Thomas Moore

Memoirs of the Life of the Rt. Hon. R. B. Sheridan

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BIRTH AND EDUCATION OF MR. SHERIDAN.—HIS FIRST ATTEMPTS IN LITERATURE.

Richard Brinsley [Footnote: He was christened also by the name of Butler, after the Earl of Lanesborough.] Sheridan was born in the month of September, 1751, at No. 12, Dorset Street, Dublin, and baptized in St. Mary's Church, as appears by the register of the parish, on the fourth of the following month. His grandfather, Dr. Sheridan, and his father, Mr. Thomas Sheridan, have attained a celebrity, independent of that which he has conferred on them, by the friendship and correspondence with which the former was honored by Swift, and the competition and even rivalry which the latter so long maintained with Garrick. His mother, too, was a woman of considerable talents, and affords one of the few instances that have occurred, of a female indebted for a husband to her literature; as it was a pamphlet she wrote concerning the Dublin theatre that first attracted to her the notice of Mr. Thomas Sheridan. Her affecting novel, Sidney Biddulph, could boast among its warm panegyrists Mr. Fox and Lord North; and in the Tale of Nourjahad she has employed the graces of Eastern fiction to inculcate a grave and important moral,—putting on a fairy disguise, like her own Mandane, to deceive her readers into a taste for happiness and virtue. Besides her two plays, The Discovery and The Dupe,—the former of which Garrick pronounced to be "one of the best comedies he ever read,"—she wrote a comedy also, called The Trip to Bath, which was never either acted or published, but which has been supposed by some of those sagacious persons, who love to look for flaws in the titles of fame, to have passed, with her other papers, into the possession of her son, and, after a transforming sleep, like that of the chrysalis, in his hands, to have taken wing at length in the brilliant form of The Rivals. The literary labors of her husband were less fanciful, but not, perhaps, less useful, and are chiefly upon subjects connected with education, to the study and profession of which he devoted the latter part of his life. Such dignity, indeed, did his favorite pursuit assume in his own eyes, that he is represented (on the authority, however, of one who was himself a schoolmaster) to have declared, that "he would rather see his two sons at the head of respectable academies, than one of them prime minister of England, and the other at the head of affairs in Ireland."

At the age of seven years, Richard Brinsley Sheridan was, with his elder brother, Charles Francis, placed under the tuition of Mr. Samuel Whyte, of Grafton Street, Dublin,—an amiable and respectable man, who, for near fifty years after, continued at the head of his profession in that metropolis. To remember our school-days with gratitude and pleasure, is a tribute at once to the zeal and gentleness of our master, which none ever deserved more truly from his pupils than Mr. Whyte, and which the writer of these pages, who owes to that excellent person all the instructions in English literature he has ever received, is happy to take this opportunity of paying. The young Sheridans, however, were little more than a year under his care—and it may be consoling to parents who are in the first crisis of impatience, at the sort of hopeless stupidity which some children exhibit, to know, that the dawn of Sheridan's intellect was as dull and unpromising as its meridian day was bright; and that in the year 1759, he who, in less than thirty years afterwards, held senates enchained by his eloquence and audiences fascinated by his wit, was, by common consent both of parent and preceptor, pronounced to be "a most impenetrable dunce."

From Mr. Whyte's school the boys were removed to England, where Mr. and Mrs. Sheridan had lately gone to reside, and in the year 1762 Richard was sent to Harrow—Charles being kept at home as a fitter subject for the instructions of his father, who, by another of those calculations of poor human foresight, which the deity, called Eventus by the Romans, takes such wanton pleasure in falsifying, considered his elder son as destined to be the brighter of the two brother stars. At Harrow, Richard was remarkable only as a very idle, careless, but, at the same time, engaging boy, who contrived to win the affection, and even admiration of the whole school, both masters and pupils, by the mere charm of his frank and genial manners, and by the occasional gleams of superior intellect, which broke through all the indolence and indifference of his character.

Harrow, at this time, possessed some peculiar advantages, of which a youth like Sheridan might have powerfully availed himself. At the head of the school was Doctor Robert Sumner, a man of fine talents, but, unfortunately, one of those who have passed away without leaving any trace behind, except in the admiring recollection of their contemporaries. His taste is said to have been of a purity almost perfect, combining what are seldom seen together, that critical judgment which is alive to the errors of genius, with the warm sensibility that deeply feels its beauties. At the same period, the distinguished scholar, Dr. Parr, who, to the massy erudition of a former age, joined all the free and enlightened intelligence of the present, was one of the under masters of the school; and both he and Dr. Sumner endeavored, by every method they could devise, to awaken in Sheridan a consciousness of those powers which, under all the disadvantages of indolence and carelessness, it was manifest to them that he possessed. But remonstrance and encouragement were equally thrown away upon the good- humored but immovable indifference of their pupil; and though there exist among Mr. Sheridan's papers some curious proofs of an industry in study for which few have ever given him credit, they are probably but the desultory efforts of a later period of his life, to recover the loss of that first precious time, whose susceptibility of instruction, as well

as of pleasure, never comes again.

One of the most valuable acquisitions he derived from Harrow was that friendship, which lasted throughout his life, with Dr. Parr,—which mutual admiration very early began, and the "*idem sentire de re publica*" of course not a little strengthened.

As this learned and estimable man has, within the last few weeks, left a void in the world which will not be easily filled up, I feel that it would be unjust to my readers not to give, in his own words, the particulars of Sheridan's school-days, with which he had the kindness to favor me, and to which his name gives an authenticity and interest too valuable on such a subject to be withheld:

"Hatton, August 3, 1818.

