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THE CRITIC

The Critic

By

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

Edited, with Introduction and Notes by

Robert Herring, M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

LIFE OF SHERIDAN

SHERIDAN was born in Dublin in 1752, receiving the names of Richard Brinsley. Of his father, Dr. Johnson ponderously observed " Sheridan is dull, naturally dull ; but it must have taken him a deal of pains to have become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in nature." His mother, the author of *Sidney Biddulph*, died at Blois when Sheridan was fifteen ; and as his relations with his father are described as being " more respectful and attentive than close and cordial," it is not surprising to find that five years later, he eloped with Elizabeth Ann Linley, the daughter of a singing master at Bath, where his father taught oratory. Actually, his brother Charles was in love with her, but when she was pressed by her father to marry a rich but elderly man and was also annoyed by the attentions of a rake, she turned to Sheridan, and he took her to Lille. The next year they were married. Meanwhile, the rake had been libelling him in the Bath papers, so Sheridan accordingly fought two duels, in the second of which he was seriously wounded.

In the spring of the next year he was studying law at the Middle Temple, while his wife sang in oratorio. Fanny Burney noted in her diary that " the elegance

of Mrs. Sheridan's beauty is unequalled by any I ever saw, except Mrs. Crewe," and Horace Walpole recounts that George III "ogles her as much as he dare do in so holy a place as an Oratorio." In 1775 Sheridan's first play, *The Rivals*, was produced at Covent Garden, on 17th January. Owing to miscasting and excessive length, it was a failure and was withdrawn. On the 28th, considerably cut, it was put on again, and encouraged by its success he followed it up with the bad *St. Patrick's Day* and in the same year with the operette, *The Duenna*, which is not as good as Byron thought. The next year he contrived to buy Garrick's share in Drury Lane. In 1777, *A Trip to Scarborough*, his adaptation of *The Relapse* by Vanbrugh, was put on, and followed in May of that year by *The School for Scandal*, which ran for twenty nights on its first presentation and for sixty-one the next season. *The Duenna* had been acted for seventy-five nights. Two years later, in October 1779, Sheridan produced *The Critic*.

Then, at the age of twenty-eight, manager of a theatre and the most talked-of dramatist of his time, he stopped writing plays. In 1780, he entered Parliament as member for Stafford, and began a new and equally brilliant career as an orator. He lived till he was sixty-five ; less than half that number of years had been sufficient for him to earn his place as one of the foremost writers of English artificial comedy, and of the political work which filled the latter half of his life, little but report remains. His speeches won a great reputation ; the most famous of all, that on the Begums, delivered during the impeachment of

Hastings, was said to have lasted five and a half hours. But we have no versions that pretend either to accuracy or fullness, and there is no known reason why Sheridan so early abandoned authorship. It is possible that he found the state of the theatre un-conducive to writing ; it is possible that the plight of his country made politics seem more worth while. It is, however, more probable that Sheridan was not, fundamentally, creative. Three years produced all his plays—an adaptation, a farce, two comedies, an operette, a burlesque and a translation. The variety may show that he did not feel at home in the theatre. Certainly, there are many stories of his inability to finish a play to time. We are told that while the audience were actually assembling for the first performance of *Pizarro* the company were rehearsing all that was then written and that Mrs. Siddons only received her part for the fifth act by the end of the fourth. It is related of *The Critic* that, two days before its production, the last scene was not finished and that Sheridan was only persuaded to finish it by being first lured and then locked into a room where there were a fire, food and drink. This may be true, but authors were not averse from having such tales circulated. Congreve always liked to be thought a dilettante and many men feel it enhances the brilliance of their work if it is supposed to be casually or swiftly written. It is more likely that Sheridan's gift was more constructive than creative, for his " borrowings " are famous and in *The Critic* he is at some pains to rebut the charge of plagiarism. It may be that he turned from his mother's heritage of literary talent to that of his

father (who taught elocution) and enjoyed delivering the speeches he had himself constructed.

When he had been in Parliament for twenty-nine years, Drury Lane was burnt down, with great loss to him. He was an incompetent manager and a supposed play by Shakespeare, *Vortigem and Rowena*, had increased his failure. He could not raise enough money to be returned for Stafford and his second wife, whom he had married in 1795, "added her own extravagances to his," of which betting at Brooks and the baleful friendship of the Prince of Wales were prime causes. Drury Lane theatre was rebuilt in 1812, at a cost of £40,000. Sheridan, whose plays had added to its lustre, owed not much more than £4,000. Yet he died with bailiffs in the house. The Regent and others sent money at the last moment, but it was too late and he died on 7th July, 1816. The nation was then able to honour him with burial in Westminster Abbey, where those who had been behind-hand in easing his debts were in the fore to pay their respects.

2. LIFE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Sheridan was born more than fifty years after the death of Dryden ; he died only twelve years before Ibsen was born. Yet so loose is the term " eighteenth century ", and so typical of it are his plays thought to be, that he seems nearer to the former than to the latter. It is true that he lived in the age of Dr. Johnson, Reynolds and Chippendale ; Frederick the Great and Catherine the Great were ruling abroad. It seems an age of silken elegance and courtly intrigue, from which the names of Tennyson, Macaulay and Cardinal

Newman are a far cry. Yet these three were old enough to remember when Sheridan died, and though 1777 saw the production of *The School for Scandal*, it was also the year in which Watts invented a steam-engine. Coming events were casting their shadow before, and towards the end of the century change was swift and various. The first half of the eighteenth century had been prosperous, but the later years, as the history of the time shows, was marked plainly by a need for economy. We find that, in 1785, pantaloons were replacing knee-breeches and when, by 1793, these had descended to the ankle, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the saving of silk stockings was as much the cause as the result. The shortage of flour, due to the wars, abolished wigs two years later. As clothes changed, so did customs. Both became nearer those of our times, for as fashions became simpler, so did the manners. London, too, underwent changes. Sir Walter Besant, in his *Survey of London*, states that "all that area which lies between Lincoln's Inn Fields in the East and Park Lane in the North was filled up with the houses of the nobility and country gen try." St. James's, Berkeley and Bloomsbury Squares had been begun in the previous century, but now were added Soho, Cavendish, Portman, Grosvenor and Hanover Squares. What is known as the West End began to be built. The West End is remarkable because, having no municipality, it has no civic buildings. At this time, it was "a collection of Parishes to which the principal residents came for three or four months in the year ... In every respect, the West End was separate and distinct from the

City." The gates and walls were abolished and hanging signs were removed in 1766. The unhealthy Fleet Ditch was covered up, and the prisons destroyed by the Gordon rioters were rebuilt, and built better. London was becoming cleaner and lighter. The old customs which had survived into a new way of living were swept away and London became recognisable as the city we know. This expansion spread outside the capital, for the wars had given a set-back to foreign travel and forced English people to go to English resorts. As the result, many towns flourished and such watering places as Brighton and Bath to this day bear witness, in their architectures and planning, of the prosperity which was once theirs.

But the wars also made this prosperity short-lived. In 1795 the King was pelted by a hungry mob as he drove to open Parliament, and the same year the Privy Council begged all to abjure from pies and white bread and to make only rye loaves. In seven years, the price of butter, sugar and meat doubled. Life was forced to be simpler. But if it lost thereby in elegance, it gained in sincerity. The passing of polite formality may be deplored, but with it went also a great deal of the backbiting, malice and slander which mark eighteenth-century literature. There was slowly breaking down that segregation of the sexes, which always results in the courtliness paid to women by men being atoned for by extreme coarseness when they are among themselves. Even in the theatres, the women sat apart, in the boxes, while the wits used the pit and met afterwards to discuss the play in coffee-houses, where women did not go. The coffee-

houses were the great social feature of the time and several London clubs are descended from them. Most of them were in St. James' Street, which contained White's, the Cocoa Tree and Brooks's. The chief resort of literary men was Will's, though Sheridan used the Piazza.

The present play is full of contemporary theatrical detail and abounds in topical allusion, but it should be supplemented by *The School for Scandal*, which deals exclusively with the social life of a period that faded almost as soon as it flowered.

3. *THE CRITIC* :

ITS CONSTRUCTION AND CHARACTERISATION

It is not sufficiently remembered that *The Critic* was first performed as an after-play to *Hamlet*. Much that seems merely tediously allusive becomes definitely amusing when this is borne in mind. Tilburina's entry "mad according to custom," her burlesque of Ophelia's speech, and the references to saving "a description of the rising sun" would all gain added point from following on *Hamlet*. The audience would have heard, a few hours previously, several of the quotations in their proper context, and we may perhaps allow ourselves to imagine that what the painters did for Tilbury Fort had already been seen as Elsinore. We must in any case remember that a play which seems to us short would, in a programme which included *Hamlet*, not unnaturally have been found long; it is noticeable that, contrary to custom, there is no epilogue.

There is not very much action, in the theatrical sense of the word, about the play ; of construction there is even less. We are introduced to one Dangle, a man who is less a lover of the drama than of the gossip and glitter that goes with the stage. He spends the morning collecting a party to visit a rehearsal of a play written by one of his friends. In the second act, the rehearsal is witnessed and *The Critic* ends. With the exception of Puff and Dangle, any character could be deleted without interfering with the action ; others could be added. It would be possible, for instance, for Dangle to be visited by the manager of the theatre, anxious to obtain his views on *The Spanish Armada*. He could be invaded by actors seeking parts in the play. Tilburina could voice her opinions to Mr. Dangle, who, we may be sure, would be a ready listener. It would make no difference. The characters do not develop nor do their relationships alter, in the course of the play. They are types and they remain true to type. The humour which we to-day find in *The Critic* is due to the fact that Dangle, Fretful and Puff are eternal types. Of plot there is little and the story is slight. The play reaches no conclusion—even the rehearsal is incomplete. " So, ladies and gentlemen, if you please, we'll rehearse this piece again to-morrow."

