

Michael Clancy, M.D. (blind actor and playwright) / [T. Percy C. Kirkpatrick].

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MICHAEL CLANCY, M.D.,

(Blind Actor and Playwright)

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BY

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MICHAEL CLANCY, M.D.

(Blind Actor and Playwright.)

By T. PERCY C. KIRKPATRICK.

STUDENTS of Swift may remember a letter, addressed by the Dean to Michael Clancy, from the "Deanry House, Christmas Day, 1737", in which he refers to Clancy's play *The Sharper*, and says: "Some friend of mine lent me a comedy, which I am told was written by you. I read it carefully, with much pleasure, on account both of the characters and the moral". Elrington Ball, in a note on this passage, says: "The only claim to fame of the recipient of this letter is being the author of a book entitled: *The Memoirs of Michael Clancy, M.D.*"; a comment which, we think, is neither illuminating nor quite fair to Clancy. To justify this opinion it will be necessary to review what is known of Clancy and of his life.

Although *The Memoirs* were published in two octavo volumes in 1750, they form a very incomplete narrative, and they do not contain any information about the greater part of the author's life. In the dedication of the first volume to the Earl of Kildare, Clancy says: "The story I here presume to offer to your Lordship is the narrative of a life full of variety and troubles, from perhaps too little an attention to the proper means of acquiring the gifts of fortune, or a mistaken course in the pursuit of them, not duly considering their proper use". A study of the *Memoirs*, however, suggests that the author was more anxious to air, in long and somewhat tedious digressions, his learning, than to give a consecutive story of his life, and for some reason, not explained, that story, with the exception of the incident referred to in the Dean's letter, breaks off abruptly when the author was about twenty years old, the continuation which was promised was never published.

Clancy tells us that his father was "a military man, and a man of letters; of an ancient and once powerful family in the County of Clare", who wished to give his son "all those advantages for instruction and polite education, which men of the highest rank can provide for their children," and to further this design when "but in my eighth year he settled me in the best College in Paris, where he supported me genteely". Clancy does not often give exact dates for the events which he records, but he tells us that while he was at school he once saw Louis XIV when "he was in the

last decline of life", and also that he "saw him lie in state in the Church of St. Dennis", before his funeral in the year 1715. While at school in Paris, in 1716, he was taught the first rudiments of the Greek tongue by Dr. Michael Moore, who, in 1689, had been appointed Provost of Trinity College, Dublin, by James II. This Michael Moore, "an Irish gentleman knowing in every useful branch of learning", had done Trinity College good service by preserving its library when the College was occupied by the troops of King James, and in his honour a memorial tablet has recently been erected in the new reading room. Moore left Ireland after the defeat of King James and became "Principal of the College of Navarre"; subsequently he was twice Rector of the University of Paris, and he died August 22, 1726.

Shortly after 1716, the exact date is uncertain, Clancy's school life in Paris ended abruptly owing to a foolish escapade. One day he and two school fellows having learned that the Duke of Ormond, who had been attainted for high treason in August, 1715, was to visit Mary, Queen of James II, at St. Germain's, they escaped from school to get a glimpse of their hero. The boys succeeded in seeing the Duke, but they were too frightened of the consequences of their truancy to return to school. His companions went home, but "fear and folly persuaded me to make my escape, I took place in the boat for *Hunfleur* in *Normandy*, and arrived at *Havre de Grace*, where a captain of a ship from *Wexford* in *Ireland*, upon some story which I made feasible to him, brought me to *Dublin*." On his arrival in Dublin Clancy, then about twelve years of age, found himself "an absolute stranger, without relation, friend or acquaintance", and apparently without any money. He decided to make his way through *Kilkenny* to *Clare* with the hope of finding his family. In *Kilkenny* he had the good fortune to meet "Captain Tracy, I think, of Lord Nassau Pawlet's Horse, son to Judge Tracy of London". Captain Tracy was under some obligation to Clancy's father, in return for which he "ordered a support for me, and put me to a school in that town, endowed by the Ormond family" and there "paid for my maintenance and education for near three years". The existing Register of pupils at *Kilkenny* College does not record the name of Clancy, but, although that Register extends back to 1685, unfortunately there is a gap from 1715 to 1743, the period during which the Rev. Edward Lewis was headmaster. It is probable that Clancy was a pupil at the school, but the whole story which he tells, in connection with a boy of twelve years of age, seems to be somewhat fantastic, yet Clancy tells it as if it were not unusual. Curiously enough he does not make any further mention of his parents, nor does he name any individual member of his family. Captain Tracy later became affected with "a melancholy, which I was told, he had contracted by the terrors of shipwreck, from which he narrowly escaped with life"; and three years after he had undertaken the care of Clancy at *Kilkenny*, there was "a sudden stop in all remittances from that gentleman". Clancy never heard of his benefactor again "till I found him, in the year 1728, in

the most deplorable condition that can happen to human nature, deprived of his senses, at Montpelier, where he found no cure but in death". Clancy, in his sixteenth year, although he says "I had at this time equalled, if not surpassed, the most forward youths in the school", again found himself without resources, and with little hope of being able to fulfil his ambition and to pursue his studies in the University. He had, he tells us, "often made a strict enquiry, concerning what friends or relations I might have living in the County of Clare; and as I searched every means to find them out, a very simple accident, not worthy of relating, brought me to the knowledge of them. The lost sheep was reclaimed, and I was brought among my relations", and "in a few months, it was so contrived, that I was sent to the University".

When he set out for college Francis, twenty-first "Lord Athunry first Baron of Ireland", gave him a letter of introduction to William King, the Archbishop of Dublin. This letter Clancy presented to his Grace, who examined him "in an Ode of Horace, and in a passage of the Coacae of Hippocrates, which, 'tho in a very advanced age, he read distinctly on the table before me, without spectacles, and without stooping'". The Archbishop was at the time seventy-one years old. The examination was apparently satisfactory, for the Archbishop "looked me full in the face, and told me, that, if he had any judgment in physiognomy, I seemed to him not to be allotted for the service of the Church, but that in any other station of life, which I should chuse, I might depend upon his favour and protection". While he did not cast any doubt on the "prescience" of his Grace, Clancy tells us that he "was afterwards informed, that this prelate did not care to put any person into orders, who had not some primitive fund to subsist upon, exclusive of that holy occupation". His Grace recommended Clancy to Dr. James King, who had been elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1720, and, Clancy says: "I was the first pupil he ever had". Clancy was fortunate in his tutor, who "was an excellent scholar, with a most refined taste, delighted in the search of the secret laws of nature, profitably curious, and elegantly inquisitive; and carried his researches so far, that he taught a boy to speak articulately who was born deaf and dumb".