"DEAR SIR,

"With the aid of a scribe I sit down to fulfil my promise about Mr. Sheridan. There was little in his boyhood worth communication. He was inferior to many of his school-fellows in the ordinary business of a school, and I do not remember any one instance in which he distinguished himself by Latin or English composition, in prose or verse. [Footnote: It will be seen, however, though Dr. Parr was not aware of the circumstance, that Sheridan did try his talent at English verse before he left Harrow.] Nathaniel Halhed, one of his school-fellows, wrote well in Latin and Greek. Richard Archdall, another school-fellow, excelled in English verse. Richard Sheridan aspired to no rivalry with either of them. He was at the uppermost part of the fifth form, but he never reached the sixth, and, if I mistake not, he had no opportunity of attending the most difficult and the most honorable of school business, when the Greek plays were taught—and it was the custom at Harrow to teach these at least every year. He went through his lessons in Horace, and Virgil, and Homer well enough for a time. But, in the absence of the upper master, Doctor Sumner, it once fell in my way to instruct the two upper forms, and upon calling up Dick Sheridan, I found him not only slovenly in construing, but unusually defective in his Greek grammar. Knowing him to be a clever fellow, I did not fail to probe and to tease him. I stated his case with great good-humor to the upper master, who was one of the best tempered men in the world; and it was agreed between us, that Richard should be called oftener and worked more severely. The varlet was not suffered to stand up in his place; but was summoned to take his station near the master's table, where the voice of no prompter could reach him; and, in this defenceless condition, he was so harassed, that he at last gathered up some grammatical rules, and prepared himself for his lessons. While this tormenting process was inflicted upon him, I now and then upbraided him. But you will take notice that he did not incur any corporal punishment for his idleness: his industry was just sufficient to protect him from disgrace. All the while Sumner and I saw in him vestiges of a superior intellect. His eye, his countenance, his general manner, were striking. His answers to any common question were prompt and acute. We knew the esteem, and even admiration, which, somehow or other, all his school-fellows felt for him. He was mischievous enough, but his pranks were accompanied by a sort of vivacity and cheerfulness, which delighted Sumner and myself. I had much talk with him about his apple-loft, for the supply of which all the gardens in the neighborhood were taxed, and some of the lower boys were employed to furnish it. I threatened, but without asperity, to trace the depredators, through his associates, up to their leader. He with perfect good-humor set me at defiance, and I never could bring the charge home to him. All boys and all masters were pleased with him. I often praised him as a lad of great talents,—often exhorted him to use them well; but my exhortations were fruitless. I take for granted that his taste was silently improved, and that he knew well the little which he did know. He was removed from school too soon by his father, who was the intimate friend of Sumner, and whom I often met at his house. Sumner had a fine voice, fine ear, fine taste, and, therefore, pronunciation was frequently the favorite subject between him and Tom Sheridan. I was present at many of their discussions and disputes, and sometimes took a very active part in them,—but Richard was not present. The father, you know, was a wrong-headed, whimsical man, and, perhaps, his scanty circumstances were one of the reasons which prevented him from sending Richard to the University. He must have been aware, as Sumner and I were, that Richard's mind was not cast in any ordinary mould. I ought to have told you that Richard, when a boy, was a great reader of English poetry; but his exercises afforded no proof of his proficiency. In truth, he, as a boy, was quite careless about literary fame. I should suppose that his father, without any regular system, polished his taste, and supplied his memory with anecdotes about our best writers in our Augustan age. The grandfather, you know, lived familiarly with Swift. I have heard of him, as an excellent scholar. His boys in Ireland once performed a Greek play, and when Sir William Jones and I were talking over this event, I determined to make the experiment in England. I selected some of my best boys, and they performed the Oedipus Tyrannus, and the Trachinians of Sophocles. I wrote some Greek Iambics to vindicate myself from the imputation of singularity, and grieved I am that I did not keep a copy of them. Milton, you may remember, recommends what I attempted.

"I saw much of Sheridan's father after the death of Sumner, and after my own removal from Harrow to Stanmer. I respected him,—he really liked me, and did me some important services,—but I never met him and Richard together. I often inquired about Richard, and, from the father's answers, found they were not upon good terms,—but neither he nor I ever spoke of his son's talents but in terms of the highest praise." In a subsequent letter Dr. Parr says: "I referred you to a passage in the Gentleman's Magazine, where I am represented as discovering and encouraging in Richard Sheridan those intellectual powers which had not been discovered and encouraged by Sumner. But the statement is incorrect. We both of us discovered talents, which neither of us could bring into action while Sheridan was a school-boy. He gave us few opportunities of praise in the course of his school business, and yet he was well aware that we thought highly of him, and anxiously wished more to be done by him than he was disposed to do.

"I once or twice met his mother,—she was quite celestial. Both her virtues and her genius were highly esteemed by Robert Sumner. I know not whether Tom Sheridan found Richard tractable in the art of speaking,— and, upon such a subject, indolence or indifference would have been resented by the father as crimes quite inexpiable. One of Richard's sisters now and then visited Harrow, and well do I remember that, in the house where I lodged, she triumphantly repeated Dryden's Ode upon St. Cecilia's Day, according to the

instruction given to her by her father. Take a sample:

None but the brave, None but the *brave*, None *but* the brave deserve the fair.

Whatever may have been the zeal or the proficiency of the sister, naughty Richard, like Gallio, seemed to care naught for these things.

"In the later periods of his life Richard did not cast behind him classical reading. He spoke copiously and powerfully about Cicero. He had read, and he had understood, the four orations of Demosthenes, read and taught in our public schools. He was at home in Virgil and in Horace. I cannot speak positively about Homer,—but I am very sure that he read the Iliad now and then; not as a professed scholar would do, critically, but with all the strong sympathies of a poet reading a poet. [Footnote: It was not one of the least of the triumphs of Sheridan's talent to have been able to persuade so acute a scholar as Dr. Parr, that the extent of his classical acquirements was so great as is here represented, and to have thus impressed with the idea of his remembering so much, the person who best knew how little he had learned.] Richard did not, and could not forget what he once knew, but his path to knowledge was his own,—his steps were noiseless,—his progress was scarcely felt by himself,—his movements were rapid but irregular.

"Let me assure you that Richard, when a boy, was by no means vicious. The sources of his infirmities were a scanty and precarious allowance from the father, the want of a regular plan for some profession, and, above all, the act of throwing him upon the town, when he ought to have been pursuing his studies at the University. He would have done little among mathematicians at Cambridge;—he would have been a rake, or an idler, or a trifler, at Dublin;—but I am inclined to think that at Oxford he would have become an excellent scholar.

"I have now told you all that I know, and it amounts to very little. I am very solicitous for justice to be done to Robert Sumner. He is one of the six or seven persons among my own acquaintance whose taste I am accustomed to consider perfect, and, were he living, his admiration…." [Footnote: The remainder of the letter relates to other subjects.]

During the greater part of Richard's stay at Harrow his father had been compelled, by the embarrassment of his affairs, to reside with the remainder of the family in France, and it was at Blois, in the September of 1766, that Mrs. Sheridan died—leaving behind her that best kind of fame, which results from a life of usefulness and purity, and which it requires not the aid of art or eloquence to blazon. She appears to have been one of those rare women, who, united to men of more pretensions, but less real intellect than themselves, meekly conceal this superiority even from their own hearts, and pass their lives without remonstrance or murmur, in gently endeavoring to repair those evils which the indiscretion or vanity of their partners has brought upon them.

As a supplement to the interesting communication of Dr. Parr, I shall here subjoin an extract from a letter which the eldest sister of Sheridan, Mrs. E. Lefanu, wrote a few months after his death to Mrs. Sheridan, in consequence of a wish expressed by the latter that Mrs. Lefanu would communicate such particulars as she remembered of his early days. It will show, too, the feeling which his natural good qualities, in spite of the errors by which they were obscured and weakened, kept alive to the last, in the hearts of those connected with him, that sort of retrospective affection, which, when those whom we have loved become altered, whether in mind or person, brings the recollection of what they once were, to mingle with and soften our impression of what they are.