But if the play lacks elaborate construction and seems to consist of the comings and goings of a number of people in the first act, preparatory to watching a play in the second, it is worth noticing how Sheridan manages these comings and goings. " Mr. and Mrs. Dangle discovered at breakfast " rings up his curtain

with the main figure already on the stage ; the first six lines reveal his character ; to that his wife is a foil. Sneer visits him to obtain recommendation for two plays ; Sir Fretful Plagiary comes to ask his opinion of one he already had and they thus "inform us of Dangle's past and future activity ; as to his present, Puff is coming to take him to a rehearsal of yet another play. This procession is broken by a change of scene and by the diversion of the Italian players. These occur between the exit of Sir Fretful and the arrival of Puff, who never meets him. It will be observed that the latter at once takes the former's place in the play.

If everything not essential to the action were omitted, there would be neither the Italian players nor Mrs. Dangle. Sneer could go, Sir Fretful need not appear and Puff's exposition of his profession would vanish. If it were only necessary that the way be prepared for the rehearsal, most of the allusions could be cut, for Sheridan, avowedly satirising the theatre, took in much else in his stride. He attacked not only the stage of his time, but the people who made it what it was and the circumstances which made them what they were. All the characters set themselves up as critics of something or other in the play, but Sheridan is the chief critic of all, and this must be urged in his defence if it is held that, compared to his other plays, *The Critic* consists merely of a series of sketches, loosely strung together. In writing this, he was producing neither a comedy of intrigue, as in *The School for Scandal*, nor a farce of brisk action, as in *The Rivals*. Both these forms of drama require elaborate plotting for their success. But a burlesque,

as is *The Critic*, must be direct. Intricacy blunts the point. The audience ask only that the subject of satire be one that provides ready laughter and allows easy recognition. These demands they found more readily satisfied in *The Critic* than we can hope to, since time has obscured allusions that were then topical. On the other hand, the very slenderness of action in this play allows for the introduction of speeches and persons which have nothing to do with the plot, but which are fit matter for raillery. As long as the subject being satirised is made clear, and Sheridan made this clear at the start, variations on the theme help ; in a more complex situation they would hinder. The speeches of Sir Fretful and Puff are, therefore, not to be dismissed as padding. They are the decorations of the edifice which, in the second act, Sheridan demolished. If, to us, the effect is not proportionate to the energy, that is because our own stage is freer of the abuses which Sheridan suffered. We must remember that it is due to the efforts both of him and of others that they have vanished, and to this we must know something of the history of the English stage.

4. THE STAGE BEFORE SHERIDAN

Most of the plays which we call " Elizabethan " were written in James I's reign. " Between 1600 and 1625", says Professor Saintsbury, " all the best of our dramatists, with the exception of Marlowe, were working more or less simultaneously." One of these, George Chapman, covers the whole period. He was born before *Gorboduc* and *Gammer Gurton's*

Needle, the two plays which are considered as marking the start of English drama. He was nearly thirty when *Tamburlane* appeared and he finished Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*. He survived Shakespeare, Beaumont, Fletcher and Middleton, dying in 1634, six years before the theatres were closed on account of the plague.

They remained shut for twenty years. When they opened again, it was on Restoration England. Charles II licensed two theatres and warranted actresses, the first of whom appeared as Desdemona. It was a very different epoch from that of 1640. Yet, no drama had been written in those twenty years and two tragedies of Chapman had been published as late as 1654. This may explain why new dramatists felt born in the shadow of the Elizabethans and why Dryden, who died nearly a hundred years after Shakespeare, so often refers to him, to Fletcher and to Ben Jonson. To understand the eighteenth-century drama, therefore, it is essential to have some knowledge of that of the previous century.

It opened with tragedy in full flower. Shakespeare's first play had not been written till 1594 ; when the Queen died, his best work was yet to come, and Ben Jonson had written little. His first play, *Every Man in His Humour*, was acted in by Shakespeare himself in 1596, and his last three appeared between 1625 and 1633. The two greatest tragedies outside Shakespeare, Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* and *The White Devil*, were not printed till 1612 and 1623 respectively. The Elizabethan drama in short lasted for fifty years, of which only ten were in the sixteenth century.

The seed was sown then, but the harvest only came later.

Here is not the place to discuss that wealth at length, but it may be stated that Fletcher died in 1625, and that after him decadence set in. This is natural. The Elizabethan style, in the hands of any but masters, could degenerate into bombast and brutality. The looseness of its structure could lead to incoherence, and those who sought to remedy this often went to the opposite extreme and produced plays so stiff that they could not move. As the form altered so did also the temper. Grandeur either softened into pathos (from which even the best of Fletcher, such as *The Maid's Tragedy*, is not free) or else, conscious of its weakness, sought to impress with ghoulishness. Horror was piled upon horror, in plays which became collectively known as the Tragedy of Blood. Shakespeare himself has been criticised for allowing Gloucester to be blinded on the stage in *King Lear*, and there are many whom the terrors of Webster make blind to his poetry. It is perhaps not without interest that in his later plays, Shakespeare showed a disinclination for tragedy. Though the subjects of *Cymbeline* and *A Winter's Tale* are tragic, he treated them so that they came to fortunate conclusions. The looseness of the verse in these plays may also be noticed, for the verse of Davenant, Suckling and other Caroline dramatists is of an extraordinary laxness. Consequently, it began to be felt that tragedy needed discipline. The craze for the new couplet seemed the remedy, and heroic tragedy, the answer to neo-Elizabethan blank verse, which had all the faults and

none of the virtues of its originals. Comedy also suffered a change. The influence of the masque is visible in *The Tempest*. Ben Jonson wrote many masques, working with the artist Inigo Jones till they quarrelled. Jonson said that "next himself, only Fletcher and Chapman could make a masque." He may have been right; it is hard to judge these productions, for the text cannot do justice to a form of drama in which music, spectacle and dancing were at least equally important. They can, however, be regarded as the forerunners of opera, and when opera became established the masque disappeared. Dramatic performances were at this time the special entertainment of the Court. It can be understood that pomp, processions and prettiness were the ingredients most needed.

Another court influence, less wholesome than the masque, affected the lighter stage of the Restoration. There is no profit in arguing whether the ribaldry of these comedies sprang from reaction from Puritanism or vice versa, but it is a plain fact that the plays of Congreve, Wycherley and Etherege were all tainted with coarseness and brutality; nor were Vanbrugh and Farquhar immune. The result was the publication in 1698 of Jeremy Collier's *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, which had profound effect on the drama.

The high spirits of the Restoration were sobering. The Augustan age was one of order and construction. In literature, much store was set by form. The exuberance of the Elizabethans was disapproved as much as was the Restoration's lack of restraint de-

plored. Rebuked by Collier, the dramatists sought to cleanse comedy and improve drama. We now may smile at their assurance and at their seriousness—the more so as we have their works before us and can see that *The School for Scandal* at its best does not beat Congreve's *The Way of the World* for wit, nor Goldsmith's *The Good-Natured Man* touch Farquhar's *The Beaux' Stratagem* for humour. But we owe the improving Augustans a debt. They tidied literature, they disciplined the drama, in insisting on rules and refinement, and although it may be that they tamed the drama overmuch, it can hardly be imagined that its progress would have been more profitable had its lawlessness been unchecked.

Reformers, however, usually go too far. To us it seems amazing that the strange mixture of heroics and stiff verse should seem a refinement on the grandeur of Elizabethan drama at its best. But that it was thought so is proved by the versions of Shakespeare's plays made by Davenant, Garrick and even Dryden. Ears had, however, been wearied by bad blank verse and undistinguished prose. On them, the neat pointed couplet fell gratefully. As for the content, English audiences at no time have shown distaste for rant, and any excesses made by Heroic Tragedy in this direction, were more than atoned for by the comedy of the time, which, as Sneer says in *The Critic*, was "always moral at least, if not entertaining."

5. DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In Elizabethan times, the theatre was the resort of the people ; in the Restoration, the amusement of the

court. But in the eighteenth century, the most influential grade in society was ceasing to be the aristocracy. The middle-classes were taking their place, and they had their effect on the drama.

London had more theatres than it had during the Restoration, but it was only at Drury Lane and Covent Garden that the spoken drama could legally be presented. Hence, it came to be called "the legitimate." Other houses could only offer musical entertainments, burlettas or spectacular displays. To meet the increased patronage of the middle-classes, Covent Garden was rebuilt in 1792 ; two years later, Drury Lane was enlarged to hold over three thousand spectators. To the fact that only at these two theatres could a play be performed as it was written, authors now had added the discouragement that horsemanship, aquatics and other spectacles had to be called in to make productions pay. Niceties of acting were lost in such huge auditoriums, which were then illuminated only by candlelight, and plays had to rely on broad strokes and straightforward humour. The popular style of acting was another encumbrance to authors, who did not feel inspired to write brilliant dialogue, knowing that stereotyped delivery would make it sound worse than hack-work. There is much contemporary criticism of the actors of this period. Thus, Cumberland, observes that " Quin . . . with very little variation of cadence, rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified indifference," while Mrs. Cibber's voice, " though it did not wound the ear, wearied it." Garrick, however, was alive in every muscle and every feature and he changed the conventional declamation

into an easier and more expressive style. He also, in 1762, rid the stage of all people but the players and in 1765 instituted footlights.

Dress was sumptuous. It was customary for nobles to give clothes to the actors, and we find that Queen Adelaide presented her coronation dress, while Charles II's robes were worn by Betterton. But little attempt was made to secure historical accuracy. Traditional dresses existed for such characters as Othello and Shylock ; but Cleopatra might poison herself in panniers and wig, and Mercutio, as acted by Woodward, wore cravat, coat and knee-breeches. Prints show Garrick acting Shakespeare in eighteenth-century costume and even when he capped Macklin's innovation of a kilt for Macbeth by having " ancient British costumes " for *King Lear*, it is possible that he was the only one to be so dressed. Contemporary records show that, while the star might have correct clothes, any costume would suffice for the rest of the cast. As for the actresses, they were unwilling to wear anything but the latest fashion, whatever the place or the period of the play in which they appeared. Add to this the fact that scenery was not elaborate and that the furnishing of a stage was elementary, and it will be seen that the productions of the time were by no means as lavish and life-like as those which we now accept as a matter of course.