In the Entrance Book of Trinity College it is recorded that Michael Clancy entered College as a sizar on June 6, 1721, aged 17, and he is there stated to have been educated by Mr. Price of Galway. His father's name is given as Daniel, a "medicus", and his birth place as County Clare. In his *Memoirs* Clancy says his father was a soldier, but the Entrance Book at present available is merely a copy, the original having been lost, so that it is possible the copyist mistook "miles" for "medicus." There is no mention in the Entrance Book of Clancy's education at Kilkenny. It may be that the "few months" which, Clancy says, elapsed between his leaving school and his entrance to college, were spent with Mr. Price in Galway, and that he consequently was given as his teacher. There is, however, an element of doubt about the accuracy

of all the uncorroborated details of his career which Clancy gives in the *Memoirs*. The *Memoirs* tell us very little about his life as an undergraduate, except that his tutor, once having occasion to go to the country for three weeks, gave him "Ward's Arithmetic", and told him he expected "a perfect account of it all" on his return. This Clancy accomplished, in spite of the fact that "I never before had the least notion of figures", but "this force on the infirm fibres of my brain, disturbed their former direction, and for a long time impaired my health".

Although he tells us little about himself, Clancy tells us some interesting things about the College. "It is", he says, "the only University in the Kingdom, situated in the capital, and receives no very great advantage by that commerce. In this school were nurtured two of the most excellent personages that have appeared for many centuries, Primate Ussher, and Mr. Dodwell; the former, the most profound and accurate Chronologist that any age has produced; the latter, a walking library". He speaks of the Provost, seven senior, and thirteen junior associates "who rule the College under statutes given by Archbishop Laud, "grounded on the system of absolute obedience to one head, whose power determines and decides everything; how far his will, when disputed, has been assented to, and confirmed by the voice of what was thought a superior authority to his, the present Principal sufficiently demonstrated, in the management of a late Senior Fellow". Clancy here refers to the incident when Patrick Delany preached a sermon in chapel in which he attacked the Provost. The Provost appeared to take no notice of the matter, and Delany, piqued by his indifference, had the sermon printed and presented a copy to him. The Provost thanked him for it, and said: "so you did intend your remarks for me, well you must apologise for them". Delany sought the protection of his friend, the Lord Lieutenant, who sent a message to the Provost as follows: "tell the Provost that his house is made of glass, and that I have a stone in my sleeve that will wreck it". The Provost in reply said: "tell his Excellency that if Doctor Delany does not beg my pardon in the College Hall tomorrow, I will expel him at twelve o'clock". Delany apologised. Clancy describes Richard Baldwin, who had been made Provost in 1717, as "a polite well-bred gentleman, sober in his way of living, and decent in his manners, with a courtly behaviour, purged from every academical rust; learned without pedantry, and prudent from the habit of doing right". In "*The College Examination. A Poem*", published anonymously, in 1731, Baldwin's "courtly behaviour" is not so evident. There we read:—

"Lo! Baldwin comes, how dreadfully serene,
How grand his looks, while at his itching cheek
His nimble finger, faithful to its trust,
Incessant labours."

Clancy speaks also of two of the Senior Fellows of his time, George Berkeley, afterwards Bishop of Cloyne, and Richard Helsham, Doctor in Physic. Berkeley, he says, "was made a

bishop without episcopising" and when he set out to his See he "sent before him twenty two carr-loads of books, and an hogshead of wine, to his See of Cloyne, and at the same time a venerable prelate, just after his consecration, sent to his See in the north, one load of books and twenty four hogsheads of wine, to amuse his holy retirement". He offers a conjecture on the etymology of the name "Siris", which Berkeley gave to his book on tar water. Siris, he says, was an ancient name for the Nile, a river which brought every blessing to the land of Egypt, and so, as tar water would bring every blessing to all mankind, "he gave this allusionary title to his excellent performance".

For Richard Helsham, who had befriended him while he was at Kilkenny, Clancy had a warm affection. "He had", he tells us, "a graceful aspect, and a noble mein, that commanded respect", and "gained him the highest esteem among all sets of men". "He brought experimental philosophy into a nicer order than any had done before him: he was accurate, just, and clear in his demonstrations, and conversant with all the powers of mechanism; perspicuous, acute and brief". "Notwithstanding all this excellence, Venus, who cruelly delights in joining the most dissimilar under a brazen yoke, gave him one of those inoffensive Doves, who soften life, by making its end appear lovely, and daily inculcate this maxim—That no man is completely happy 'till he dies". Helsham, who was elected a Fellow in 1704, was for many years Professor of Natural Philosophy, and his lectures, published after his death, formed the standard textbook on the subject in the College till the next century. On December 16, 1730, he married Jane, widow of Thomas Putland; she survived him some thirty-five years, dying in 1769. Clancy prints some fifty lines of verse which he sent to Dean Swift on the death of Helsham. The verses begin with the lines:—

" My faithful friend is gone, and you
The worth of Helsham's friendship knew.
Alas! Weak mimic of his skill
I learned to guide the healing pill."

The Dean is not recorded to have expressed any opinion on the merit of the verses, but "was pleased to say that these verses shew'd a real concerne, and an unfeign'd sorrow in the person who wrote them". Helsham, Clancy says, "was the only person to whom I owed any obligations, while I was at the University".

In Clancy's opinion a fellowship in Trinity College "is one of the best steps that can be made for the assurance of a good support during life". Those who are elected Fellows have no need to think of work again. In College he says:—

" They gape and waste away,
In gentle inactivity the day."

We are told, he says, "learning cometh by opportunity of leisure", and "there must be a great deal of learning in some nook of this place; for that much came into it, but scarce ever any went out". Compared with Oxford or Cambridge Trinity is known as "the mute sister".

Clancy remained "near four years" at Trinity College, but he is not recorded as having taken any degree, nor does he seem to have formed any definite plans for his future. He tells us that he consulted the Archbishop, "and he received me civilly", but "this good prelate, whose penetration perhaps saw into my insufficiency—moralized on the duty of forbearance, and dismissed me replenished with—counsel".