After giving an account of the residence of the family in France, she continues: "We returned to England, when I may say I first became acquainted with my brother—for faint and imperfect were my recollections of him, as might be expected from my age. I saw him; and my childish attachment revived with double force. He was handsome, not merely in the eyes of a partial sister, but generally allowed to be so. His cheeks had the glow of health; his eyes,—the finest in the world,— the brilliancy of genius, and were soft as a tender and affectionate heart could render them. The same playful fancy, the same sterling and innoxious wit, that was shown afterwards in his writings, cheered and delighted the family circle. I admired—I almost adored him. I would most willingly have sacrificed my life for him, as I, in some measure, proved to him at Bath, where we resided for some time, and where events that you must have heard of engaged him in a duel. My father's displeasure threatened to involve me in the denunciations against him, for committing what he considered as a crime. Yet I risked everything, and in the event was made happy by obtaining forgiveness for my brother…. You may perceive, dear sister, that very little indeed have I to say on a subject so near your heart, and near mine also. That for years I lost sight of a brother whom I loved with unabated affection—a love that neither absence nor neglect could chill—I always consider as a great misfortune."

On his leaving Harrow, where he continued till near his eighteenth year, he was brought home by his father, who, with the elder son, Charles, had lately returned from France, and taken a house in London. Here the two brothers for some time received private tuition from Mr. Lewis Kerr, an Irish gentleman, who had formerly practised as a physician, but having, by loss of health, been obliged to give up his profession, supported himself by giving lessons in Latin and Mathematics. They attended also the fencing and riding schools of Mr. Angelo, and received instructions from their father in English grammar and oratory. Of this advantage, however, it is probable, only the elder son availed himself, as Richard, who seems to have been determined to owe all his excellence to nature alone, was found as impracticable a pupil at home as at school. But, however inattentive to his studies he may have been at Harrow, it appears, from one of the letters of his school-fellow, Mr. Halhed, that in poetry, which is usually the first exercise in which these young athletae of intellect try their strength, he had already distinguished himself; and, in conjunction with his friend Halhed, had translated the seventh Idyl, and many of the lesser poems of Theocritus. This literary partnership was resumed soon after their departure from Harrow. In the year 1770, when Halhed was at Oxford, and Sheridan residing with his father at Bath, they entered into a correspondence, (of which, unluckily, only Halhed's share remains,) and, with all the hope and spirit of young adventurers, began and prosecuted a variety of works together, of which none but their translation of Aristaenetus ever saw the light.

There is something in the alliance between these boys peculiarly interesting. Their united ages, as Halhed boasts in one of his letters, did not amount to thirty-eight. They were both abounding in wit and spirits, and as sanguine as the consciousness of talent and youth could make them; both inspired with a taste for pleasure, and thrown upon their own resources for the means of gratifying it; both carelessly embarking, without rivalry or reserve, their venture of fame in the same bottom, and both, as Halhed discovered at last, passionately in love with the same woman.

It would have given me great pleasure to have been enabled to enliven my pages with even a few extracts from that portion of their correspondence, which, as I have just mentioned, has fallen into my hands. There is in the letters of Mr. Halhed a fresh youthfulness of style, and an unaffected vivacity of thought, which I question whether even his witty correspondent could have surpassed. As I do not, however, feel authorized to lay these letters before the world, I must only avail myself of the aid which their contents supply towards tracing the progress of his literary partnership with Sheridan, and throwing light on a period so full of interest in the life of the latter.

Their first joint production was a farce, or rather play, in three acts, called "Jupiter," written in imitation of the burletta of Midas, whose popularity seems to have tempted into its wake a number of these musical parodies upon heathen fable. The amour of Jupiter with *Major* Amphitryon's wife, and *Sir Richard* Ixion's courtship of Juno, who substitutes *Miss Peggy Nubilis* in her place, form the subject of this ludicrous little drama, of which Halhed furnished the burlesque scenes,—while the form of a rehearsal, into which the whole is thrown, and which, as an anticipation of "The Critic" is highly curious, was suggested and managed entirely by Sheridan. The following extracts will give some idea of the humor of this trifle; and in the character of Simile the reader will at once discover a sort of dim and shadowy pre- existence of Puff:—

"*Simile.* Sir, you are very ignorant on the subject,—it is the method most in vogue.

"*O'Cul.* What! to make the music first, and then make the sense to it afterwards!

"*Sim.* Just so.

"*Monop.* What Mr. Simile says is very true, gentlemen; and there is nothing surprising in it, if we consider now the general method of writing *plays to scenes.*

"*O'Cul.* Writing *plays to scenes*!—Oh, you are joking.

"*Monop.* Not I, upon my word. Mr. Simile knows that I have frequently a complete set of scenes from Italy, and then I have nothing to do but to get some ingenious hand to write a play to them.

"*Sim.* I am your witness, Sir. Gentlemen, you perceive you know nothing about these matters.

"*O'Cul.* Why, Mr. Simile, I don't pretend to know much relating to these affairs, but what I think is this, that in this method, according to your principles, you must often commit blunders.

"*Sim.* Blunders! to be sure I must, but I always could get myself out of them again. Why, I'll tell you an instance of it.—You must know I was once a journeyman sonnet-writer to Signor Squallini. Now, his method, when seized with the *furor harmonicus*, was constantly to make me sit by his side, while he was thrumming on his harpsichord, in order to make extempore verses to whatever air he should beat out to his liking. I remember, one morning, as he was in this situation, *thrum, thrum, thrum, (moving his fingers as if beating on the harpsichord,)* striking out something prodigiously great, as he thought,—'Hah!' said he,—'hah! Mr. Simile, *thrum, thrum, thrum,* by gar here is vary fine,—*thrum, thrum, thrum*, write me some words directly.'—I durst not interrupt him to ask on what subject, so instantly began to describe a fine morning.

"'Calm was the land and calm the seas,
And calm the heaven's dome serene,
Hush'd was the gale and hush'd the breeze,
And not a vapor to be seen.'

I sang it to his notes,—'Hah! upon my vord vary pritt,—*thrum, thrum, thrum,*—stay, stay,—*thrum, thrum,*—Hoa? upon my vord, here it must be an adagio,—*thrum, thrum,*—oh! let it be an *Ode to Melancholy.*'

"*Monop.* The Devil!—there you were puzzled sure.

"*Sim.* Not in the least,—I brought in a *cloud* in the next stanza, and matters, you see, came about at once.

"*Monop.* An excellent transition.