These are some of the faults at which Sheridan poked fun in *The Critic*. But though tragedy was in a decline because the spirit of the age could only have produced it on a classical model, comedy was not moribund—not even really morbid. Sheridan and

Goldsmith are usually regarded as lone flowers in the weedy garden of eighteenth-century drama. But there were others that blossomed, even if more humbly, and some of the plays of this period which can still be read with pleasure are Mrs. Inchbald's *I'll Tell You What*, Cumberland's *West Indian* (1771), Mrs. Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem* (1780) and *The Mourning Bride* (1780), and Holcroft's *Road to Ruin* (1792). A play by Carey deserves mention on account of its name—*Chronohotonthologos*, and it should be remembered that Fielding, by writing a piece in which Walpole is represented as silencing patriots with bribes, caused the institution of a censor. These plays exist, and to mention their existence in no way detracts from Sheridan's achievement. He and Goldsmith stand out because their gifts were greater, and because also they withstood the emotional softness of their time. When tragedy is inarticulate, emotion finds vent in comedy as sentimentality, and the sentimental comedy was a growth peculiar to the eighteenth century.

The term has a meaning over and above the separate meanings of the two words, "sentimental" and "comedy/" and it crops up so often, in play and prologue, essay and epilogue, that it is essential this meaning be grasped. Towards the end of the century, "social and economic conditions were moving in the direction of a change greater than any since the break-up of the Middle Ages." The early and middle decades had been periods of prosperity, but the latter were marked by crisis. The middle classes, who had risen during the earlier years, brought to their new

position all their heavy and slightly hypocritical qualities, which the older aristocracy were too weak to repudiate and too impoverished to refine. Manners therefore, relaxed, while morals became more severe. Squeamish, but unrefined, the new audiences had no taste for the old comedies of manners. They liked farce, but at the same time had a horror of anything that was "low." In short, though folly and vice might be represented, their inevitable consequences could not be put on the stage. Some redeeming trait had to be made manifest in the last act, some piece of mock modesty had to triumph.

This, coinciding with the early struggling for expression of romanticism, led to comedy becoming watered down and sentimentalised. Prevailing conditions being uncongenial to creative work of the first order, dramatists found it easier to ransack the Elizabethans and Carolines for plays which they could adapt. Jonson, Shirley, Beaumont and Fletcher, above all Shakespeare in his romantic comedies, were all popular once they had been altered to suit the false morality of the time. It must be remembered that, as the first act of *The Critic* shows, there was uneasiness at home. Abroad, the French Revolution was in the air and in the year that *She Stoops to Conquer* was produced, the American War of Independence had begun. People's nerves were on edge, and their minds were hazy ; they did not wish to face any facts they disliked ; they wanted to alter them if they could and dream about them in a softer light. Clarity of thought gave way to a misty emotionalism, and comedy, losing its sharp edge, became senti-

mental. It triumphed in the work of such writers as Cumberland, Kelly and Reynolds. If this tendency had been allowed to go too far, the spirit of laughter would have been crushed. But in 1759, Goldsmith attacked the sentimental playwrights in *The Present State of Polite Learning*. Nine years later he put his theories into practice with *The Good-Natur'd Man*, which dared step out of the conventional at a time when convention was choking itself. Sheridan followed with *The Rivals* in 1775. Other writers had protested against the falsification of character engendered by the sentimental comedy, but Sheridan and Goldsmith, by virtue of their prestige and position, carried more weight, though they were neither alone nor first in the fray.

6. THE STAGE AFTER SHERIDAN

The results of that fray seem at first sight depressing, for nothing took the place of what had been destroyed. For a hundred years after *The School for Scandal* no comedy of manners appeared on the English stage. But this was due less to the authors, less even to the stage, than to the conditions of the time. The nineteenth century was sixteen years old when Sheridan died and, if we look at some of the changes which took place in those years, we may find some clue as to why he abandoned dramatic writing. Change is in the air before it becomes apparent, and it is not without significance that the last work with which Sheridan was connected, a translation of *Pizarro*, appeared on the stage in the last year of the

eighteenth, and not in the early years of the nineteenth, century.

The neat fixed world which he knew was crumbling. The city which in 1800 contained only a million inhabitants was increasing till there were two million when Victoria came to the throne. London had expanded—and so had the National Debt. In 1793, it was £250,000,000 ; the Napoleonic Wars added to it a further £600,000,000. A new and larger audience had invaded the theatre, but up till 1843, Drury Lane and Covent Garden still enjoyed the monopoly created by Charles II. Despite this, there were ten theatres in 1807. They were limited to the production of spectacles and burlettas. A burletta had to have at least five songs, but by 1818 this rule had been so stretched that it was possible for the " minor " theatres to engage leading comedy-actors for productions of which the brilliance made them outstanding dramatic events. Shakespeare's plays were even produced as burlettas. We may read that *Othello* was given " with an accompaniment of chords struck every five minutes and quite inaudible at that." *Richard III* was put on " with only a musical instrument, not audible beyond the orchestra, slightly touched." This was in 1820, but the tendency must have made itself felt in Sheridan's time. Small wonder that the dramatist-manager, whose own *School for Scandal* was played as a burletta in 1826, should have felt the times were out of joint. He had been the leading playwright of his day, while he might still have been regarded as a young man of promise. It is not unreasonable to suppose that he

felt it wiser to attack a new profession while at the height of his powers than to struggle with conditions which had no use for them. Mrs. Siddons, it should be noticed, retired in 1812, and of her brother, Cumberland in his *Theatrical Retrospections* observes that " Kemble struggles against a torrent of mummery and machinery which the circumstances of the times he lives in and of the stage he treads render it impossible for him to do more than struggle with." Kemble had first acted at Covent Garden in 1809. That year was theatrically memorable for other things. Drury Lane was burnt ; gas was first used for lighting, and the O.P. riots occurred. E. B. Watson writes that " at the turn of the century, the theatre succumbed to the rabble as a weakened constitution might to a virulent disease " (*From Sheridan to Robertson*). Nowhere is this more clear than in these famous riots. The " rabble " resented an increase of sixpence in the pit and insisted on the Old Prices. Largely owing to Kemble's tactlessness, rioting lasted sixty-one nights. The actors were driven from the stage, and snuff and sparrows were let loose among the audience, who were even threatened with a water-engine.

This, and the fact that the riots were successful, may explain why the upper classes kept away from the theatres in the early years of the new century. They frequented only the Italian opera at the King's in the Haymarket. Yet even this house, between 1820 and 1827, lost £3000 annually. Neither Queen Anne nor her successors went much to the theatre ; fashion thus had no model to follow. As for the lower and middle classes, they imposed their taste but were

unable equally to bestow their patronage. The managers, therefore, could not afford the lavish productions which alone attracted them. Hard times followed the Napoleonic wars; respectability followed the Restoration. The clergy were denouncing the theatre, and novels were enhancing the library. The nineteenth century is the era of the printed word, and after Sheridan no man of letters appeared in the theatre till Wilde. Side by side with the decay of the theatre, we may trace the growth of the club and the increase of domestic comfort.

The great Kemble was forced to maintain three separate companies, for tragedy, comedy and opera, in an effort to attract the public to Covent Garden. Yet Harris, the manager of that theatre, declared that from 1809 to 1821, not one shilling had been made on regular drama, pantomime and spectacle alone proving profitable. Even at a small theatre in the Haymarket, Kemble needed *Mother Goose* to make *Hamlet* successful. The reason for this state of affairs may perhaps be found in another observation of Harris; "apart from the acting of a few geniuses like Siddons, Kemble, Elliston and Mathews, there could have been comparatively little to attract a fastidious taste in the best performances of tragedy and comedy."

The minor theatres, however, having to compete with the complacent patents, had more initiative. In 1831, it was lamented that whereas Covent Garden was offering "a mere spectacle accompanied by every kind of catch-shilling gew-gaw," the minor theatres were showing *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Richard III*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. In

our own day, it may be remarked, we find Drury Lane the home of musical comedy, while the Embassy and provincial repertory theatres are the true "nursery" of drama.

English opera was licensed at the Lyceum in 1810 ; His Majesty's, the Prince of Wales's and the Princess's were built, but there were no new theatres between 1845 and 1860. Plays, perhaps owing to their scarcity, perhaps because of the lavishness of their staging, began to have long runs. The normal run for a play in the Restoration period was three days. *The School for Scandal* was accounted a success, and it ran for twenty nights, whilst *The Beggar's Opera* held the record with a month. But Sheridan would have seen between 1788 and 1795, that productions at Sadler's Wells lasted from the April till October. In the '20s *Paul Pry* ran at the Haymarket theatre for 114 nights, the whole of the season.

These runs made possible increased care in production. Kemble's *King John* of 1823 is regarded as the first completely historical production, and Kean became famous as much for his sumptuous staging as for his acting. Their methods were followed by Irving and Tree. Macready, at Covent Garden in 1837, won praise for his artistic taste, but it is the Vestris who perhaps left most mark on stage-craft. For eight years at the Olympic they worked for refinement and naturalness to such effect that it was declared that "the *mise-en-scene* was never perfect or in good taste till Madame Vestris." They reduced the length of performance which till then had lasted six hours, and set up many new standards.