As he did not see any prospect of advancement in Ireland, Clancy determined to seek his fortune in France, "founding my hopes on the protection and favour of a gentleman, who was then in a post of eminence in the French Army, and to whom I had the honour of being related". "Accordingly with as much money as I thought could, with frugality, maintain me for two years", he set sail on July 25, 1724, "on board the *Charming Betty*, Captain Leveston, Master, bound for *Rochelle*—in full youth and of perfect health". At first the voyage was prosperous, and in four days they reached *L'Isle Dieu*, off the coast of Brittany, but there, on the following night, they met a severe storm during which the ship nearly foundered, and eventually they were stranded on the coast of Spain "about a mile's distance from the town of *St. Sebastian* in *Biscay*". The ship, much damaged, was saved with difficulty, and the passengers were put ashore by a boat. For about six weeks Clancy remained in *St. Sebastian*, "where fortune made her sport of my hopes and me", and where, at first, he found himself without friends, ignorant of the language, and with an uncertain prospect of being able to continue his journey. Fortunately he met a Scotch friar, who was attached to a convent in the town, and the two became fast friends. The friar introduced him to the convent, and Clancy gives a very unflattering, and probably fanciful, account of the inmates and their ways. He visited the library, where he found the Librarian snoring before "a large, square, transparent bottle half full of wine, a melon, two Bologna sausages, some cheese, and some dry fruit. Near them a book turned down open, upon its leaves". The friar remarked that, to his knowledge, for the past six months, the Librarian had "the same book and the same leaf doubled down before him, and smiling said, he believed the Librarian steady in his reading, and constant in his taste". On the shelves the books were "disposed according to their size and figure, without any regard to their affinity in matter". Latin Fathers, a history of cats in French, by Mr. de Monerif, and notes on the comedies of Terence were found side by side, but it is not improbable that Clancy introduces many of these titles to show his acquaintance with the books rather than to record his observations. As well as the friar Clancy made friends with a lieutenant who was stationed in a fort close to the town, and there the three spent a convivial night. On his return to town the next day Clancy found that the *Charming Betty* had sailed, and with her had gone his money and his luggage. Shortly after his friend the friar had to go to Saragossa, the lieutenant was ordered away for duty to another part of Spain, and Clancy was again left alone. As the result of

an accidental trespass in a vineyard he met the owner, a wealthy man, who had been a pupil at the school Clancy had attended in Paris, although many years before him. The old school tie formed a bond between them, and at his new friend's house Clancy was entertained for ten days. Then he got a passage with an English captain bound for Rochelle, and "set sail about the middle of September with a fair gale and a serene sky". The captain and Clancy made great friends, and when Clancy said that his design in coming to France had been to study physic, "he gave me the name of Doctor, an appellation which is liberally bestowed in England on every apothecary's boy, or corn-cutter".

This voyage proved to be more successful than the former, and in about five days they arrived at Rochelle, but there, to his dismay, Clancy found that Captain Leveston had sailed for Bordeaux some three weeks before. His new friend, the English captain, insisted that Clancy should share his rooms in the town, and there the habit of calling him "Doctor" proved to be very useful. After his arrival at Rochelle Clancy's host had gone to visit an old friend, "the Captain of a ship from Bristol, who lingered under a severe fit of the gravel for many weeks, and found no relief from the physicians of the place". He begged Clancy to undertake the treatment of the patient, and this Clancy, under protest, agreed to do. On an old bookstall in one of the streets Clancy found a folio, which proved to be a copy of *Reverius Reformatus*, in which there was a chapter dealing with the treatment of the stone and gravel. Clancy learned by heart some of the prescriptions there recommended, and armed with this knowledge, he prescribed for the patient with results which were satisfactory both to the patient's health and to his own pocket. Clancy gives an amusing account of the indignation of the quack who had been in attendance, but says that he felt some shyness during a general discussion on the subject of quacks "finding myself in the situation of one of those female heroines, who having made a boast of virtue all their lives, unfortunately fall into a company, where stiff-necked principles become the subject, and are under a necessity of torturing themselves, to preserve the fury of character, by crying down Vice on that very day when they first have yielded to its Inchantments".

At Rochelle Clancy had the good fortune to meet a man who had been at school with him in Ireland, and who at the time was employed as a clerk in the town. Through this man he got news of Captain Leveston, and he got also an advance of money, which enabled him to continue his journey to Bordeaux. He met also a Danish sea officer, who was a man of learning, and who, in his youth, had been a student of medicine, having "spent seven years at Padua and Leyden". The mention of this man leads to a long digression in which the two friends discuss Harvey and the circulation of the blood, but the Dane "boldly attributed the glory of that exquisite research to Michael Servetus, who was burnt at Geneva by John Calvin". The Dane also "said that there is more

good sense in two pages of Hippocrates or Boerhaave, than in all the volumes of Manget, Ray, and Tournefort; that too scrupulous an enquiry into the infinitely minute fibres of the human body, and that all the microscopes that ever Lewenhoeck could invent, to pry into the texture of vegetables, could no more advance the art of healing, than taking the dimensions of every stone in the wall of a city, or poring into the constituent particles of powder and ball, could help a General in defeating his enemy; that those curious investigations are the froth of knowledge, and not the substance. That Sydenham, whose only study was how to assist nature, was of more benefit to mankind, than all the cabinets of curiosities in the world". His Danish friend also lent him Le Clerc's History of Medicine which he read with much interest.

At Rochelle Clancy's curiosity led him to make the acquaintance of a wealthy old gentleman who invited him to dinner at his house. His elderly friend had recently married a beautiful young wife, who came to dinner "equipped in all that kind of attire, which is calculated to captivate the eye". After the servants had left the room his host talked much:—

"He fought his battles o'er again,
And thrice he slew the slain."

but, says Clancy, his energy "warmed him into a thirst which I thought unquenchable. He called for bumpers thick and thick, and summoned all the growths of France and Spain to his assistance". The lady sat uninterested, and "at last the wine and spirits took effect and he fell fast asleep in his chair". Clancy and the lady carried him gently to his bed in an adjoining room, and then returned to enjoy their coffee. Clancy was shy, but says, shyness, "as it shows a want of experience, often proves a good letter of recommendation to women". The conversation became intimate, and the lady told him that "to bind the body in frozen bonds, is the office of death, and do we live to taste that severity, before fate commands us to pay that cold and necessary tribute". After this speech she looked down, and "shewed all that innocence which virgin modesty or virtue can inspire". To Clancy, however, it was as "a pearl presented to an ignorant Indian, who, contented with the rarity of its figure, never once considered its use or value". With the lady it was different; "among other symptoms of inward agitation, her visage changed into a languid negligence, her lip hung like that of Hebe tinged with nectar, she panted, stared about, reddened, and in an instant collected herself, and crisped up like a sensitive plant after touch. She started up, and rang the bell". Clancy was left to study the pictures in the room, but he evidently felt afterwards that he had learned about women from her, although she did not appear again. Afterwards Clancy spent some time with his friend at his country house where there was a fine library, which gives him the excuse for a long digression on the books he read there. He says "to dip into bad books, is worse than mixing with bad company. The latter may be avoided—but the former, are those wicked counsellors, that can steal into our most secret hours,

and having nothing to controul their force, can whisper every fraud into the heart". Although he was invited to spend the winter with his friend, Clancy decided to push on to Bordeaux, and as a parting gift he received "an antient manuscript of Persius, which I afterwards gave to the famous Pere le Conte". Shortly after this he left Rochelle, and travelled to Bordeaux in an "old coach belonging to the Bishop of *Saintes*", which was being sent to town for repair. On this journey he had several fellow passengers, men and women, but from the wiles of the latter he was protected by the warmth of the former. At Bordeaux he found his money and his goods, which had been left there for him by Captain Leveston. He wished to push on at once to Paris, but he decided to wait for an answer to a letter which he addressed to the "gentleman, who was then in a post of eminence in the French Army". To that letter, however, he did not get any reply, and in consequence he made up his mind to remain at Bordeaux.