" *O'Cul.* Vastly ingenious indeed.

"*Sim.* Was it not? hey! it required a little command,—a little presence of mind,—but I believe we had better proceed.

"*Monop.* The sooner the better,—come, gentlemen, resume your seats.

"*Sim.* Now for it. Draw up the curtain, and *(looking at his book)* enter Sir Richard Ixion,—but stay,—zounds, Sir Richard ought to overhear Jupiter and his wife quarrelling,—but, never mind,—these accidents have spoilt the division of my piece.—So enter Sir Richard, and look as cunning as if you had overheard them. Now for it, gentlemen,—you can't be too attentive.

"*Enter* Sir RICHARD IXION *completely dressed, with bag, sword, &c.*

"*Ix.*

'Fore George, at logger-heads,—a lucky minute,
'Pon honor, I may make my market in it.
Dem it, my air, address, and mien must touch her,
Now out of sorts with him,—less God than butcher.
O rat the fellow,—where can all his sense lie,
To gallify the lady so immensely?
Ah! *le grand bete qu'il est!*—how rude the bear is!
The world to two-pence he was ne'er at *Paris*.
Perdition stop my vitals,—now or never
I'll niggle snugly into Juno's favor.
Let's see,—(*looking in a glass*) my face,—toll loll—
'twill work upon her.
My person—oh, immense, upon my honor.
My eyes,—oh fie.—the naughty glass it flatters,—
Courage,—Ixion flogs the world to tatters. [*Exit Ixion.*]

"*Sim.* There is a fine gentleman for you,—In the very pink of the mode, with not a single article about him his own,—his words pilfered from Magazines, his address from French valets, and his clothes not paid for.

"*Macd.* But pray, Mr. Simile, how did Ixion get into heaven?

"*Sim.* Why, Sir, what's that to any body?—perhaps by Salmoneus's Brazen Bridge, or the Giant's Mountain, or the Tower of Babel, or on Theobald's bull-dogs, or—who the devil cares how?—he is there, and that's enough."

* * * * *

"*Sim.* Now for a Phoenix of a song.

"*Song by* JUPITER.

"You dogs, I'm Jupiter Imperial,
King, Emperor, and Pope aetherial,
Master of th' Ordnance of the sky.—

"*Sim.* Z——ds, where's the ordnance? Have you forgot the pistol? (*to the Orchestra.*)

"*Orchestra.* (*to some one behind the scenes.*) Tom, are not you prepared?

"*Tom.* (*from behind the scenes.*) Yes, Sir, but I flash'd in the pan a little out of time, and had I staid to prime, I should have shot a bar too late.

"*Sim.* Oh then, Jupiter, begin the song again.—We must not lose our ordnance.

"You dogs, I'm Jupiter Imperial,
King, Emperor, and Pope aetherial,
Master of th' Ordnance of the sky; &c. &c.
[*Here a pistol or cracker is fired from behind the scenes.*]

"*Sim.* This hint I took from Handel.—Well, how do you think we go on?

"*O'Cul.* With vast spirit,—the plot begins to thicken.

"*Sim.* Thicken! aye,—'twill be as thick as the calf of your leg presently. Well, now for the real, original, patentee Amphitryon. What, ho, Amphitryon! Amphitryon!—'tis Simile calls.—Why, where the devil is he?

"*Enter* SERVANT.

"*Monop.* Tom, where is Amphitryon?

"*Sim.* Zounds, he's not arrested too, is he?

"*Serv.* No, Sir, but there was but *one black eye* in the house, and he is waiting to get it from Jupiter.

"*Sim.* To get a black eye from Jupiter,—oh, this will never do. Why, when they meet, they ought to match like two beef-eaters."

According to their original plan for the conclusion of this farce, all things were at last to be compromised between Jupiter and Juno; Amphitryon was to be comforted in the birth of so mighty a son; Ixion, for his presumption, instead of being fixed to a *torturing* wheel, was to have been fixed to a vagrant monotroche, as knife-grinder, and a grand chorus of deities (intermixed with "knives, scissors, pen-knives to grind," set to music as nearly as possible to the natural cry,) would have concluded the whole.

That habit of dilatoriness, which is too often attendant upon genius, and which is for ever making it, like the pistol in the scene just quoted, "shoot a bar too late," was, through life, remarkable in the character of Mr. Sheridan,—and we have here an early instance of its influence over him. Though it was in August, 1770, that he received the sketch of this piece from his friend, and though they both looked forward most sanguinely to its success, as likely to realize many a dream of fame and profit, it was not till the month of May in the subsequent year, as appears by a letter from Mr. Ker to Sheridan, that the probability of the arrival of the manuscript was announced to Mr. Foote. "I have dispatched a card, as from H. H., at Owen's Coffee-house, to Mr. Foote, to inform him that he may expect to see your dramatic piece about the 25th instant."

Their hopes and fears in this theatrical speculation are very naturally and livelily expressed throughout Halhed's letters, sometimes with a degree of humorous pathos, which is interesting as characteristic of both the writers:—"the thoughts," he says, "of 200_l_. shared between us are enough to bring the tears into one's eyes." Sometimes, he sets more moderate limits to their ambition, and hopes that they will, at least, get the freedom of the play-house by it. But at all times he chides, with good-humored impatience, the tardiness of his fellow- laborer in applying to the managers. Fears are expressed that Foote may have made other engagements,—and that a piece, called "Dido," on the same mythological plan, which had lately been produced with but little success, might prove an obstacle to the reception of theirs. At Drury Lane, too, they had little hopes of a favorable hearing, as Dibdin was one of the principal butts of their ridicule.

The summer season, however, was suffered to pass away without an effort; and in October, 1771, we find Mr. Halhed flattering himself with hopes from a negotiation with Mr. Garrick. It does not appear, however, that Sheridan ever actually presented this piece to any of the managers; and indeed it is probable, from the following fragment of a scene found among his papers, that he soon abandoned the groundwork of Halhed altogether, and transferred his plan of a rehearsal to some other subject, of his own invention, and, therefore, more worthy of his wit. It will be perceived that the puffing author was here intended to be a Scotchman.

"*M.* Sir, I have read your comedy, and I think it has infinite merit, but, pray, don't you think it rather grave?

"*S.* Sir, you say true; it *is* a grave comedy. I follow the opinion of Longinus, who says comedy ought always to be sentimental. Sir, I value a sentiment of six lines in my piece no more than a nabob does a rupee. I hate those dirty, paltry equivocations, which go by the name of puns, and pieces of wit. No, Sir, it ever was my opinion that the stage should be a place of rational entertainment; instead of which, I am very sorry to say, most people go there for their diversion: accordingly, I have formed my comedy so that it is no laughing, giggling piece of work. He must be a very light man that shall discompose his muscles from the beginning to the end.