But these were improvements in presentation. Authors were not so active. Finding that burlettas restricted their talent, " the great forces in the literary world had long before abandoned the stage." When the minor theatres were legalised in 1843, they were " too busy to turn back simply because an act had been passed." Dickens, Browning and Thackeray had all left the theatre in dismay. Playhouses thus offered Shakespeare revivals, of which Phelps' Sadlers Wells season in 1844 and Kean's at the Princess's from 1850-58 were outstanding; Queen Victoria patronised the latter, and her own interest drew people back to the theatre. But if something modern was wanted, it had to be brought from France. The English stage favoured bombast in tragedy and battles of wit in comedy ; these styles were out of tune with the times, but in the French plays were found naturalistic dialogue, economy of plot and a vitality which all suited the age, and brought forth a new style of acting. French work held sway till such pieces as Robertson's *Caste* (1867), *Diplomacy* (1878) and Pinero's *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* showed that new life had evolved a new drama. Realism was a reaction from the romantic substitution of the beautiful for the true. It swept in with Brieux, Strindberg and Ibsen, whose *Doll's House* was first played in 1879. Artificial comedy flowered again in the comedies of Wilde, but it is naturalism which is the keynote of the new drama, as found in Galsworthy, Shaw and many others, and it was struggling to be heard even while the author of *The Critic* was denouncing the old.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT DRURY-LANE THEATRE,
OCTOBER 30, 1779

<i>Dangle</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. DODD.
<i>Sneer</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. PALMER.
<i>Sir Fretful Plagiary</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. PARSONS.
<i>Signor Pasticcio</i>		<i>Ritornello</i>	-	-	Mr. DELPINI.
<i>Interpreter</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. BADDELEY.
<i>Under Prompter</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. PHILLIMORE.
<i>Puff</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. KING.
<i>Mrs. Dangle</i>	-	-	-	-	Mrs. HOPKINS.
<i>Italian Girls</i>	-	-	-	-	Miss FIELD <i>and the</i> Miss AB RAMS.

CHARACTERS OF THE TRAGEDY

<i>Lord Burleigh</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. MOODY.
<i>Governor of Tilbury Fort</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. WRKJHTEN.
<i>Earl of Leicester</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. FARREN.
<i>Sir Walter Raleigh</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. BURTON.
<i>Sir Christopher Hatton</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. WALDIION.
<i>Master of the Horse</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. KKNNY.
<i>Beef-eater</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. WRIGHT.
<i>Justice</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. PACKER.
<i>Son</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. LAMASH.
<i>Constable</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. FAWCETT.
<i>Thames</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. GAWDRY.
<i>Don Ferolo</i>		<i>Whiskerandos</i>	-	-	Mr. BANNISTER, jun..
<i>1st Niece</i>	-	-	-	-	Miss COLLET.
<i>2nd Niece</i>	-	-	-	-	Miss KIRBY.
<i>Justice's Lady</i>	-	-	-	-	Mrs. JOHNSTON.
<i>Confidant</i>	-	-	-	-	Mrs. BRADSHAW.
<i>Tilburina</i>	-	-	-	-	Miss POPE.

*Guards, Constables, Servants, Chorus, Rivers,
Attendants, etc. etc.*

TO MRS. GREVILLE

MADAM,

In requesting your permission to address the following pages to you, which, as they aim themselves to be critical, require every protection and allowance that approving taste or friendly prejudice can give them, I yet ventured to mention no other motive than the gratification of private friendship and esteem. Had I suggested a hope that your implied approbation would give a sanction to their defects, your particular reserve, and dislike to the reputation of critical taste, as well as of poetical talent, would have made you refuse the protection of your name to such a purpose. However, I am not so ungrateful as now to attempt to combat this disposition in you. I shall not here presume to argue that the present state of poetry claims and expects every assistance that taste and example can afford it; nor endeavour to prove that a fastidious concealment of the most elegant productions of judgment and fancy is an ill return for the possession of those endowments. Continue to deceive yourself in the idea that you are known only to be eminently admired and regarded for the valuable qualities that attach private friendships, and the graceful

talents that adorn conversation. Enough of what you have written has stolen into full public notice to answer my purpose ; and you will, perhaps, be the only person, conversant in elegant literature, who shall read this address and not perceive that by publishing your particular approbation of the following drama, I have a more interested object than to boast the true respect and regard with which

I have the honour to be,

Madam,

Your very sincere,

And obedient humble servant,

R. B. SHERIDAN

PROLOGUE

BY THE HONOURABLE RICHARD FITZPATRICK

THE sister Muses, whom these realms obey,
Who o'er the drama hold divided sway,
Sometimes, by evil counsellors, 'tis said,
Like earth-born potentates have been misled.
In those gay days of wickedness and wit,
When Villiers criticised what Dryden writ,
The tragic queen, to please a tasteless crowd,
Had learn'd to bellow, rant, and roar so loud,
That frighten'd Nature, her best friend before,
The blust'ring beldam's company forswore.
Her comic sister, who had wit, 'tis true,
With all her merits, had her failings too ;
And would sometimes in mirthful moments use
A style too flippant for a well-bred muse :
Then female modesty abash'd began
To seek the friendly refuge of the fan ;
Awhile behind that slight intrenchment stood,
Till driv'n from thence, she left the stage for
good.
In our more pious, and far chaster times,
These sure no longer are the Muse's crimes !
But some complain that, former faults to shun,
The reformation to extremes has run.

The frantic hero's wild delirium past,
Now insipidity succeeds bombast;
So slow Melpomene's cold numbers creep,
Here dulness seems her drowsy court to keep,
And we are scarce awake, whilst you are fast
asleep.

Thalia, once so ill-behaved and rude,
Reform'd, is now become an arrant prude ;
Retailing nightly to the yawning pit
The purest morals, undefiled by wit !
Our author offers, in these motley scenes,
A slight remonstrance to the drama's queens :
Nor let the goddesses be over nice ;
Free spoken subjects give the best advice.
Although not quite a novice in his trade,
His cause to-night requires no common aid.
To this, a friendly, just, and pow'rful court,
I come ambassador to beg support.
Can he undaunted brave the critic's rage ?
In civil broils with brother bards engage ?
Hold forth their errors to the public eye,
Nay more, e'en newspapers themselves defy ?
Say, must his single arm encounter all ?
By numbers vanquish'd, e'en the brave may fall ;
And though no leader should success distrust,
Whose troops are willing, and whose cause is just
To bid such hosts of angry foes defiance,
His chief dependence must be, your alliance.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A Room in Dangle's House

Mr. and Mrs. DANGLE at breakfast,
and reading newspapers

Dangle. [Reading.] "*Brutus to Lord North*"
—"Letter the second on the State of the Army"—
Pshaw! "*To the first L—dash D. of the A—dash*
Y."—"Genuine Extract of a Letter from St.
Kitt's."—"Coxheath Intelligence."—"It is now
confidently asserted that Sir Charles Hardy."—
Pshaw!—Nothing but about the fleet and the
nation!—and I hate all politics but theatrical
politics.—Where's the *Morning Chronicle*?

Mrs. Dangle. Yes, that's your gazette.

Dangle. So, here we have it.—"*Theatrical*
intelligence extraordinary.—We hear there is a new
tragedy in rehearsal at Drury-Lane Theatre, called
the Spanish Armada, said to be written by Mr. Puff,
a gentleman well known in the theatrical world : if
we may allow ourselves to give credit to the report of
the performers, who, truth to say, are in general but
indifferent judges, this piece abounds with the most
striking and received beauties of modern com-

position."—So ! I am very glad my friend Puff's tragedy is in such forwardness.—Mrs. Dangle, my dear, you will be very glad to hear that Puff's tragedy—

Mrs. Dangle. Lord, Mr. Dangle, why will you plague me about such nonsense ?—Now the plays are begun I shall have no peace.—Isn't it sufficient to make yourself ridiculous by your passion for the theatre, without continually teasing me to join you ? Why can't you ride your hobby-horse without desiring to place me on a pillion behind you, Mr. Dangle ?

Dangle. Nay, my dear, I was only going to read——

Mrs. Dangle. No, no ; you will never read anything that's worth listening to :—you hate to hear about your country ; there are letters every day with Roman signatures, demonstrating the certainty of an invasion, and proving that the nation is utterly undone.—But you never will read anything to entertain one.

Dangle. What has a woman to do with politics, Mrs. Dangle %

Mrs. Dangle. And what have you to do with the theatre, Mr. Dangle ? Why should you affect the character of a critic ? I have no patience with you !—haven't you made yourself the jest of all your acquaintance by your interference in matters where you have no business ? Are not you called a theatrical quidnunc, and a mock Maecenas to second-hand authors ?

Dangle. True ; my power with the managers is pretty notorious ; but is it no credit to have applications from all quarters for my interest.—From lords to recommend fiddlers, from ladies to get boxes, from authors to get answers, and from actors to get engagements ?

Mrs. Dangle. Yes, truly ; you have contrived to get a share in all the plague and trouble of theatrical property, without the profit, or even the credit of the abuse that attends it.

Dangle. I am sure, Mrs. Dangle, you are no loser by it, however ; *you* have all the advantages of it:—mightn't you, last winter, have had the reading of the new pantomime a fortnight previous to its performance ? And doesn't Mr. Fosbrook let you take places for a play before it is advertised, and set you down for a box for every new piece through the season ? And didn't my friend, Mr. Smatter, dedicate his last farce to you at my particular request, Mrs. Dangle ?

Mrs. Dangle. Yes; but wasn't the farce damn'd, Mr. Dangle ? And to be sure it is extremely pleasant to have one's house made the motley rendezvous of all the lackeys of literature :—the very high 'change of trading authors and jobbing critics !—Yes, my drawing-room is an absolute register-office for candidate actors and poets without character ; then to be continually alarmed with misses and ma'ams piping hysteric changes on Juliets and Dorindas, Pollys and Ophelias ; and the very furniture trembling at the

probationary starts and unprovoked rants of would-be Richards and Hamlets !—And what is worse than all, now that the manager has monopolised the Opera-house, haven't we the signors and signoras calling here, sliding their smooth semibreves, and gargling glib divisions in their outlandish throats—with foreign emissaries and French spies, for aught I know, disguised like fiddlers and figure-dancers ?

Dangle. Mercy ! Mrs. Dangle !

Mrs. Dangle. And to employ yourself so idly at such an alarming crisis as this too—when, if you had the least spirit, you would have been at the head of one of the Westminster associations—or trailing a volunteer pike in the Artillery Ground ?—But you—o'my conscience, I believe if the French were landed to-morrow, your first inquiry would be whether they had brought a theatrical troop with them.

Dangle. Mrs. Dangle, it does not signify—I say the stage is "*the Mirror of Nature*," and the actors are "*the Abstract and brief Chronicles of the Time*;"—and, pray, what can a man of sense study better ?—Besides, you will not easily persuade me that there is no credit or importance in being at the head of a band of critics, who take upon them to decide for the whole town, whose opinion and patronage all writers solicit, and whose recommendation no manager dares refuse.