At Bordeaux, as was usual with him, Clancy quickly made friends, and through the good offices of a Benedictine he was introduced to Pere Le Conte, who had written "an elegant history of China", and who "was then living in the College of the Jesuits". The learned historian received him kindly, and Clancy says: "I often sat with him, and found him not unlike a traveller, who perhaps had mistaken his road, or loitered in the way, making all possible expedition, at the decline of day, to secure a retreat for the night, just ready to overtake him. He died soon after".

Among the people Clancy met at Bordeaux was an Englishman, named Sully, who had been an "overseer of a factory of watch-makers", and who was obsessed with the idea that he had found out a method which would win for him the "forty thousand pounds, promised by the Parliament of Great Britain, for the discovery of the longitude". Sully was an enthusiast in his research, and was anxious to demonstrate his methods to everyone. He took Clancy to visit various people, including "an old Counsellor of the Parliament to whom he had a letter, and on whom he had not, as yet, waited. We went to his house, and found an unwieldy old man, loaded with fat, who filled a large wooden frame, somewhat like an elbow-chair". The old gentleman, who was a little deaf, was not interested, and said longitude "may be a very good thing at sea, but we are upon terra firma". A more important introduction was to a meeting of the Royal Academy, at which Sully was to give an address. Clancy was asked to speak, and he referred to "the conjectures of Doctor Hally and Mr. Leibnitz on the matter in question", which had been published in the *Philosophical Transactions*. This speech led to his presentation to M. de Montesquieu, who was at the meeting, and the introduction resulted in Clancy being invited to visit the great man, who shortly afterwards took him to his country house at La Brede, where he "did me the honour to keep me with him near six months". Thus, says Clancy, "he brought me into life; and in the following part of this story, it will plainly appear, how many fortunate events have

depended on the happiness of being continually protected by the favours and friendship of one man of real worth ”.

With these words Clancy ends abruptly the story of his life, for the rest of the second volume of the *Memoirs* is taken up with *The Sharper*, a comedy, which although written in 1737, had never before been printed. Clancy promised a third volume of the *Memoirs*, but it never appeared, and we have little certain information about his life from 1725, when he set out for La Brede with M. de Montesquieu, till 1737 when we find him a blind doctor in Dublin.

On the title page of his various books Clancy describes himself as M.D., but there is no certain information as to the University at which he graduated. It has been said that it was at Rheims, but the University records do not support this. In the records at Montpellier, where Clancy tells us that he spent some time, the University Librarian tells me that there is no mention of him. It seems probable that he graduated at Bordeaux, but the records of the University there for that time are lost, and his thesis, if he wrote one, has not been found. We know that he spent three years at Bordeaux, and that while there he “ attended the lectures given by M. Gregoire, who was a man of wit, and excellent physician, and one of the ablest Professors I ever was acquainted with ”.

Although there was at Bordeaux, as Dr. Richard Hayes has told us (*Studies*, 1938), a considerable colony of his countrymen, Clancy does not make any mention of them, nor of the Irish College there, which at the time had many Irish pupils. In 1728 Clancy was at Montpellier, and there he found his former benefactor, Captain Tracy, then insane. In the prologue to his tragedy, *Hermon Prince of Athens*, published in 1746, the writer, “ A Friend,” says:—

“ Though dark in sight, yet clear his mental view,
Brighten'd by Boyle, Cerati, Montesquieu.
He still wou'd ramble were his guides not blind,
And with Montpellier sunshine gild his mind.”

These lines suggest happy memories of the old University town. We do not know the date of his return to Ireland, or whether he practised medicine here, although in the preface to *The Sharper* he suggests that he did so, when he says “ the author, in the year 1737, had the misfortune of loosing his sight by a cold, which rendered him incapable of his profession ”.

Clancy gives an amusing account of the difficulty he experienced in getting *The Sharper* brought to the notice of Dean Swift. First he approached his old patron, Dr. Helsham, Swift's Physician, and asked him to show it to the Dean. The answer he got was, “ not I indeed, have you a mind that I should be obliged to go down his stairs faster than I went up? Shall I subject myself to be laughed at, or perhaps, ill treated; not I indeed, I do not care to bring his tongue upon me ”. Dr. Grattan was then suggested as a go-between, but he refused, and eventually Grattan's brother “ minister of St. Audeon's ”, agreed to leave the MS. on the Dean's

For the Benefit of the **AUTHOR.**
 By the Rt. Hon. the **LORD MAYOR's** Company of Comedians.



(Never Performed but Twice.)

At the **THEATRE** in *SMOCK-ALLEY*,
TO-morrow being Wednesday, the 25th of this Instant January, 1737. Will be Acted
 a Comedy, call'd, *The*

S H A R P E R.

The Parts to be Perform'd by

Mr. Sparks	Mr. Este	Mr. Bourne
Mr. Elrington	Mr. Barrington	Mr. Stepney
Mr. Morgan	Mr. Cashel	Mr. Fitzpatrick
Mr. Wetherilt	Mr. Morris	Mr. Beamfly
Mr. Philips	Mr. C. Morgan	Mr. Hind
Mrs. Reynolds	Mrs. Wetherilt	Mrs. Martin
Mrs. Orfeur	Mrs. Ravenscroft	Mrs. Hind
Mrs. Morgan	Mrs. Stepney	Mrs. Barry