"*M.* But don't you think it may be too grave?

"*S.* O never fear; and as for hissing, mon, they might as well hiss the common prayer-book; for there is the viciousness of vice and the virtuousness of virtue in every third line.

"*M.* I confess there is a great deal of moral in it; but, Sir, I should imagine if you tried your hand at tragedy—

"*S.* No, mon, there you are out, and I'll relate to you what put me first on writing a comedy. You must know I had composed a very fine tragedy about the valiant Bruce. I showed it my Laird of Mackintosh, and he was a very candid mon, and he said my genius did not lie in tragedy: I took the hint, and, as soon as I got home, began my comedy."

We have here some of the very thoughts and words that afterwards contributed to the fortune of Puff; and it is amusing to observe how long this subject was played with by the current of Sheridan's fancy, till at last, like "a stone of lustre from the brook," it came forth with all that smoothness and polish which it wears in his inimitable farce, The Critic. Thus it is, too, and but little to the glory of what are called our years of discretion, that the life of the *man* is chiefly employed in giving effect to the wishes and plans of the *boy*.

Another of their projects was a Periodical Miscellany, the idea of which originated with Sheridan, and whose first embryo movements we trace in a letter to him from Mr. Lewis Kerr, who undertook, with much good nature, the negotiation of the young author's literary concerns in London. The letter is dated 30th of October, 1770: "As to your intended periodical paper, if it meets with success, there is no doubt of profit accruing, as I have already engaged a publisher, of established reputation, to undertake it for the

account of the authors. But I am to indemnify him in case it should not sell, and to advance part of the first expense, all which I can do without applying to Mr. Ewart."—"I would be glad to know what stock of papers you have already written, as there ought to be ten or a dozen at least finished before you print any, in order to have time to prepare the subsequent numbers, and ensure a continuance of the work. As to the coffee-houses, you must not depend on their taking it in at first, except you go on the plan of the Tatler, and give the news of the week. For the first two or three weeks the expense of advertising will certainly prevent any profit being made. But when that is over, if a thousand are sold weekly, you may reckon on receiving L5 clear. One paper a week will do better than two. Pray say no more as to our accounts."

The title intended by Sheridan for this paper was "Hernan's Miscellany," to which his friend Halhed objected, and suggested, "The Reformer," as a newer and more significant name. But though Halhed appears to have sought among his Oxford friends for an auxiliary or two in their weekly labors, this meditated Miscellany never proceeded beyond the first number, which was written by Sheridan, and which I have found among his papers. It is too diffuse and pointless to be given entire; but an extract or two from it will not be unwelcome to those who love to trace even the first, feeblest beginnings of genius:

HERNAN'S MISCELLANY.

No. I.

"'I will sit down and write for the good of the people—for (said I to myself, pulling off my spectacles, and drinking up the remainder of my sixpen'worth) it cannot be but people must be sick of these same rascally politics. All last winter nothing but—God defend me! 'tis tiresome to think of it.' I immediately flung the pamphlet down on the table, and taking my hat and cane walked out of the coffee-house.

"I kept up as smart a pace as I could all the way home, for I felt myself full of something, and enjoyed my own thoughts so much, that I was afraid of digesting them, lest any should escape me. At last I knocked at my own door.—'So!' said I to the maid who opened it, (for I never would keep a man; not, but what I could afford it—however, the reason is not material now,) 'So!' said I with an unusual smile upon my face, and immediately sent her for a quire of paper and half a hundred of pens—the only thing I had absolutely determined on in my way from the coffee-house. I had now got seated in my arm chair,—I am an infirm old man, and I live on a second floor,—when I began to ruminate on my project. The first thing that occurred to me (and certainly a very natural one) was to examine my common-place book. So I went to my desk and took out my old faithful red-leather companion, who had long discharged the office of treasurer to all my best hints and memorandums: but, how was I surprised, when one of the first things that struck my eyes was the following memorandum, legibly written, and on one of my best sheets of vellum:—'Mem.—*Oct. 20th, 1769, left the Grecian after having read ——'s Poems, with a determined resolution to write a Periodical Paper, in order to reform the vitiated taste of the age; but, coming home and finding my fire out, and my maid gone abroad, was obliged to defer the execution of my plan to another opportunity.* ' Now though this event had absolutely slipped my memory, I now recollected it perfectly,—ay, so my fire *was* out indeed, and my maid *did* go abroad sure enough.—'Good Heavens!' said I, 'how great events depend upon little circumstances!' However, I looked upon this as a memento for me no longer to trifle away my time and resolution; and thus I began to reason,—I mean, I *would* have reasoned, had I not been interrupted by a noise of some one coming up stairs. By the alternate thump upon the steps, I soon discovered it must be my old and intimate friend Rudliche.

* * * * *

"But, to return, in walked Rudliche.—'So, Fred.'—'So, Bob.'—'Were you at the Grecian to-day?'—'I just stepped in.'—'Well, any news?'—'No, no, there was no news.' Now, as Bob and I saw one another almost every day, we seldom abounded in conversation; so, having settled one material point, he sat in his usual posture, looking at the fire and beating the dust out of his wooden leg, when I perceived he was going to touch upon *the* other subject; but, having by chance cast his eye on my face, and finding (I suppose) something extraordinary in my countenance, he immediately dropped all concern for the weather, and putting his hand into his pocket, (as if he meant to find what he was going to say, under pretence of feeling for his tobacco-box,) 'Hernan! (he began) why, man, you look for all the world as if you had been thinking of something.'— 'Yes,' replied I, smiling, (that is, not actually smiling, but with a conscious something in my face,) 'I have, indeed, been thinking a little.'—'What, is't a secret?'—'Oh, nothing very material.' Here ensued a pause, which I employed in considering whether I should reveal my scheme to Bob; and Bob in trying to disengage his thumb from the string of his cane, as if he were preparing to take his leave. This latter action, with the great desire I had of disburdening myself, made me instantly resolve to lay my whole plan before him. 'Bob,' said I, (he immediately quitted his thumb,) 'you remarked that I looked as if I had been thinking of something,—your remark is just, and I'll tell you the subject of my thought. You know, Bob, that I always had a strong passion for literature:—you have often seen my collection of books, not very large indeed, however I believe I have read every volume of it twice over, (excepting ——'*s Divine Legation of Moses*, and ——'*s Lives of the most notorious Malefactors*,) and I am now determined to profit by them.' I concluded with a very significant nod; but, good heavens! how mortified was I to find both my speech and my nod thrown away, when Rudliche calmly replied, with the true phlegm of ignorance, 'My dear friend, I think your resolution in regard to your books a very prudent one; but I do not perfectly conceive your plan as to the *profit*; for, though your volumes may be very curious, yet you know they are most of them secondhand.'—I was so vexed with the fellow's stupidity that I had a great mind to punish him by not disclosing a syllable more. However, at last my vanity got the better of my resentment, and I explained to him the whole matter.