Mrs. Dangle. Ridiculous !—Both managers and authors of the least merit laugh at your

pretensions.—The *public* is their *critic*—without whose fair approbation they know no play can rest on the stage, and with whose applause they welcome such attacks as yours, and laugh at the malice of them, where they can't at the wit.

Dangle. Very well, madam—very well.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Mr. Sneer, sir, to wait on you.

Dangle. O, show Mr. Sneer up. [*Exit* SERVANT.]
Plague on't, now we must appear loving and affectionate, or Sneer will hitch us into a story.

Mrs. Dangle. With all my heart; you can't be more ridiculous than you are.

Dangle. You are enough to provoke——

Enter Mr. SNEER

Ha ! my dear Sneer, I am vastly glad to see you.
My dear, here's Mr. Sneer.

Mrs. Dangle. Good morning to you, sir.

Dangle. Mrs. Dangle and I have been diverting ourselves with the papers. Pray, Sneer, won't you go to Drury Lane theatre the first night of Puff's tragedy ?

Sneer. Yes ; but I suppose one shan't be able to get in, for on the first night of a new piece they always fill the house with orders to support it. But here, Dangle, I have brought you two pieces, one of which you must exert yourself to make the managers accept, I can tell you that; for 'tis written by a person of consequence.

Dangle. So ! now my plagues are beginning.

Sneer. Ay, I am glad of it, for now you'll be happy. Why, my dear Dangle, it is a pleasure to see how you enjoy your volunteer fatigue, and your solicited solicitations.

Dangle. It's a great trouble—yet, egad, it's pleasant too.—Why, sometimes of a morning I have a dozen people call on me at breakfast-time, whose faces I never saw before, nor ever desire to see again.

Sneer. That must be very pleasant, indeed !

Dangle. And not a week but I receive fifty letters, and not a line in them about any business of my own.

Sneer. An amusing correspondence !

Dangle. [Reading.] "*Bursts into tears, and exit.*" What, is this a tragedy ?

Sneer. No, that's a genteel comedy, not a translation—only *taken from the French* : it is written in a style which they have lately tried to run down ; the true sentimental, and nothing ridiculous in it from the beginning to the end.

Mrs. Dangle. Well, if they had kept to that I should not have been such an enemy to the stage ; there was some edification to be got from those pieces, Mr. Sneer !

Sneer. I am quite of your opinion, Mrs. Dangle : the theatre, in proper hands, might certainly be made the school of morality ; but now, I am sorry to say it, people seem to go there principally for their entertainment !

Mrs. Dangle. It would have been more to the credit of the managers to have kept it in the other line.

Sneer. Undoubtedly, madam ; and hereafter, perhaps, to have had it recorded, that in the midst of a luxurious and dissipated age they preserved *two* houses in the capital where the conversation was always moral, at least, if not entertaining !

Dangle. Now, egad, I think the worst alteration is in the nicety of the audience.—No double entendre, no smart innuendo admitted; even Vanbrugh and Congreve obliged to undergo a bungling reformation !

Sneer. Yes, and our prudery in this respect is just on a par with the artificial bashfulness of a courtesan, who increases the blush upon her cheek in an exact proportion to the diminution of her modesty.

Dangle. Sneer can't even give the public a good word !—But what have we here ?—This seems a very odd——

Sneer. O, that's a comedy on a very new plan ; replete with wit and mirth, yet of a most serious moral! You see it is called "*The Reformed Housebreaker*"; where, by the mere force of humour, housebreaking is put into so ridiculous a light, that if the piece has its proper run, I have no doubt but that bolts and bars will be entirely useless by the end of the season.

Dangle. Egad, this is new indeed I

Sneer. Yes ; it is written by a particular friend of mine, who has discovered that the follies and foibles of society are subjects unworthy the notice of the Comic Muse, who should be taught to stoop only at the greater vices and blacker crimes of humanity—gibbeting capital offences in five acts, and pillorying petty larcenies in two.—In short, his idea is to dramatise the penal laws, and make the stage a court of ease to the Old Bailey.

Dangle. It is truly moral.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Fretful Plagiary, sir.

Dangle. Beg him to walk up. [*Exit* SERVANT.]
Now, Mrs. Dangle, Sir Fretful Plagiary is an author to your own taste.

Mrs. Dangle. I confess he is a favourite of mine because everybody else abuses him.

Sneer. Very much to the credit of your charity, madam, if not of your judgment.

Dangle. But, egad, he allows no merit to any author but himself, that's the truth on't—though he's my friend.

Sneer. Never.—He is as envious as an old maid verging on the desperation of six-and-thirty ; and then the insidious humility with which he seduces you to give a free opinion on any of his works, can be exceeded only by the petulant arrogance with which he is sure to reject your observations.

Dangle. Very true, egad—though he is my friend.

Sneer. Then his affected contempt of all newspaper strictures ; though, at the same time, he is the sorest man alive, and shrinks like scorched parchment from the fiery ordeal of true criticism : yet he is so covetous of popularity, that he had rather be abused than not mentioned at all.

Dangle. There's no denying it—though he is my friend.

Sneer. You have read the tragedy he has just finished, haven't you ?

Dangle. O yes ; he sent it to me yesterday.

Sneer. Well, and you think it execrable, don't you ?

Dangle. Why, between ourselves, egad, I must own—though he is my friend—that it is one of the most—He's here—[*Aside*—finished and most admirable perform—

[*Sir FRETFUL, without.*] Mr. Sneer with him, did you say ?

Enter Sir FRETFUL PLAGIARY

Dangle. Ah, my dear friend !—Egad, we were just speaking of your tragedy.—Admirable, Sir Fretful, admirable !

Sneer. You never did anything beyond it, Sir Fretful—never in your life.

Sir Fret. You make me extremely happy ; for without a compliment, my dear Sneer, there isn't a man in the world whose judgment I value as I do yours—and Mr. Dangle's.

Mrs. Dangle. They are only laughing at you, Sir Fretful ; for it was but just now that—•

Dangle. Mrs. Dangle !—Ah, Sir Fretful, you know Mrs. Dangle.—My friend Sneer was rallying just now—He knows how she admires you, and——

Sir Fret. O Lord, I am sure Mr. Sneer has more taste and sincerity than to——A damn'd double-faced fellow! *[Aside.*

Dangle. Yes, yes,—Sneer will jest—but a better humoured——

Sir Fret. O, I know.

Dangle. He has a ready turn for ridicule—his wit costs him nothing.

Sir Fret. No, egad,—or I should wonder how he came by it. *[Aside.*

Mrs. Dangle. Because his jest is always at the expense of his friend.

Dangle. But, Sir Fretful, have you sent your play to the managers yet ?—or can I be of any service to you !

Sir Fret. No, no, I thank you ; I believe the piece had sufficient recommendation with it.—I thank you, though—I sent it to the manager of Covent Garden theatre this morning.

Sneer. I should have thought, now, that it might have been cast (as the actois call it) better at Drury Lane.

Sir Fret. O Lud ! no—never send a play there while I live—harkee ! *[Whispers SNEER.*

Sneer. *Writes himself!* — I know he does——

Sir Fret. I say nothing—I take away from no man's merit—am hurt at no man's good fortune—I say nothing.—But this I will say—through all

my knowledge of life I have observed—that there is not a passion so strongly rooted in the human heart as envy !

Sneer. I believe you have reason for what you say, indeed.

Sir Fret. Besides—I can tell you it is not always so safe to leave a play in the hands of those who write themselves.

Sneer. What, they may steal from them, hey, my dear Plagiary !

Sir Fret. Steal!—to be sure they may ; and, egad, serve your best thoughts as gypsies do stolen children, disfigure them to make 'em pass for their own.

Sneer. But your present work is a sacrifice to Melpomene, and *he* you know never——

Sir Fret. That's no security.—A dexterous plagiarist may do anything.—Why, sir, for aught I know, he might take out some of the best things in my tragedy, and put them into his own comedy.

Sneer. That might be done, I dare be sworn.

Sir Fret. And then, if such a person gives you the least hint or assistance he is devilish apt to take the merit of the whole——

Dangle. If it succeeds.

Sir Fret. Ay,—but with regard to this piece, I think I can hit that gentleman, for I can safely swear he never read it.

Sneer. I'll tell you how you may hurt him more.

Sir Fret. How ?

Sneer. Swear he wrote it.

Sir Fret. Plague on't now, Sneer, I shall take it ill.—I believe you want to take away my character as an author.

Sneer. Then I am sure you ought to be very much obliged to me.

Sir Fret. Hey !—sir !—

Dangle. O you know, he never means what he says.

Sir Fret. Sincerely, then—you do like the piece?

Sneer. Wonderfully !

Sir Fret. But come now, there must be something that you think might be mended, hey ?—Mr. Dangle, has nothing struck you ?

Dangle. Why, faith, it is but an ungracious thing, for the most part, to——

Sir Fret. With most authors it is just so indeed ; they are in general strangely tenacious !—But, for my part, I am never so well pleased as when a judicious critic points out any defect to me ; for what is the purpose of showing a work to a friend if you don't mean to profit by his opinion ?

Sneer. Very true.—Why then, though I seriously admire the piece upon the whole, yet there is one small objection, which, if you'll give me leave, I'll mention.

Sir Fret. Sir, you can't oblige me more.

Sneer. I think it wants incident.

Sir Fret. Good God ! you surprise me !—wants incident!

Sneer. Yes ; I own I think the incidents are too few.

Sir Fret. Good God !—Believe me, Mr. Sneer, there is no person for whose judgment I have a more implicit deference. But I protest to you, Mr. Sneer, I am only apprehensive that the incidents are too crowded.—My dear Dangle, how does it strike you ?

Dangle. Really I can't agree with my friend Sneer.—I think the plot quite sufficient; and the four first acts by many degrees the best I ever read or saw in my life. If I might venture to suggest anything, it is that the interest rather falls off in the fifth.

Sir Fret. Rises, I believe you mean, sir.

Dangle. No, I don't, upon my word.