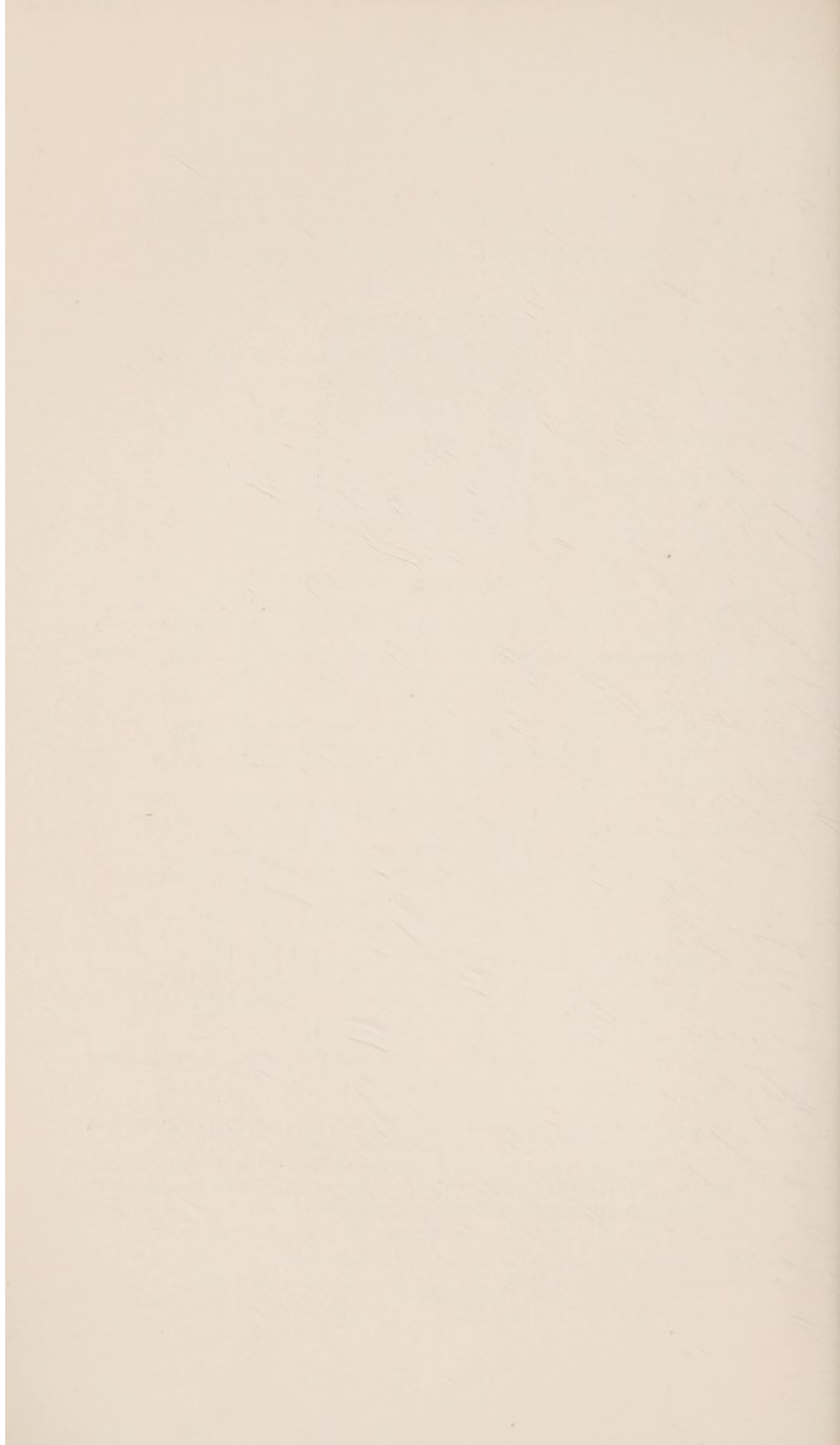
The **PROLOGUE** to be spoke by **Mr. ESTE.**

With a New **EPILOGUE**, spoke by **Mrs. RAVENSCROFT**, in the Character of
SUSANNAH DAIRY.

TICKETS to be had at Mr George Faulkner's in Essex Street; the Globe Coffee-House in
 Essex-Street; and at the Theatre.

Tickets given out for the 9th of December will be taken at this Play.

Boxes, Stage, Lettices and Pit at a British Crown. **Gallery** 2s. 2d. **No odd Money to be take**
Beginning exactly at half an Hour after Six o' Clock. *Vivat B*



table, in the hope that "if it was good, he would be apt to examine how it came there". Some days later Dr. Helsham saw the book on the Dean's table and asked what it was. "The Dean smiled and told him, it was a villain well painted, and that whoever had written the piece, conveyed a good moral". Helsham then told him about the author, with the result that the letter of Christmas Day, 1737, was written, and sent to Clancy with a packet containing "five pounds in small pieces of gold of different kinds, of which the largest did not exceed the value of five shillings. A little time after, I sent him a parcel of tickets, he kept but one, which he said he had paid for, and afterwards sent me two four pound pieces for more".

The Sharper, a comedy in five acts, with a prologue by James Arbuckle, is founded on "the history of the noted Colonel Francis Chartres, who was described by Arbuthnot as "the only person of his time, who could cheat without the mask of honesty, retained his primæval meanness, when possessed of ten thousand a year. And having daily deserved the gibbet for what he did, was at last condemned to it, for what he could not do". At one time, it seems, the play was to have got its name from this character, for in Faulkner's *Dublin Journal* for Saturday, November 12, 1737, we read:—

"There is now in rehearsal at the Theatre in Smock Alley, a Comedy called the, Chartres, written by Michael Clancy, M.D. This being an excellent subject to write upon, it is undertaken by a gentleman, who has already distinguished himself for his great genius in poetry, as well in Latin as English, so that the Town may reasonably expect the most agreeable entertainment from this performance."

This name, however, was given up, as was also a proposed performance of the play on December 9th, and in the *Dublin Journal* for Saturday, December 24, there appeared the following advertisement:—

"The new comedy which is now in rehearsal at the Theatre in Smock Alley, was in the different Newspapers call'd the Charters, Chartres, and Charters; now as none of these names were designed by the Author the public is hereby advertis'd that the play is,
The Sharper.

Tickets given out for the 9th of December, shall be taken at night of the Author's benefit."

Finally, the first performances were advertised in the *Dublin News Letter* for Saturday, January 21, 1738, as follows:—

"At the Theatre in Smock Alley, on Monday next, being the 23rd of this instant January, will be acted a comedy, called the Sharper, never performed but once, with entertainments of dancing."

In the *Dublin Journal* there was a fuller notice:—

"On Friday the 20th of this instant January, will be acted at the theatre in Smock Alley, a new comedy called

The Sharper

and on Wednesday the 25th will be acted the same play for the benefit of the Author. The tickets given out for the 9th of December, for the Author's benefit, will be taken that night."

In 1917, Mr. J. W. Lawrence discovered, among the theatrical collection in Harvard College Library, the playbill for this benefit

performance. This, which is believed to be the earliest known Dublin playbill, we are able to reproduce through the kindness of Miss Lillian A. Hall, custodian of that collection.

When introducing the play in the *Memoirs* Clancy tells us that it was "writ in the year 1737, and was never before published. It was five times acted in Smock Alley". The only other performance of which we have found any record was advertised in the *Dublin Journal* for Saturday, April 22, 1738:—

"The new comedy called the *Sharper*, which was to have been performed on Monday the 17th of this instant, but was deterred on account of the indisposition of a principal actor, will be performed on Thursday the 27th of this instant April, at the Theatre in Smock Alley, with a Farce called the *Stage-Coach*, and a new Prologue on the occasion. The last time the Comedy was acted there was the greatest appearance of nobility and gentry that ever was seen at any play in this Kingdom. Tickets given out for Monday the 17th will be taken on Thursday the 27th instant."

We have not found any record of the new prologue.

