The lives of the players

Galt John
THE

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

Although this compilation will probably be among the most amusing books in the language, still the author can lay claim to very little merit. The subject was suggested by a literary friend, and he had only to select from abundant materials.

In one respect he may not be deemed undeserving of some indulgent consideration. The world is well aware that many of the early adventures of those who in riper life have added to our harmless pleasures, are difficult to describe in such a manner as not to render some of the most entertaining objectionable. His object, however, was to produce a parlour-book, and the rule he prescribed to himself was to introduce nothing into it that would not be tolerated on the stage by the most fastidious. In this he is
sensible that he may be questioned by those liquorish epicures who care not for the woodcock without the trail.

The nature of his task necessarily directed him to disregard dates and minute circumstances, save in a few epochal events, and to study the general appearance rather than those particular markings which distinguish personal from historical portraiture. His pencil has been withheld from warts, scars, and freckles, but the nobler features have been painted with industrious care. With several individuals he has perhaps not failed, and where he ventures to offer a judgment either on defects, talents, or degrees of excellence, he has not only endeavoured to be correct in weighing the testimony of others, but well supported where he has found himself constrained to differ from received opinions.

It will depend on the reception which this work may receive from the public, whether more shall be added. In the mean time, the author cannot omit to acknowledge the obligations he is under for access to the dramatic collections of Mr. Mathews and Mr. Winstone,
which, though in some respects different, are each more valuable to histrionic biography, particularly the latter, than the works which relate to the lives of the players in the British Museum. He cannot also but acknowledge the politeness with which he was invited to examine a collection of original letters in the London Institution. His opportunities have therefore been such as to enable him to give a fair general view of the most important characters, and in doing so he has studied less to echo the judgment of others, than to be firm and impartial in his own.
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