Sir Fret. Yes, yes, you do, upon my soul—it certainly don't fall off, I assure you.—No, no ; it don't fall off.

Dangle. Now, Mrs. Dangle, didn't you say it struck you in the same light ?

Mrs. Dangle. No, indeed, I did not—I did not see a fault in any part of the play, from the beginning to the end.

Sir Fret. Upon my soul, the women are the best judges after all !

Mrs. Dangle. Or, if I made any objection, I am sure it was to nothing in the piece, but that I was afraid it was, on the whole, a little too long.

Sir Fret. Pray, madam, do you speak as to duration of time ; or do you mean that the story is tediously spun out ?

Mrs. Dangle. O Lud ! no.—I speak only with reference to the usual length of acting plays.

Sir Fret. Then I am very happy—very happy indeed,—because the play is a short play, a remarkably short play : — I should not venture to differ with a lady on a point of taste ; but, on these occasions, the watch, you know, is the critic.

Mrs. Dangle. Then, I suppose, it must have been Mr. Dangle's drawling manner of reading it to me.

Sir Fret. O, if Mr. Dangle read it, that's quite another affair !—But I assure you, Mrs. Dangle, the first evening you can spare me three hours and a half, I'll undertake to read you the whole from beginning to end, with the prologue and epilogue, and allow time for the music between the acts.

Mrs. Dangle. I hope to see it on the stage next.

Dangle. Well, Sir Fretful, I wish you may be able to get rid as easily of the newspaper criticisms as you do of ours.

Sir Fret. The newspapers !—Sir, they are the most villainous—licentious—abominable—infernal—Not that I ever read them—No—I make it a rule never to look into a newspaper.

Dangle. You are quite right—for it certainly must hurt an author of delicate feelings to see the liberties they take.

Sir Fret. No ! quite the contrary ; their abuse is, in fact, the best panegyric—I like it of all things. An author's reputation is only in danger from their support.

Sneer. Why, that's true—and that attack, now, on you the other day——

Sir Fret What ? where ?

Dangle. Ay, you mean in a paper of Thursday : it was completely ill-natured, to be sure.

Sir Fret. O, so much the better.—Ha ! ha ! ha ! — I wou'dn't have it otherwise.

Dangle. Certainly it is only to be laughed at ; for——

Sir Fret. You don't happen to recollect what the fellow said, do you ?

Sneer. Pray, Dangle—Sir Fretful seems a little anxious—

Sir Fret. O Lud, no !—anxious !—not I,—not the least.—I—But one may as well hear, you know.

Dangle. Sneer, do *you* recollect ?—Make out something. *[Aside.*

Sneer. I will. *[To DANGLE.]*—Yes, yes, I remember perfectly.

Sir Fret. Well, and pray now—not that it signifies—what might the gentleman say ?

Sneer. Why, he roundly asserts that you have not the slightest invention or original genius whatever ; though you are the greatest traducer of all other authors living.

Sir Fret. Ha ! ha ! ha !—very good !

Sneer. That as to comedy, you have not one idea of your own, he believes, even in your common-place-book—where stray jokes and pilfered witticisms are kept with as much method as the ledger of the lost and stolen office.

Sir Fret. Ha ! ha ! ha !—very pleasant!

Sneer. Nay, that you are so unlucky as not to have the skill even to *steal* with taste ;—but that you glean from the refuse of obscure volumes, where more judicious plagiarists have been before you ; so that the body of your work is a composition of dregs and sediments—like a bad tavern's worst wine.

Sir Fret. Ha ! ha !

Sneer. In your more serious efforts, he says, your bombast would be less intolerable, if the thoughts were ever suited to the expression ; but the homeliness of the sentiment stares through the fantastic encumbrance of its fine language, like a clown in one of the new uniforms !

Sir Fret. Ha ! ha !

Sneer. That your occasional tropes and flowers suit the general coarseness of your style, as tambour sprigs would a ground of linsey-woolsey ; while your imitations of Shakespeare resemble the mimicry of Falstaff's page, and are about as near the standard of the original.

Sir Fret. Ha !——

Sneer. In short, that even the finest passages you steal are of no service to you ; for the poverty of your own language prevents their assimilating ; so that they lie on the surface like lumps of marl on a barren moor, encumbering what it is not in their power to fertilise !

Sir Fret. [After great agitation.]—Now another person would be vexed at this.

Sneer. Oh ! but I wouldn't have told you, only to divert you.

Sir Fret. I know it—I *am* diverted.—Ha ! ha ! ha !—not the least invention !—Ha ! ha ! ha ! very good !—very good !

Sneer. Yes—no genius ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

Dangle. A severe rogue ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! But you are quite right, Sir Fretful, never to read such nonsense.

Sir Fret. To be sure—for if there is anything to one's praise, it is a foolish vanity to be gratified at it ; and if it is abuse,—why, one is always sure to hear of it from one damn'd good-natured friend or another !

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir, there is an Italian gentleman, with a French interpreter, and three young ladies, and a dozen musicians, who say they are sent by Lady Rondeau and Mrs. Fugue.

Dangle. Gadso ! they come by appointment. Dear Mrs. Dangle, do let them know I'll see them directly.

Mrs. Dangle. You know, Mr. Dangle, I shan't understand a word they say.

Dangle. But you hear there's an interpreter.

Mrs. Dangle. Well, I'll try to endure their complaisance till you come. *[Exit.*

Serv. And Mr. Puff, sir, has sent word that the last rehearsal is to be this morning, and that he'll call on you presently.

Dangle. That's true—I shall certainly be at home. [*Exit SERVANT.*] NOW, Sir Fretful, if you have a mind to have justice done you in the way of answer, egad, Mr. Puff's your man.

Sir Fret. Pshaw ! Sir, why should I wish to have it answered, when I tell you I am pleased at it?

Dangle. True, I had forgot that. But I hope you are not fretted at what Mr. Sneer——

Sir Fret. Zounds! no, Mr. Dangle; don't I tell you these things never fret me in the least ?

Dangle. Nay, I only thought——

Sir Fret. And let me tell you, Mr. Dangle, 'tis damn'd affronting in you to suppose that I am hurt when I tell you I am not.

Sneer. But why so warm, Sir Fretful ?

Sir Fret. Gad's life ! Mr. Sneer, you are as absurd as Dangle : how often must I repeat it to you, that nothing can vex me but your supposing it possible for me to mind the damn'd nonsense you have been repeating to me !—and let me tell you, if you continue to believe this, you must mean to insult me, gentlemen—and then your disrespect will affect me no more than the newspaper criticisms—and I shall treat it with exactly the same calm indifference and philosophic contempt—and so your servant. [*Exit.*]

Sneer. Ha ! ha ! ha ! Poor Sir Fretful! Now will he go and vent his philosophy in anonymous abuse of all modern critics and authors.—But

Dangle, you must get your friend Puff to take me to the rehearsal of his tragedy.

Dangle. I'll answer for it, he'll thank you for desiring it. But come and help me to judge of this musical family : they are recommended by people of consequence, I assure you.

Sneer. I am at your disposal the whole morning ;—but I thought you had been a decided critic in music as well as in literature.

Dangle. So I am—but I have a bad ear. I'faith, Sneer, though, I am afraid we were a little too severe on Sir Fretful—though he is my friend.

Sneer. Why, 'tis certain, that unnecessarily to mortify the vanity of any writer is a cruelty which mere dulness never can deserve ; but where a base and personal malignity usurps the place of literary emulation, the aggressor deserves neither quarter nor pity.

Dangle. That's true, egad !—though he's my friend!

SCENE II.

A Drawing-room. Harpsichord, etc., Italian Family, French Interpreter, Mrs. DANGLE and SERVANTS discovered

Interp. Je dis, madame, j'ai l'honneur to introduce et de vous demander votre protection pour le Signor Pasticcio Ritornello et pour sa charmante famille.

Signor Past. Ah ! Vosignoria, noi vi preghiamo di favorite vi colla vostra protezione.

Ist Daugh. Vosignoria fatevi questi grazie.

2nd Daugh. Si, signora.

Interp. Madame—*me interpret.*—C'est à dire—in English—qu'ils vous prient de leur faire l'honneur—

Mrs. Dangle. I say again, gentlemen, I don't understand a word you say.

Signor Past. Questo signore spiegheró—

Interp. Oui—*me interpret.*—Nous avons les lettres de recommandation pour Monsieur Dangle de——

Mrs. Dangle. Upon my word, sir, I don't understand you.

Signor Past. La Contessa Rondeau e nostra padrona.

3rd Daugh. Si, padre, et mi Ladi Fugue.

Interp. O !—*me interpret.* · Madame, ils disent—in English—Qu'ils ont l'honneur d'être protégés de ces dames.—*You understand ?*

Mrs. Dangle. No, sir,——no understand !

Enter DANGLE and SNEER

Interp. Ah voici, Monsieur Dangle !

All Italians. Ah ! Signor Dangle !

Mrs. Dangle. Mr. Dangle, here are two very civil gentlemen trying to make themselves understood, and I don't know which is the interpreter.

Dangle. Eh bien !

Interp. Monsieur Dangle, le grand bruit de vos talents pour la critique, et de votre intérêt avec Messieurs les Directeurs à tous les théâtres——

Signor Past. Vosignoria flete si famoso par la vostra conoscensa, e vostra interessa colla le Direttore da——

Speaking
together

Dangle. Egad, I think the interpreter is the hardest to be understood of the two !

Sneer. Why I thought, Dangle, you had been an admirable linguist!

Dangle. So I am, if they would not talk so damn'd fast.

Sneer. Well, I'll explain that—the less time we lose in hearing them the better—for that, I suppose, is what they are brought here for.

[SNEER *speaks to* Signor PASTICCIO—*they sing trios, etc.*, DANGLE *beating out of time.*

SERVANT *enters and whispers* DANGLE.]

Dangle. Show him up. [*Exit* SERVANT.] Bravo! admirable ! bravissimo ! admirablissimo !—Ah ! Sneer ! where will you find such as these voices in England ?

Sneer. Not easily.