The author's benefit performance on January 25th was attended with some disturbance, which led to the following advertisement in the *Dublin News Letter* for January 31, 1738:—

"Whereas several evil-minded persons, at the Author's benefit on Wednesday, the 25th instant, did in a riotous and tumultuous manner, assault many of the servants belonging to the Theatre in Smock Alley, broke down the gallery door, and most of the lamps and windows thereof, together with two of the public lights, and notwithstanding a detachment from the Main Guard came, and made diligent search for such rioters, none of them were found out. This is to give notice, that if any person or persons will discover the persons so offending, so that he, or they, may be legally convicted of any of the offences aforesaid, Mr. Lewis Duvall, master of the said Theatre, doth hereby promise a reward of three pounds sterling, for each offender convicted as aforesaid."

We do not know if the reward was earned.

On the title page of the play, as printed in the *Memoirs*, it is stated that it was acted "by His Majesty's Company of Comedians", while the playbill states that it was "by the Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor's Company of Comedians". The playbill mentions also "the Prologue to be spoke by Mr. Este", and "a new Epilogue, spoke by Mrs. Ravenscroft, in the character of Susannah Dairy". In the *Dramatis Personæ* of the printed play the part of Susannah Dairy is given to Mrs. Pasquilini. Mr. Lawrence has explained the discrepancy by the fact that subsequent to the acting of the play Mrs. Ravenscroft had married again, this time to "a fascinating Italian musician, one Signor Pasqualini, and had left the stage". The Prologue, by Mr. Arbuckle, is printed with the play, but there is not any mention of the new Epilogue.

In spite of the troubles during the production of *The Sharper* the returns from the box-office seem to have been sufficiently good to induce Clancy to continue in his efforts to earn a living as a playwright. The following advertisement appears in Faulkner's *Dublin Journal* for January 22-25, 1740:—

"A new tragedy, called *Tamer Prince of Nubia*, which was to have been acted at the Theatre Royal in Aungier Street on Monday the 28th of this instant, is at the desire of several persons of quality, further deferred on account of the excessive cold weather. . . . The author of

the Sharper, or the Fraudulent Match-maker, being obliged to put off his play on account of the severity of the weather; the town may be assured of meeting with no further disappointment, as soon as the weather will permit."

Further notice of this play has not been found in the papers of the time, nor was the play itself ever published, but Hitchcock, in his *Historical View of the Irish Stage*, says: "it was played, and soon after consigned to the oblivion it merited". In the *Dublin Journal* for April 29-May 3, 1740, it is announced that the "celebrated comedy called *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*", will be played at the Theatre Royal for the benefit of Dr. Clancy, and that Miss Woffington was to be one of the players. We may hope that the benefit proved to be satisfactory, at all events Miss Woffington pleased some of her audience, for in the same journal for May 13-17, the following lines appeared:—

"That excellent Pegg,
Who shew'd such a legg;
When lately dress'd up in men's cloaths,
A creature uncommon,
Who's both man and woman,
And the chief of the Belles and the Beaux.

Shortly after this Clancy appears to have again gone abroad, for in the Memoirs he tells us that, in the year 1741, he was at "Villeneuve le Roy, a seat belonging to President le Segur near Paris". It is uncertain how long he remained in France, but in the spring of 1744 he was in London, as is shown by the following advertisement in the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* for March 2, 1743-44:—

"The day returns, but not to me returns. *Milton*. For the benefit of Dr. Clancy at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, on Monday, April 2, will be revived the celebrated tragedy of *Oedipus King of Thebes*. The part of Tiresias the Prophet to be performed by Dr. Clancy, who is blind. This gentleman being by the loss of his sight deprived of the advantage of his profession, and as the plays which he has lately written for the stage could not be brought on this season, the manager has been so kind as to give him this benefit, wherein he acts a part himself: and as no precedent of any person, who had the misfortune of the loss of his eyes, was ever known to perform on the stage, he humbly hopes the indulgence and protection of the town."

This notice was repeated in the paper for April 2, but a report of the performance has not been found, either in the *Daily Post* or in any other newspaper. Genest, in his *History of the Stage*, says: "the newspaper says 'that as this will be the first instance of any person labouring under so heavy a deprivation, performing on the stage, the *novelty*, as well as the *unhappiness* of his case, will engage the favour and protection of a *British Audience*'. Mr. W. J. Lawrence has pointed out that, although Clancy may have been the first blind person to play the part of a blind character on the English stage, in Italy, Luigi Groto, who was blind from infancy, in 1583, established a reputation as an actor of tragedy.

Clancy probably remained in London for some time for in 1745 there was published in London, by Dodsley, a Latin poem, *Templum Veneris, sive Amorum Rhapsodiæ*, by Michael Clancy, M.D., "for the benefit of the Author". The dedication of this poem to John,

Earl of Orrery, is dated "Londini Mensis Martii 12". In a letter to the reader Clancy pleads for an adequate reward for his work. He points out that the divine Homer and our Milton, though blind were gifted, "by the source and origin of ethereal light", with the heavenly fires of their minds, but that to him as he stumbled through the hazards and darkness of his night, "not one tiny spark of heaven sent fire lent me cheer." With the poem Clancy prints a letter addressed to him from Paris in 1742, by the most reverend Bishop of Cerati, Chancellor and Provost of the Academy of Pisa, in which the bishop praises the poem and says that with pleasure he read and re-read it in the company of the learned Abbot of Rothlin and the Secretary of the Academy of Bologna, "an honest man in assigning praise". The bishop invites Clancy to complete a poem by the late Cardinal de Polignac, which had been undertaken to refute the system of Epicurus, and to replace the fortuitous concourse of atoms by the Cartesian philosophy. He tells Clancy that in this task he believes that he would have the help of the President de Montesquieu, and that together they might establish the work of the Cardinal "soundly on Newton's Principia, in which alone you English rightly find satisfaction". This letter, Clancy says, was printed at the desire of his friends and not with a "wish to seek after notoriety by methods of self advertisement". In spite of the praises of the bishop Clancy's poem has not much merit. Dr. Alton describes it as just "an exercise in verse composition, the ideas of which might have been picked up from a reading of school classics. The verse is not bad although at times the construction is laboured, and there are some false quantities. The mythology suits either Greece or Rome equally badly".

Not long after the publication of this poem Clancy was again in Dublin, and in *Faulkner's Journal* for February 18-22, 1745, there is the following advertisement:—

"By special command of his Excellency the Earl of Chesterfield, for the benefit of Dr. Clancy, on Thursday the 27th of this instant February, by his Majesty's Company of Comedians, *The Fair Penitent*. The part of Lothario to be performed by Mr. Garrick. The part of Horatio to be performed by Mr. Sheridan. The part of Altamont to be performed by Mr. Barry.

Plans of the boxes to be taken of Mr. Neil, Box Keeper in Abbey street. Tickets to be had next door to the White Hart in Bolton street, at Lucas's and at the Globe Coffee House.