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"In examining the beginning of the Spectators, &c., I find they are all written by a society.—Now I profess to write all myself, though I acknowledge that, on account of a weakness in my eyes, I have got some understrappers who are to write the poetry, &c.... In order to find the different merits of these my subalterns, I stipulated with them that they should let me feed them as I would. This they consented to do, and it is surprising to think what different effects diet has on the writers. The same, who after having been fed two days upon artichokes produced as pretty a copy of verses as ever I saw, on beef was as dull as ditch-water...."

"It is a characteristic of fools," says some one, "to be always beginning,"—and this is not the only point in which folly and genius resemble each other. So chillingly indeed do the difficulties of execution succeed to the first ardor of conception, that it is only wonderful there should exist so many finished monuments of genius, or that men of fancy should not oftener have contented themselves with those first vague sketches, in the production of which the chief luxury of intellectual creation lies. Among the many literary works shadowed out by Sheridan at this time were a Collection of Occasional Poems, and a volume of Crazy Tales, to the former of which Halhed suggests that "the old things they did at Harrow out of Theocritus" might, with a little pruning, form a useful contribution. The loss of the volume of Crazy Tales is little to be regretted, as from its title we may conclude it was written in imitation of the clever but licentious productions of John Hall Stephenson. If the same kind oblivion had closed over the levities of other young authors, who, in the season of folly and the passions, have made their pages the transcript of their lives, it would have been equally fortunate for themselves and the world.

But whatever may have been the industry of these youthful authors, the translation of Aristaenetus, as I have already stated, was the only fruit of their literary alliance that ever arrived at sufficient maturity for publication. In November, 1770, Halhed had completed and forwarded to Bath his share of the work, and in the following month we find Sheridan preparing, with the assistance of a Greek grammar, to complete the task. "The 29th ult., (says Mr. Ker, in a letter to him from London, dated Dec. 4, 1770,) I was favored with yours, and have since been hunting for Aristaenetus, whom I found this day, and therefore send to you, together with a Greek grammar. I might have dispatched at the same time some numbers of the Dictionary, but not having got the last two numbers, was not willing to send any without the whole of what is published, and still less willing to delay Aristaenetus's journey by waiting for them." The work alluded to here is the Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, to which Sheridan had subscribed, with the view, no doubt, of informing himself upon subjects of which he was as yet wholly ignorant, having left school, like most other young men at his age, as little furnished with the knowledge that is wanted in the world, as a person would be for the demands of a market, who went into it with nothing but a few ancient coins in his pocket.

The passion, however, that now began to take possession of his heart was little favorable to his advancement in any serious studies, and it may easily be imagined that, in the neighborhood of Miss Linley, the Arts and Sciences were suffered to sleep quietly on their shelves. Even the translation of Aristaenetus, though a task more suited, from its amatory nature, to the existing temperature of his heart, was proceeded in but slowly; and it appears from one of Halhed's letters, that this impatient ally was already counting upon the *spolia opima* of the campaign, before Sheridan had fairly brought his Greek grammar into the field. The great object of the former was a visit to Bath, and he had set his heart still more anxiously upon it, after a second meeting with Miss Linley at Oxford. But the profits expected from their literary undertakings were the only means to which he looked for the realizing of this dream; and he accordingly implores his friend, with the most comic piteousness, to drive the farce on the stage by main force, and to make Aristaenetus sell whether he will or not. In the November of this year we find them discussing the propriety of prefixing their names to the work—Sheridan evidently not disinclined to venture, but Halhed recommending that they should wait to hear how "Sumner and the wise few of their acquaintance" would talk of the book, before they risked anything more than their initials. In answer to Sheridan's inquiries as to the extent of sale they may expect in Oxford, he confesses that, after three coffee-houses had bought one a-piece, not two more would be sold.

That poverty is the best nurse of talent has long been a most humiliating truism; and the fountain of the Muses, bursting from a barren rock, is but too apt an emblem of the hard source from which much of the genius of this world has issued. How strongly the young translators of Aristaenetus were under the influence of this sort of inspiration appears from every paragraph of Halhed's letters, and might easily, indeed, be concluded of Sheridan, from the very limited circumstances of his father, who had nothing besides the pension of L200 a year, conferred upon him in consideration of his literary merits, and the little profits he derived from his lectures in Bath, to support with decency himself and his family. The prospects of Halhed were much more golden, but he was far too gay and mercurial to be prudent; and from the very scanty supplies which his father allowed him, had quite as little of "le superflu, chose si necessaire," as his friend. But whatever were his other desires and pursuits, a visit to Bath,—to that place which contained the two persons he most valued in friendship and in love,—was the grand object of all his financial speculations; and among other ways and means that, in the delay of the expected resources from Aristaenetus, presented themselves, was an exhibition of L20 a year, which the college had lately given him, and with five pounds of which he thought he might venture "adire Corinthum."

Though Sheridan had informed his friend that the translation was put to press some time in March, 1771, it does not appear to have been given into the hands of Wilkie, the publisher, till the beginning of May, when Mr. Ker writes thus to Bath: "Your Aristaenetus is in the hands of Mr. Wilkie, in St. Paul's Churchyard, and to put you out of suspense at once, will certainly make his appearance about the first of June next, in the form of a neat volume, price 3s or 3s 6d, as may best suit his size, &c., which cannot be more nearly determined at present, I have undertaken the task of correcting for the press.... Some of the Epistles that I have perused seem to me elegant and poetical; in others I could not observe equal beauty, and here and there I could wish there was some little amendment. You will pardon this liberty I take, and set it down to the account of old-fashioned friendship." Mr. Ker, to judge from his letters, (which, in addition to their other laudable points, are dated with a precision truly exemplary,) was a very kind, useful, and sensible person, and in the sober hue of his intellect exhibited a striking contrast to the sparkling vivacity of the two sanguine and impatient young wits, whose affairs he so good naturedly undertook to negotiate.

At length in August, 1771, Aristaenetus made its appearance—contrary to the advice of the bookseller, and of Mr. Ker, who

represented to Sheridan the unpropitiousness of the season, particularly for a first experiment in authorship, and advised the postponement of the publication till October. But the translators were too eager for the rich harvest of emolument they had promised themselves, and too full of that pleasing but often fatal delusion—that calenture, under the influence of which young voyagers to the shores of Fame imagine they already see her green fields and groves in the treacherous waves around them—to listen to the suggestions of mere calculating men of business. The first account they heard of the reception of the work was flattering enough to prolong awhile this dream of vanity. "It begins (writes Mr. Ker, in about a fortnight after the publication,) to make some noise, and is fathered on Mr. Johnson, author of the English Dictionary, &c. See to-day's Gazetteer. The critics are admirable in discovering a concealed author by his style, manner, &c."

