

**Accession number:** 1992-24/27

**Description:** Single sheet of paper, written on two sides. Incomplete draft of a letter from Garrick to the Committee of The Theatrical Fund for Decayed actors about his fellow actor Thomas King. 24 November 1776.

**Transcript:** Adelphi Nov[embe]r 24<sup>th</sup> 1776

Gentlemen,

It is with much more concern, than surprise, that I have heard of Mr King's giving up his place in your Committee! From the long connection that has been between us, I flatter[e]d myself that he would not have taken such a step without the comp[li]ment of communicating his intentions to me, his very old & very sincere friend – my Zeal in the Cause I hope has been as Efficacious, as it has been warm & Active – but I have found from many circumstances, which I am sure must Occur to you, that M<sup>r</sup> King had always something upon his mind, which I have often, as well as Yourselves, endeavour[e]d to account for:

I will not trace the matter higher than the last Benefit but one: when we were all Exerting ourselves for the good of the Charity: M<sup>r</sup> King to my astonishment appear[e]d cold & unwilling without assigning the least cause for it. Your very flattering intentions of paying me some compliment for my warm, & undisguis[e]d attachment to your Cause – M<sup>r</sup> King oppos[e]d the immediate Execution of your plan, as it would appear [~~'most' crossed out]~~ more disinterested to honour me when I was no longer a Manager – the time being come when the loss of power proves the touchstone of friendship, I heard

**Note:**

Aileen Osborn, 'The Literary Material in the Hereford Garrick Papers', M. Phil thesis, University of Birmingham, 1999, 237-8. This letter was previously unknown.

**Thomas king** (1730 -1805) was a popular comic actor in Garrick's company. After two years at Drury lane, he left for Dublin to play the 1750/1 season for Thomas Sheridan at Smock alley. From there he went to Bath and did not return to Drury lane until 1759. (*Letter* 93, n. 5). King purchased William Powell's share in the King Street Theatre, Bristol and was sole manager there during the summer season of 1771 (*Letter* 635, n. 7). In letter 1285 Garrick calls him "my first Comedian". At the Stratford Jubilee he was planted in the audience, dressed as a French fop, to challenge Shakespeare's claim to fame, after Garrick's delivery of the ode. Many were fooled by his performance. King is mentioned in 22 of Garrick's letters and in the notes to 3 more, always in the context of theatrical business. Of the 6 letters addressed to him, 5 refer to misunderstandings between them which seem to be prompted by resentment on king's part, and a tendency to male indirect complaints. In letter 713 Garrick says,

You accuse me of not taking proper care of Your importance, of making you y<sup>e</sup> hack of y<sup>e</sup> Theatre[,] of giving you improper parts, of raising others beyond their merits & by various Methods lessen[e]d y[o]urs. These are y<sup>e</sup> allegations of my friend M<sup>r</sup> King in y<sup>e</sup> midst of our Friendship & when He was possessed of my utmost confidence.

The matter was ended by Garrick's agreeing to King's financial demands. On his retirement, Garrick presented his stage sword to King (Letter 1028). (Osborn, 238).

**Theatrical Fund:** : The Theatrical Fund, initiated by Garrick, was established for the benefit of 'decayed players' in 1766, complementing a fund already established at Covent Garden. They were later amalgamated. After his retirement he devoted time to getting it upon a legal footing, with an act of parliament. I. M<sup>cl</sup>ntyre, *Garrick*, 1999, 379-80,44,512-3,536,564, 578-9,615; Bill and Royal assent, 556. It still exists as the Drury Lane Theatrical Fund