Dr. Clancy requests the favour of such gentlemen and ladies as are pleased to go to the play of *The Fair Penitent*, to be acted for his benefit on Thursday, the 27th of this instant February, that such ladies or gentlemen who have bespoke boxes or places, in consideration of his infirmity, will be so kind as to send for tickets to the Globe Coffee House, between the hours of 1 and 3 o'clock in the afternoon, where he will attend to deliver them every day. N.B.—Four rows of the Pit will be taken in to the boxes and seats raised on the stage."

With such a distinguished cast Clancy's benefit should have been considerable.

In 1746 Clancy published in Dublin and in London a tragedy with the title *Hermon Prince of Choræa; or, the Extravagant Zealot*, which he dedicated to Lord Viscount Molesworth, Lieutenant

General and Master of the Ordinance, who lived at Swords, County Dublin. In this dedication, which is dated "Dublin, March 26, 1746", Clancy thanks his Lordship for his good offices to which he owes the privilege of having been "taken more particular notice of by his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant", and he adds that owing to the kindness he had received from both, "I shall esteem my disorder a sort of blessing in disguise, although some of my maligners are peevish enough to assert that my blindness was my only merit". The tragedy is reported to have been played in Dublin but we have not found any record in the newspapers of its performance. The Prologue, written by a friend, starts with the following lines:—

"This night a bard your favour would implore,
Just cast away on his own native shore,
Tho' dark in sight, yet clear his mental view
Brighten'd by Boyle, Cerati, Montesquieu.
He still would ramble were his guides not blind,
And with Montpellier's sun-shine gild his mind:
But, now resolved, the Muse, and Fate to follow—
So wills our Lord-Lieutenant and Apollo."

And goes on—

"To do him right—the man has some Invention
—I wonder how the Plague, he got a Pension—

Yet Stanhope thinks some praise is due to learning,
Is this the Bard's desert, or Lord's discerning?"

The friend here refers to the fact that through the good offices of Lord Chesterfield, the Lord Lieutenant, Clancy had, by King's Letter, dated January 27, 1745, been granted a pension on the Irish establishment of £40 a year, which he continued to enjoy for the rest of his life. In *Faulkner's Journal* for March 25-29, 1746, it is stated that the play was to be published on March 31, and that it "will be delivered to the subscribers, or those who are pleased to send for it, at the author's house, next door to the White Hart in Bolton street".

With this play Clancy's connection with the stage ended, for the publication of *The Sharper* in the second volume of the *Memoirs* was evidently an afterthought. In the prologue to *The Sharper*, James Arbuckle entered a plea that an Irish audience should support "a home-spun play" and he asks

" . . . why at home should Irish wit be scorn'd
Which hath so oft the British stage adorn'd?
Our Congreves, Steeles, and Swifts, who hath not known?"

He tells those present to

"Be gen'rous then to night, nor think it weak
To spare our author for his country's sake."

English plays, however, continued to hold the stage in Dublin, and one cannot help feeling that Clancy was not the man to force a change. None of his plays was very successful, and their production seemed to be due rather to sympathy for the misfortune of the author than to merit of the work. His "maligners" may have

been partly right, and much of his reward, if not his merit, was due to his blindness. The fact that a contemporary account of his playing the part of Tiresias in Dryden's *Oedipus* has not been found suggests that the performance, although interesting and courageous, was not of great merit, and the fact that he appeared once only on the stage lends support to this view.

In 1751 Clancy published in duodecimo a translation from the French of M. de Crebillon's book *The Wanderings of the Heart and Mind, or Memoirs of Mr. de Melicour*. The tale is a rather uninteresting "history of the private life, extravagancies and reformation of a young nobleman".

A year after this Clancy started on quite a new career which was to occupy him for the remainder of his life. In the *Dublin Journal* from August 11, 1752, till the end of the month, there appeared the following advertisement, which was continued after September 1, with the change of the word "next" to "inst." in the first line, and "did open" instead of "will open".

"Recti cultus pectore roborant.

On Tuesday the first of September next 1752, Dr. Michael Clancy will open a Grammar School at the end of Church street near the Old Bridge, where he will teach the Greek, Latin, French and English Languages, and a thorough knowledge of the Classics in all their purity. He has taken, for his assistant, Mr. Richard Crump, A.B., of Trinity College, who has taught a school, and is extremely well qualified for the purpose. The utmost assiduity shall be employed to advance youth by an easy and expeditious method, and the rudiments of those languages shall be taught in an accurate manner. Doctor Clancy will treat with such parents as purpose to send their children, at his house in Bolton-street, where he will, at convenient hours, instruct and perfect young gentlemen in all branches of polite literature, and in the knowledge of the French tongue."

How far this school was a success we have not any means of knowing. Neither the name of Dr. Clancy, nor that of his assistant, Richard Crump, appears in the list of school-masters prefixed to the *Alumni Dublinensis*, edited by Burtchael, and Sadleir, from which we may conclude that the school did not educate many candidates for the University, and six years later, on June 4, 1758, Clancy was appointed master of the Diocesan School of Kilkenny, a post which he held till his death.

Although Clancy abandoned the drama for pedagogy he did not cease from publishing verses. In *Brookiana*, collected by Charles Wilson and published in 1804, there are two poems which Wilson says he had taken from a manuscript volume which belonged to Clancy. The first of these: *An Epistle to Francis Andrews, on the late advertisement directing such books as should be read for admission to the University of Dublin*. This consists of one hundred and thirty-four lines, in rhymed couplets, making an ironical attack on classical learning, which, in spite of the decision of the College, Clancy says, must be considered to be quite out of date. Clancy is here referring to a letter addressed by Theaker Wilder, on behalf of the Board, to the teachers of Greek and Latin in the Irish schools, which was published in the *Public Gazetteer* for July 14, 1759. The greater

part of this poem appeared also in *Walker's Hibernian Magazine* for March, 1777, but we have not found any earlier publication of it.

The second poem is *On the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Chesterfield's recovery from a late indisposition*. There are forty-eight lines in rhymed couplets, and the poem is dated "Durrow in Ireland, September 29", but no year is given. These verses were published in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September, 1767. It is not easy to decide to which of the many illnesses of the noble Earl the poem refers, but it is probably to that which followed his departure from Ireland in April, 1746, and from which he did not recover till the following September. Clancy says:—

"Eclipses are the sun's disease,
When the dark moon obstructs his rays;
As she goes off, he shines again,
And reassumes his splendid reign."

The suggestion being that the sons of Ireland will smile again on Stanhope's recovery. In the *Gentleman's Magazine* for November, 1767, there are fifty-eight lines of verse, "by Dr. Clancy of Durrow in Ireland", entitled "An ironical eulogium on ignorance". It ends as follows:—

"Knowledge withdraw thy hated rays;
We love obscurity and ease:
Extend thy glim'ring light no more:
But let us yawn, and sleep, and snore:
Since not e'en Berkley's vision saw
Th' intrinsic parts that form a straw?
Nor Newton, more than mortals wise,
Who fathom'd earth, and seas, and skies,
Could ever truly understand
The essence of one grain of sand."