Their disappointment at the ultimate failure of the book was proportioned, we may suppose, to the sanguineness of their first expectations. But the reluctance with which an author yields to the sad certainty of being unread, is apparent in the eagerness with which Halhed avails himself of every encouragement for a rally of his hopes. The Critical Reviewers, it seems, had given the work a tolerable character, and quoted the first Epistle. [Footnote: In one of the Reviews I have seen it thus spoken of:—"No such writer as Aristaenetus ever existed in the classic era; nor did even the unhappy schools, after the destruction of the Eastern empire, produce such a writer. It was left to the latter times of monkish imposition to give such trash as this, on which the translator has ill spent his time. We have been as idly employed in reading it, and our readers will in proportion lose their time in perusing this article."] The Weekly Review in the Public Ledger had also spoken well of it, and cited a specimen. The Oxford Magazine had transcribed two whole Epistles, without mentioning from whence they were taken. Every body, he says, seemed to have read the book, and one of those *hawking booksellers* who attend the coffeehouses assured him it was written by Dr. Armstrong, author of the Oeconomy of Love. On the strength of all this he recommends that another volume of the Epistles should be published immediately—being of opinion that the readers of the first volume would be sure to purchase the second, and that the publication of the second would put it in the heads of others to buy the first. Under a sentence containing one of these sanguine anticipations, there is written, in Sheridan's hand, the word "Quixote!"

They were never, of course, called upon for the second part, and, whether we consider the merits of the original or of the translation, the world has but little to regret in the loss. Aristaenetus is one of those weak, florid sophists, who flourished in the decline and degradation of ancient literature, and strewed their gaudy flowers of rhetoric over the dead muse of Greece. He is evidently of a much later period than Alciphron, to whom he is also very inferior in purity of diction, variety of subject, and playfulness of irony. But neither of them ever deserved to be wakened from that sleep, in which the commentaries of Bergler, De Pauw, and a few more such industrious scholars have shrouded them.

The translators of Aristaenetus, in rendering his flowery prose into verse, might have found a precedent and model for their task in Ben Jonson, whose popular song, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," is, as Mr. Cumberland first remarked, but a piece of fanciful mosaic, collected out of the love-letters of the sophist Philostratus. But many of the narrations in Aristaenetus are incapable of being elevated into poetry; and, unluckily, these familiar parts seem chiefly to have fallen to the department of Halhed, who was far less gifted than his coadjutor with that artist-like touch, which polishes away the mark of vulgarity, and gives an air of elegance even to poverty. As the volume is not in many hands, the following extract from one of the Epistles may be acceptable —as well from the singularity of the scene described, as from the specimen it affords of the merits of the translation:

"Listen—another pleasure I display,
That help'd delightfully the time away.
From distant vales, where bubbles from its source
A crystal rill, they dug a winding course:
See! thro' the grove a narrow lake extends,
Crosses each plot, to each plantation bends;
And while the fount in new meanders glides,
The forest brightens with refreshing tides.
Tow'rds us they taught the new-born stream to flow,
Tow'rds us it crept, irresolute and slow;
Scarce had the infant current crickled by,
When lo! a wondrous fleet attracts our eye;
Laden with draughts might greet a monarch's tongue,
The mimic navigation swam along.
Hasten, ye ship-like goblets, down the vale,
[Footnote: "In the original, this luxurious image is pursued so far that the very leaf which is represented as the sail of the vessel, is particularized as of a medicinal nature, capable of preventing any ill effects the wine might produce."—_Note by the Translator.]
Your freight a flagon, and a leaf your sail;
O may no envious rush thy course impede,
Or floating apple stop thy tide-born speed.
His mildest breath a gentle zephyr gave;
The little vessels trimly stem'd the wave:
Their precious merchandise to land they bore,
And one by one resigned the balmy store.
Stretch but a hand, we boarded them, and quaft
With native luxury the tempered draught.

For where they loaded the nectareous fleet,
The goblet glow'd with too intense a heat;
Cool'd by degrees in these convivial ships,
With nicest taste it met our thirsty lips."

As a scholar, such as Halhed, could hardly have been led into the mistake, of supposing [Greek: pa Medika phuxa phullon] to mean "a leaf of a medicinal nature," we may, perhaps, from this circumstance not less than from the superior workmanship of the verses, attribute the whole of this Epistle and notes to Sheridan.

There is another Epistle, the 12th, as evidently from the pen of his friend, the greater part of which is original, and shows, by its raciness and vigor, what difference there is between "the first sprightly runnings" of an author's own mind, and his cold, vapid transfusion of the thoughts of another. From stanza 10th to the end is all added by the translator, and all spirited—though full of a bold defying libertinism, as unlike as possible to the effeminate lubricity of the poor sophist, upon whom, in a grave, treacherous note, the responsibility of the whole is laid. But by far the most interesting part of the volume is the last Epistle of the book, "From a Lover resigning his Mistress to his Friend,"—in which Halhed has contrived to extract from the unmeaningness of the original a direct allusion to his own fate; and, forgetting Aristaenetus and his dull personages, thinks only of himself, and Sheridan, and Miss Linley.

"Thee, then, my friend,—if yet a wretch may claim
A last attention by that once dear name,—
Thee I address:—the cause you must approve;
I yield you—what I cannot cease to love.
Be thine the blissful lot, the nymph be thine:
I yield my love,—sure, friendship may be mine.
Yet must no thought of me torment thy breast;
Forget me, if my griefs disturb thy rest,
Whilst still I'll pray that thou may'st never know
The pangs of baffled love, or feel my woe.
But sure to thee, dear, charming—fatal maid!
(For me thou'st charmed, and me thou hast betray'd,)
This last request I need not recommend—
Forget the lover thou, as he the friend.
Bootless such charge! for ne'er did pity move
A heart that mock'd the suit of humble love.
Yet, in some thoughtful hour—if such can be,
Where love, Timocrates, is join'd with thee—
In some lone pause of joy, when pleasures pall,
And fancy broods o'er joys it can't recall,
Haply a thought of me, (for thou, my friend,
May'st then have taught that stubborn heart to bend,)
A thought of him whose passion was not weak,
May dash one transient blush upon her cheek;
Haply a tear—(for I shall surely then
Be past all power to raise her scorn again—)
Haply, I say, one self-dried tear may fall:—
One tear she'll give, for whom I yielded all!