Dangle. But Puff is coming. Signor and little Signora's obligatissimo !—Sposa Signora Dangle—Mrs. Dangle, shall I beg you to offer them some refreshments, and take their address in the next room.

[*Exit* Mrs. DANGLE *with the Italians and Interpreter ceremoniously.*]

Re-enter SERVANT

Serv. Mr. Puff, sir.

Dangle. My dear Puff !

Enter PUFF

Puff. My dear Dangle, how is it with you ?

Dangle. Mr. Sneer, give me leave to introduce Mr. Puff to you.

Puff. Mr. Sneer is this ?—Sir, he is a gentleman whom I have long panted for the honour of knowing—a gentleman whose critical talents and transcendent judgment——

Sneer. Dear sir——

Dangle. Nay, don't be modest, Sneer; my friend Puff only talks to you in the style of his profession.

Sneer. His profession !

Puff. Yes, sir ; I make no secret of the trade I follow: among friends and brother authors, Dangle knows I love to be frank on the subject, and to advertise myself *viva voce*.—I am, sir, a practitioner in panegyric, or, to speak more plainly, a professor of the art of puffing, at your service—or anybody else's.

Sneer. Sir, you are very obliging ! — I believe, Mr. Puff, I have often admired your talents in the daily prints.

Puff. Yes, sir, I flatter myself I do as much business in that way as any six of the fraternity in town.—Devilish hard work all the summer.—

Friend Dangle, never worked harder !——But, harkee,—the winter managers were a little sore, I believe.

Dangle. No ; I believe they took it all in good part.

Puff. Ay !—then that must have been affectation in them ; for, egad, there were some of the attacks which there was no laughing at!

Sneer. Ay, the humorous ones.—But I should think, Mr. Puff, that authors would in general be able to do this sort of work for themselves.

Puff. Why, yes—but in a clumsy way : besides, we look on that as an encroachment, and so take the opposite side. I dare say, now, you conceive half the very civil paragraphs and advertisements you see to be written by the parties concerned, or their friends ?—No such thing : nine out of ten manufactured by me in the way of business.

Sneer. Indeed.

Puff. Even the auctioneers now—the auctioneers, I say—though the rogues have lately got some credit for their language—not an article of the merit theirs : take them out of their pulpits, and they are as dull as catalogues !——No, sir ; 'twas I first enriched their style—'twas I first taught them to crowd their advertisements with panegyrical superlatives, each epithet rising above the other, like the bidders in their own auction-rooms !—From me they learned to inlay their phraseology with variegated chips of exotic metaphor: by me, too, their inventive faculties

were called forth :—yes, sir, by me they were instructed to clothe ideal walls with gratuitous fruits—to insinuate obsequious rivulets into visionary groves—to teach courteous shrubs to nod their approbation of the grateful soil; or on emergencies to raise upstart oaks, where there never had been an acorn ; to create a delightful vicinage without the assistance of a neighbour ; or fix the temple of Hygeia in the fens of Lincolnshire !

Dangle. I am sure you have done them infinite service ; for now, when a gentleman is ruined, he parts with his house with some credit.

Sneer. Service !—if they had any gratitude they would erect a statue to him ; they would figure him as a presiding Mercury, the god of traffic and fiction, with a hammer in his hand instead of a caduceus. But pray, Mr. Puff, what first put you on exercising your talents in this way ?

Puff. Egad, sir, sheer necessity—the proper parent of an art so nearly allied to invention : you must know, Mr. Sneer, that from the first time I tried my hand at an advertisement, my success was such, that for some time after I led a most extraordinary life indeed.

Sneer. How, pray ?

Puff. Sir, I supported myself two years entirely by my misfortunes.

Sneer. By your misfortunes ?

Puff. Yes, sir, assisted by long sickness, and

other occasional disorders ; and a very comfortable living I had of it.

Sneer. From sickness and misfortunes ! You practised as a doctor and an attorney at once ?

Puff. No, egad ; both maladies and miseries were my own.

Sneer. Hey !—what the plague !

Dangle. 'Tis true, i'faith.

Puff. Harkee !—By advertisements—' To the charitable and humane ! ' and ' to those whom Providence hath blessed with affluence ! '

Sneer. Oh, I understand you.

Puff. And, in truth, I deserved what I got ; for I suppose never man went through such a series of calamities in the same space of time. Sir, I was five times made a bankrupt, and reduced from a state of affluence by a train of unavoidable misfortunes ; then, sir, though a very industrious tradesman, I was twice burnt out, and lost my little all both times : I lived upon those fires a month. I soon after was confined by a most excruciating disorder ; and lost the use of my limbs : that told very well ; for I had the case strongly attested, and went about to collect the subscriptions myself.

Dangle. Egad, I believe that was when you first called on me.

Puff. In November last ? O, no ; I was at that time a close prisoner in the Marshalsea, for a debt benevolently contracted to serve a friend. I was afterwards twice tapped for a dropsy, which de-

clined into a very profitable consumption. I was then reduced to—0, no—then I became a widow with six helpless children, after having had eleven husbands pressed, and being left every time eight months gone with child, and without money to get me into an hospital!

Sneer. And you bore all with patience, I make no doubt ?

Puff. Why, yes ; though I made some occasional attempts at *felo de se* ; but as I did not find those *rash actions* answer, I left off killing myself very soon. Well, sir,—at last, what with bankruptcies, fires, gouts, dropsies, imprisonments, and other valuable calamities, having got together a pretty handsome sum, I determined to quit a business which had always gone rather against my conscience, and in a more liberal way still to indulge my talents for fiction and embellishment, through my favourite channels of diurnal communication—and so, sir, you have my history.

Sneer. Most obligingly communicative indeed ; and your confession, if published, might certainly serve the cause of true charity, by rescuing the most useful channels of appeal to benevolence from the cant of imposition.—But surely, Mr. Puff, there is no great mystery in your present profession ?

Puff. Mystery, sir ! I will take upon me to say the matter was never scientifically treated, nor reduced to rule before.

Sneer. Reduced to rule !

Puff. O Lud, sir, you are very ignorant, I am afraid.—Yes, sir,—puffing is of various sorts ; the principal are, the puff direct, the puff preliminary, the puff collateral, the puff collusive, and the puff oblique, or puff by implication. These all assume, as circumstances require, the various forms of letter to the editor, occasional anecdote, impartial critique, observation from correspondent, or advertisement from the party.

Sneer. The puff direct, I can conceive——

Puff. O yes, that's simple enough ; for instance,—a new comedy or farce is to be produced at one of the theatres (though by the by they don't bring out half what they ought to do)—the author, suppose Mr. Smatter, or Mr. Dapper, or any particular friend of mine—very well ; the day before it is to be performed, I write an account of the manner in which it was received ; I have the plot from the author, and only add "—characters strongly drawn—highly coloured—hand of a master fund of genuine humour—mine of invention—neat dialogue—Attic salt." Then for the performance "—Mr. Dodd was astonishingly great in the character of Sir Harry ; that universal and judicious actor, Mr. Palmer, perhaps never appeared to more advantage than in the Colonel ;—but it is not in the power of language to do justice to Mr. King : indeed he more than merited those repeated bursts of applause which he drew from a most brilliant and judicious audience. As to

the scenery—the miraculous powers of Mr. De Louthembourg's pencil are universally acknowledged. In short, we are at a loss which to admire most, the unrivalled genius of the author, the great attention and liberality of the managers, the wonderful abilities of the painter, or the incredible exertions of all the performers."

Sneer. That's pretty well indeed, sir.

Puff. O, cool—quite cool—to what I sometimes do.

Sneer. And do you think there are any who are influenced by this ?

Puff. O Lud, yes, sir : the number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed.

Sneer. Well, sir,—the puff preliminary ?

Puff. O that, sir, does well in the form of a caution. In a matter of gallantry now—Sir Flimsy Gossamer wishes to be well with Lady Fanny Fete, He applies to me—I open trenches for him with a paragraph in the *Morning Post*.—It is recommended to the beautiful and accomplished Lady F four stars F dash E to be on her guard against that dangerous character, Sir F dash G. ; who, however pleasing and insinuating his manners may be, is certainly not remarkable for the *constancy of his attachments!*—in italics. Here, you see, Sir Flimsy Gossamer is introduced to the particular notice of Lady Fanny, who perhaps never thought of him before —~~she~~ finds herself publicly cautioned to avoid him, which

naturally makes her desirous of seeing him : the observation of their acquaintance causes a pretty kind of mutual embarrassment; this produces a sort of sympathy of interest, which if Sir Flimsy is unable to improve effectually, he at least gains the credit of having their names mentioned together, by a particular set, and in a particular way—which nine times out of ten is the full accomplishment of modern gallantry.

Dangle. Egad, Sneer, you will be quite an adept in the business.

Puff. Now, sir, the puff collateral is much used as an appendage to advertisements, and may take the form of anecdote. Yesterday, as the celebrated George Bon-mot was sauntering down St. James's Street, he met the lively Lady Mary Myrtle coming out of the Park :—" Good God, Lady Mary, I'm surprised to meet you in a white jacket,—for I expected never to have seen you but in a full-trimmed uniform and a light horseman's cap !"—" Heavens, George, where could you have learned that ?"—" Why," replied the wit, " I just saw a print of you in a new publication called the *Camp Magazine*, which, by the by, is a devilish clever thing, and is sold at No. 3, on the right hand of the way, two doors from the printing-office, the corner of Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row, price only one shilling ! "

Sneer. Very ingenious indeed.

Puff. But the puff collusive is the newest of any ; for it acts in the disguise of determined

hostility. It is much used by bold booksellers and enterprising poets. An indignant correspondent observes, that the new poem called Beelzebub's Cotillon, or Proserpine's Fête Champêtre, is one of the most unjustifiable performances he ever read. The severity with which certain characters are handled is quite shocking ; and as there are many descriptions in it too warmly coloured for female delicacy, the shameful avidity with which this piece is bought by all people of fashion is a reproach on the taste of the times, and a disgrace to the delicacy of the age. Here you see the two strongest inducements are held forth :—first, that nobody ought to read it ; and, secondly, that everybody buys it ; on the strength of which the publisher boldly prints the tenth edition, before he had sold ten of the first ; and then establishes it by threatening himself with the pillory, or absolutely indicting himself for *scan. mug*.