In *Finn's Leinster Journal* for Wednesday, January 2, 1771, published in Kilkenny, there appeared twenty-eight lines entitled "A Prologue written by Dr. Clancy, and spoken by Mr. Stewart, at the Theatre in this City, on Friday last". In this journal also, for June 21, 1775, there are twenty-four lines, signed "M.C.": "On the universally and most justly lamented death of Mrs. Elizabeth Mathews, wife of Joseph Mathews, of Bonnetstown, Esq".

"As skilful chymists by their curious art,
From the dead mass extract the purer part,
Fine particles on high exalted rise,
And freed from dross, the spirit upward flies;
Eliza thus from perishable clay,
Flew to the mighty origin of day."

If "Eliza" had been, during her lifetime, the subject of much verse like this we can well understand why she "flew" from the "perishable clay".

In the *Recollections of the Life of John O'Keeffe, Written by Himself*, published in two volumes in London, in 1826, we get a glimpse of Clancy in his old age. O'Keeffe describes a visit he paid to Kilkenny about the year 1767 and says:—

"I spoke with Dr. Clancy at Kilkenny, having pressed to see him from my desire of an interview with a distinguished literary character. He was upwards of eighty, quite blind, yet seemed comfortable in circumstances,

though living entirely alone. He was polite and communicative; yet melancholy; a large, well-looking man, with a great wig. I had, very early, seen and admired some lines of his upon Tickell, one of the writers of the *Spectator*.'²

We have not found any trace of the lines on Tickell. Clancy must have seemed to O'Keeffe to be very much older than he really was, since he estimated his age at eighty years.

In the *Leinster Journal* for Wednesday, April 10, 1776, there appeared the following notice, which was subsequently copied into Faulkner's *Dublin Journal* for April 13, 1776:—

“Died Sunday last, in an advanced age, Doctor Michael Clancy, Master of the Diocesan School of Ossory. He was a great favourite and intimate of the celebrated Montesquieu, Dean Swift, and other great personages; by whose recommendation to Lord Chesterfield, on account of the misfortune of losing his eyesight, he obtained a pension from Government of £40 per annum for life. This gentleman was author of the *Sharper*, a Comedy, *Hermon Prince of Choraæa*, and several Poems and miscellaneous pieces.”

Clancy's comedy, his tragedy, his poems, and his several miscellaneous pieces have been long since forgotten. They might be described in his own words, which he used in another connection:—

“While sunk in must neglected annals lie,
In diction sluggish, and in substance dry.”

They are not likely ever to leave that “must”, or to live again, but his career merits a passing notice, as that of a man who, stricken by misfortune, bravely faced his troubles without flinching, and without bitterness of spirit. He would probably agree with the words of Yeats:—

“Think where man's glory most begins and ends
And say my glory was I had such friends.”

PUBLISHED WORKS.

- I. *Templum Veneris, sive Amorum Rhapsodiæ.*
Cecinit Michael Clancy, M.D.
For the Benefit of the Author.
London: Printed for R. Dodsley at Tully's-Head, Pall-mall; and sold by M. Cooper in Pater-noster Row. 1745.
4to. 1 leaf, pp. XI & 28.
 - II. *Hermon Prince of Choræa, or, the extravagant zealot, A Tragedy.*
By Michael Clancy, M.D.
Dublin: Printed by S. Powell in Crane-lane, for the Author: and delivered to subscribers at his house, next door to the White Hart in Bolton-street. 1746.
8vo. pp. 6 & 92.
- Ibid.*
Dublin Printed: London reprinted for G. Woodfall, at the King's-Arms, near Craig's-Court, Charing Cross; and sold by M. Cooper, in Paternoster-Row, 1746.
(Price One Shilling.)
8vo. pp. 80.

- III. The Memoirs of Michael Clancy, M.D. Containing his observations on many countries in Europe: particularly, the Southern parts of France, the Province of Guienne, part of Spain, Paris, London, and Ireland, where he resided at different times, for the space of twenty-five years.
- Vols. I & II.
- Dublin: Printed by S. Powell, for the Author. 1750.
8vo. pp. 144, 56, 86 & 1 leaf.
- (The Sharper. A Comedy, which occupies the last 86 pages of Vol II, has a separate title and pagination.)
The Sharper. A Comedy. As it was acted at the Theatre-Royal in Smock-Alley, by his Majesty's Company of Comedians.
By Michael Clancy, M.D.
- Dublin: Printed by S. Powell, for the Author. 1750.)
- IV. The Wanderings of the Heart and Mind: or Memoirs of Mr. de Meilcour. Translated from the French of Mr. de Crebillon the Son. By Michael Clancy, M.D.
London: Printed for John Nourse, at the Lamb over against Katharine-street in the Strand. 1751.
12mo. pp. IV, 2 leaves & pp. 267.
- V. Beauty and Taste. Inscribed to her Grace the Dutchess of Hamilton. By Michael Clancy, M.D.
Dublin: Printed by James Byrn, in Thomas-Street, near Francis-street. (N.D.)
4to. pp. 4.
- VI. On the Right Hon. the Earl of Chesterfield's recovery from a late indisposition. By Michael Clancy, M.D.
"Durrow, in Ireland, Sept. 29." (Forty-eight lines.)
Gentleman's Magazine. Vol. XXXVII. p. 517. September, 1767.
Also printed in "Brookiana." Collected by Charles Henry Wilson. Vol. I & II. London. 1804. (Vol. II. p. 153.)
- VII. An Ironical Eulogium on Ignorance. By Dr. Clancy of Durrow, in Ireland. ((Fifty-eight lines.)
Gentleman's Magazine. Vol. XXXVII. p. 566. Nov. 1767.
- VIII. An Epistle to Francis Andrews, on the late advertisement directing such books as should be read for admission to the University of Dublin. By Michael Clancy, M.D. (One hundred and thirty-four lines.)
Printed in "Brookiana." Vol. II. p. 156.
One hundred and fourteen lines are reprinted in Walker's Hibernian Magazine. March 1777. p. 211.
- IX. A Prologue written by Doctor Clancy, and spoken by Mr. Stewart, at the Theatre in this City, on Friday last. (Twenty-eight lines.)
Finn's Leinster Journal. Sat. Dec. 29 1770 to Wed. Jan. 2, 1771.
- X. On the universally and most justly lamented death of Mrs. Elizabeth Mathews, Wife of Joseph Mathews, of Bonnetstown, Esq. (Twenty-four lines.)
Finn's Leinster Journal. Sat. June 17 to Wed. June 21, 1775.
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