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My life has lost its aim!—that fatal fair
Was all its object, all its hope or care:
She was the goal, to which my course was bent,
Where every wish, where every thought was sent;
A secret influence darted from her eyes,—
Each look, attraction, and herself the prize.
Concentred there, I liv'd for her alone;
To make her glad and to be blest was one.

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* * * * *

Adieu, my friend,—nor blame this *sad* adieu,
Though sorrow guides my pen, it blames not you.
Forget me—'tis my pray'r; nor seek to know
The fate of him whose portion must be woe,
Till the cold earth outstretch her friendly arms,
And Death convince me that he *can* have charms."

But Halhed's was not the only heart that sighed deeply and hopelessly for the young Maid of Bath, who appears, indeed, to have spread her gentle conquests to an extent almost unparalleled in the annals of beauty. Her personal charms, the exquisiteness of her musical talents, and the full light of publicity which her profession threw upon both, naturally attracted round her a crowd of admirers, in whom the sympathy of a common pursuit soon kindled into rivalry, till she became at length an object of vanity as well as of love. Her extreme youth, too,—for she was little more than sixteen when Sheridan first met her,—must have removed, even from minds the most fastidious and delicate, that repugnance they might justly have felt to her profession, if she had lived much longer under its tarnishing influence, or lost, by frequent exhibitions before the public, that fine gloss of feminine modesty, for whose absence not all the talents and accomplishments of the whole sex can atone.

She had been, even at this early age, on the point of marriage with Mr. Long, an old gentleman of considerable fortune in Wiltshire, who proved the reality of his attachment to her in a way which few young lovers would be romantic enough to imitate. On her secretly representing to him that she never could be happy as his wife, he generously took upon himself the whole blame of breaking off the alliance, and even indemnified the father, who was proceeding to bring the transaction into court, by settling L3000 upon his daughter. Mr. Sheridan, who owed to this liberal conduct not only the possession of the woman he loved, but the means of supporting her during the first years of their marriage, spoke invariably of Mr. Long, who lived to a very advanced age, with all the kindness and respect which such a disinterested character merited.

It was about the middle of the year 1770 that the Sheridans took up their residence in King's Mead [Footnote: They also lived, during a part of their stay at Bath, in New King Street.] Street, Bath, where an acquaintance commenced between them and Mr. Linley's family, which the kindred tastes of the young people soon ripened into intimacy. It was not to be expected,—though parents, in general, are as blind to the first approach of these dangers as they are rigid and unreasonable after they have happened,—that such youthful poets and musicians [Footnote: Dr. Burney, in his Biographical Sketch of Mr. Linley, written for Rees' Cyclopaedia, calls the Linley family "a nest of nightingales." The only surviving member of this accomplished family is Mr. William Linley, whose taste and talent, both in poetry and music, most worthily sustain the reputation of the name that he bears.]—should come together without Love very soon making one of the party. Accordingly the two brothers became deeply enamored of Miss Linley. Her heart, however, was not so wholly un-preoccupied as to yield at once to the passion which her destiny had in store for her. One of those transient preferences, which in early youth are mistaken for love, had already taken lively possession of her imagination; and to this the following lines, written at that time by Mr. Sheridan, allude:

TO THE RECORDING ANGEL.

Cherub of Heaven, that from my secret stand
Dost note the follies of each mortal here,
Oh, if Eliza's steps employ thy hand,
Blot the sad legend with a mortal tear.
Nor when she errs, through passion's wild extreme,
Mark then her course, nor heed each trifling wrong;
Nor, when her sad attachment is her theme,
Note down the transports of her erring tongue.
But, when she sighs for sorrows not her own,
Let that dear sigh to Mercy's cause be given;
And bear that tear to her Creator's throne,
Which glistens in the eye upraised to Heaven!

But in love, as in everything else, the power of a mind like Sheridan's must have made itself felt through all obstacles and difficulties. He was not long in winning the entire affections of the young "Syren," though the number and wealth of his rivals, the ambitious views of her father, and the temptations to which she herself was hourly exposed, kept his jealousies and fears perpetually on the watch. He is supposed, indeed, to have been indebted to self-observation for that portrait of a wayward and morbidly sensitive lover, which he has drawn so strikingly in the character of Falkland.

With a mind in this state of feverish wakefulness, it is remarkable that he should so long have succeeded in concealing his attachment from the eyes of those most interested in discovering it. Even his brother Charles was for some time wholly unaware of their rivalry, and went on securely indulging in a passion which it was hardly possible, with such opportunities of intercourse, to resist, and which survived long after Miss Linley's selection of another had extinguished every hope in his heart, but that of seeing her happy. Halhed, too, who at that period corresponded constantly with Sheridan, and confided to him the love with which he also had been inspired by this enchantress, was for a length of time left in the same darkness upon the subject, and without the slightest suspicion that the epidemic had reached his friend, whose only mode of evading the many tender inquiries and messages with which Halhed's letters abounded, was by referring to answers which had by some strange fatality miscarried, and which, we may conclude, without much uncharitableness, had never been written.

Miss Linley went frequently to Oxford, to perform at the oratorios and concerts; and it may easily be imagined that the ancient allegory of the Muses throwing chains over Cupid was here reversed, and the quiet shades of learning not a little disturbed by the splendor of these "angel visits." The letters of Halhed give a lively idea, not only of his own intoxication, but of the sort of contagious

delirium, like that at Abdera described by Lucian, with which the young men of Oxford were affected by this beautiful girl. In describing her singing he quotes part of a Latin letter which he himself had written to a friend upon first hearing her; and it is a curious proof of the readiness of Sheridan, notwithstanding his own fertility, to avail himself of the thoughts of others, that we find in this extract, word for word, the same extravagant comparison of the effects of music to the process of Egyptian embalmment—"extracting the brain through the ears"—which was afterwards transplanted into the dialogue of the Duenna: "*Mortuum quondam ante aegypti medici quam pollincirent cerebella de auribus unco quodam hamo solebant extrahere; sic de meis auribus non cerebrum, sed cor ipsum exhausit lusciniola, &c., &c.*" He mentions, as the rivals most dreaded by her admirers, Norris, the singer, whose musical talents, it was thought, recommended him to her, and Mr. Watts, a gentleman commoner, of very large fortune.

While all hearts and tongues were thus occupied about Miss Linley, it is not wonderful that rumors of matrimony and elopement should, from time to time, circulate among her apprehensive admirers; or that the usual ill-compliment should be paid to her sex of supposing that wealth must be the winner of the prize. It was at one moment currently reported at Oxford that she had gone off to Scotland with a young man of L3,000 a year, and the panic which the intelligence spread is described in one of these letters to Sheridan, (who, no doubt, shared in it) as producing "long faces" everywhere. Not only, indeed, among her numerous lovers, but among all who delighted in her public performances, an alarm would naturally be felt at the prospect of her becoming private property: