uncommon Civilities, and received very great Advantages, which I shall ever remember with the utmost Gratitude, and take this and every other Opportunity to acknowledge.

As I have said, it has been a Custom to give Actors Notice of a Discharge: I must at the same time observe, That it never was a Custom to discharge any, but upon Neglect of their Business, or such as were obnoxious to the Publick; this Maxim extended even to those of the lowest Class; but to those, on whose Performances the Town had been pleased to stamp a Value, by their Indulgence and Applause, the Stage was always a Support, even after Age or any Accident had made 'em incapable of their Profession; for the then Patentees thought it as great a Piece of Insolence to deprive the Publick of their Pleasures, as of Cruelty and Injustice to deny those a Subsistence who had contributed towards 'em; for they knew and acknowledged, that the Publick was the only Support of all, consequently had an indisputable Right to be pleased in the best manner possible.

It is pretended by the Managers, that they have the same Right to dis- charge an Actor that a Master has to turn away a Servant, than which nothing can be more false and absurd; for, when a Master dismisses a Servant, there

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are many thousands besides to apply to; but when the Managers dismiss an Actor, where are they to apply? It is unlawful to act any where but with them; Necessity or Inclination brings every one to the Stage; if the former happens to be the Case, they will not readily find an Employment; and if the latter, they will not be fit for one; so that it will appear an Act of great Injustice and Oppression. If it should be objected, That the Actors Demands are so exorbitant, that the Managers cannot comply with 'em? I have already endeavoured to show, that tho' two or three Salaries might be thought so in general, they did not amount to more than had been allowed, and very considerable Profits arising to the Patentees. But there is a very melancholy Instance, that the Actors Demands is not the Reason of dismissing 'em, but the Will of the Manager alone; since last Season an Actor and Actress returned to *Drury-Lane* under such Abatements as that Manager thought proper, and such as were in no degree equal to their Merit; and yet, at the beginning of this Season, were dismissed, after having been from their Infancy on the Stage, and having no other Professions to live by, and very numerous Families to support.

The Manager of *Drury-Lane*, tho' he can't but know I am disengag'd from the other Theatre, has not made any Application to me to act with him, which he has done to several others who quitted that Stage at the Time I did: The Reasons which obliged me to leave him still subsist: He owes me a Hundred and Sixty Pounds, twelve Shillings, which he has acknowledged to be justly due, and promised Payment of it by last *Christmas* to a Person of too great Consequence for me to mention here, the greater Part of it Money I expended for Cloaths for his Use. He offer'd me, last Season, not near half as much as he afterwards agreed to give another Performer, and less than he then gave to some others in his Company; so that I must conclude, as every one knows there are Agreements betwixt the Managers, that there is a Design to distress me, and reduce me to such Terms as I cannot comply with.

I am sorry I am reduced to say any thing in favour of myself; but, as I think I merit as much as another Performer, and the Managers are so desirous to convince me of the contrary, I hope I shall be excused; especially when I declare, that at this time, I am not in the least vain of my Profession.

As to my Performances, the Audience are the only proper Judges: But I may venture to affirm, That my Labour, and Application, have been greater than any other Performers on the Stage. I have not only acted in almost all the Plays, but in Farces and Musical Entertainments; and very frequently two Parts in a Night, even to the Prejudice of my Health. I have been at a very great Expence in Masters for Singing; for which Article alone, the Managers now give five and six Pounds a Week. My additional Expences, in belonging to the Theatre, amount to upwards of one Hundred Pounds a Year, in Clothes, and other Necessaries; and the pretended great Salaries, of ten and twelve Pounds a Week, which have been so artfully, and falsely represented to the Town, to the Prejudice of the Actors, will, upon Enquiry, appear to be no more than half as much, since they performed last Season, at the Theatres, very seldom above three or four Days a Week; so taking in the long Vacation, when there are no Plays at all, to those Days the present Managers omit acting, a Salary which appears to be great, will be found, in effect, to be very moderate; and those which are less, not a Sufficiency.

I have now finished all I propos'd; I have shown in how aggravating a manner, without any Reason assigned, and at a Time a very considerable Sum of Money was owing to me, I have been turn'd out of *Covent-Garden* Theatre. The Manager of *Drury-Lane*, tho' he can't but know what just Reasons I had for quitting him, has never apply'd to me to return, nor made the least Excuse for not paying my Arrears, tho' due so long, and after promising Payment near a Year, notwithstanding I have, for many Years, not only endeavour'd, but succeeded, in greatly promoting that Manager's Interest, as is known to himself and his whole Company.

The Reason of my taking the Liberty to communicate these Things to the Publick, is most earnestly to interceed for their Favour and Protection, from whom I have always met with great Generosity and Indulgence: For, as I have already declared, in a Letter published by me last Year in the Daily Papers, that I had not a Fortune to support me, independent of my Profession, I doubt not but it will appear, I have not made any considerable Acquisition to it since, having not received two Hundred Pounds Salary for acting in Plays, Farces, and Singing; tho' other Performers have received more than twice that Sum. I have, in Consideration of these Hardships, been promised the Protection of many Ladies, to whom I have the Honour to be personally known, and will not doubt

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the Concurrence of the Publick, in receiving my Performance in the best manner I am, at present, capable of, which I shall always most gratefully Acknowledge.

*C. CLIVE.*