Dangle. Ha ! ha ! ha !—'Gad, I know it is so.

Puff. As to the puff oblique, or puff by implication, it is too various and extensive to be illustrated by an instance : it attracts in titles and presumes in patents ; it lurks in the limitation of a subscription, and invites in the assurance of crowd and incommodation at public places ; it delights to draw forth concealed merit, with a most disinterested assiduity ; and sometimes wears a countenance of smiling censure and tender reproach. It has a wonderful memory for parliamentary debates, and will often give the whole

speech of a favoured member with the most flattering accuracy. But, above all, it is a great dealer in reports and suppositions. It has the earliest intelligence of intended preferments that will reflect *honour* on the *patrons*; and embryo promotions of modest gentlemen, who know nothing of the matter themselves. It can hint a riband for implied services in the air of a common report; and with the carelessness of a casual paragraph, suggest officers into commands, to which they have no pretension but their wishes. This, sir, is the last principal class of the art of puffing—an art which I hope you will now agree with me is of the highest dignity, yielding a tablat-ure of benevolence and public spirit; befriending equally trade, gallantry, criticism, and politics: the applause of genius—the register of charity—the triumph of heroism—the self-defence of contractors—the fame of orators—and the gazette of ministers.

Sneer. Sir, I am completely a convert both to the importance and ingenuity of your profession; and now, sir, there is but one thing which can possibly increase my respect for you, and that is, your permitting me to be present this morning at the rehearsal of your new trage——

Puff. Hush, for Heaven's sake!—*My* tragedy!—Egad, Dangle, I take this very ill: you know how apprehensive I am of being known to be the author.

Dangle. *I'*faith I would not have told—but it's

in the papers, and your name at length in the *Morning Chronicle*.

Puff. Ah ! those damn'd editors never can keep a secret !—Well, Mr. Sneer, no doubt you will do me great honour—I shall be infinitely happy—highly flattered—

Dangle. I believe it must be near the time—shall we go together ?

Puff. No ; it will not be yet this hour, for they are always late at that theatre : besides, I must meet you there, for I have some little matters here to send to the papers, and a few paragraphs to scribble before I go.—[*Looking at memorandums.*]—Here is " a conscientious Baker, on the Subject of the Army Bread ; " and " a Detester of visible Brick-work, in favour of the new-invented Stucco ; " both in the style of Junius, and promised for to-morrow. The Thames navigation, too, is at a stand. Misomud or Anti-shoal must go to work again directly.—Here too are some political memorandums—I see ; ay—To take Paul Jones, and get the Indiamen out of the Shannon—reinforce Byron—compel the Dutch to—so ! — I must do that in the evening papers, or reserve it for the *Morning Herald* ; for I know that I have undertaken to-morrow, besides, to establish the unanimity of the fleet in the *Public Advertiser*, and to shoot Charles Fox in the *Morning Post*.—So, egad, I ha'n't a moment to lose!

Dangle. Well!—well meet in the Green Room.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I

The Theatre, before the Curtain

Enter DANGLE, PUFF, and SNEER

Puff. No, no, sir ; what Shakespeare says of actors may be better applied to the purpose of plays ; *they* ought to be " the abstract and brief chronicles of the time." Therefore when history, and particularly the history of our own country, furnishes anything like a case in point, to the time in which an author writes, if he knows his own interest, he will take advantage of it : so, sir, I call my tragedy " The Spanish Armada " ; and have laid the scene before Tilbury Fort.

Sneer. A most happy thought, certainly !

Dangle. Egad it was—I told you so. But pray now, I don't understand how you have contrived to introduce any love into it.

Puff. Love !—Oh, nothing so easy ; for it is a received point among poets, that where history gives you a good heroic outline for a play, you may fill up with a little love at your own discretion : in doing which, nine times out of ten, you only

make up a deficiency in the private history of the times. Now I rather think I have done this with some success.

Sneer. No scandal about Queen Elizabeth, I hope ?

Puff. O Lud ! no, no ; — I only suppose the governor of Tilbury Fort's daughter to be in love with the son of the Spanish admiral.

Sneer. Oh, is that all !

Dangle. Excellent, i'faith ! I see it at once.— But won't this appear rather improbable ?

Puff. To be sure it will—but, what the plague ! a play is not to show occurrences that happen every day, but things just so strange, that though they never *did*, they might happen.

Sneer. Certainly nothing is unnatural that is not physically impossible.

Puff. Very true—and for that matter Don Ferolo Whiskerandos, for that's the lover's name, might have been over here in the train of the Spanish ambassador ; or Tilburina, for that is the lady's name, might have been in love with him, from having heard his character, or seen his picture ; or from knowing that he was the last man in the world she ought to be in love with—or for any other good female reason.—However, sir, the fact is, that though she is but a knight's daughter, egad ! she is in love like any princess !

Dangle. Poor young lady ! I feel for her already ! for I can conceive how great the conflict must be between her passion and her duty ; her

love for her country, and her love for Don Ferolo Whiskerandos !

Puff. O, amazing !—her poor susceptible heart is swayed to and fro, by contending passions, like——

Enter UNDER PROMPTER

Under Promp. Sir, the scene is set, and everything is ready to begin, if you please.

Puff. Egad, then we'll lose no time.

Under Promp. Though, I believe, sir, you will find it very short, for all the performers have profited by the kind permission you granted them.

Puff. Hey ! what ?

Under Promp. You know, sir, you gave them leave to cut out or omit whatever they found heavy or unnecessary to the plot, and I must own they have taken very liberal advantage of your indulgence.

Puff. Well, well.—They are in general very good judges, and I know I am luxuriant.—Now, Mr. Hopkins, as soon as you please.

U rider Promp. [*To the music*] Gentlemen, will you play a few bars of something, just to——

Puff. Ay, that's right; for as we have the scenes and dresses, egad, we'll go to't as if it was the first night's performance ;—but you need not mind stopping between the acts.—[*Exit UNDER PROMPTER. Orchestra play—then the bell rings.*]—So! stand clear, gentlemen. Now you know there will be a cry of down ! down !—hats off!

—silence !—Then up curtain, and let us see what our painters have done for us.

SCENE II

The Curtain rises and discovers Tilbury

Fort. Two sentinels asleep

Dangle. Tilbury Fort!—very fine indeed !

Puff. Now, what do you think I open with ?

Sneer. Faith, I can't guess—

Puff. A clock—Hark !—[*Clock strikes.*]—I open with a clock striking, to beget an awful attention in the audience—it also marks the time, which is four o'clock in the morning, and saves a description of the rising sun, and a great deal about gilding the eastern hemisphere.

Dangle. But, pray, are the sentinels to be asleep ?

Puff. Fast as watchmen.

Sneer. Isn't that odd though at such an alarming crisis ?

Puff. To be sure it is,—but smaller things must give way to a striking scene at the opening ; that's a rule. And the case is, that two great men are coming to this very spot to begin the piece : now, it is not to be supposed they would open their lips if these fellows were watching them ; so, egad, I must either have sent them off their posts or set them asleep.

Sneer. O, that accounts for it.—But tell us, who are these coming ?—

Puff. These are they—Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Christopher Hatton. You'll know Sir Christopher by his turning out his toes—famous, you know, for his dancing. I like to preserve all **the** little traits of character.—Now attend.

Enter Sir WALTER RALEIGH and SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON

Sir Christ. H. True, gallant Raleigh !—

Dangle. What, they had been talking before ?

Puff. O, yes ; all the way as they came along.—I beg pardon, gentlemen—*[to the actors]*—but these are particular friends of mine, whose remarks may be of great service to us.—*[To SNEER and DANGLE.]*—Don't mind interrupting them whenever anything strikes you.

Sir Christ. H. True, gallant Raleigh !

But O, thou champion of thy country's fame,

There *is* a question which I yet must ask ;

A question which I never ask'd before—

What mean these mighty armaments ?

This general muster ? and this throng of chiefs ?

Sneer. Pray, Mr. Puff, how came Sir Christopher Hatton never to ask that question before ?

Puff. What, before the play began ?—how the plague could he ?

Dangle. That's true, i'faith !

Puff. But you will hear what he thinks of the matter.

Sir Christ. H. Alas ! my noble friend, when I behold
Yon tented plains in martial symmetry
Array'd ; when I count o'er yon glittering lines

Of crested warriors, where the proud steeds neigh,
 And valour-breathing trumpet's shrill appeal,
 Responsive vibrate on my listening ear ;
 When virgin majesty herself I view,
 Like her protecting Pallas, veil'd in steel,
 With graceful confidence exhort to arms !
 When, briefly, all I hear or see bears stamp
 Of martial vigilance and stern defence,
 I cannot but surmise—forgive, my friend,
 If the conjecture's rash—I cannot but
 Surmise the State some danger apprehends!

Sneer. A very cautious conjecture, that.

Puff. Yes, that's his character ; not to give an opinion but on secure grounds——now then.

Sir Walter R. O, most accomplish'd Christopher—

Puff. He calls him by his Christian name, to show that they are on the most familiar terms.

Sir Walter R. O, most accomplish'd Christopher, I find Thy stanch sagacity still tracks the future,
 In the fresh print of the o'ertaken past.

Puff. Figurative !

Sir Walter R. Thy fears are just.

Sir Christ. H. But where ? whence ? when ? and what The danger is—methinks I fain would learn.

Sir Walter R. You know, my friend, scarce two revolving suns,
 And three revolving moons, have closed their course,
 Since haughty Philip, in despite of peace,
 With hostile hand hath struck at England's trade.

Sir Christ. H. I know it well.

Sir Walter R. Philip, you know, is proud Iberia's king.

Sir Christ. H. He is.

Sir Walter R. His subjects in base bigotry
And Catholic oppression held ; while we,
You know, the Protestant persuasion hold.

Sir Christ. H. We do.

Sir Walter R. You know, beside, his boasted arma-
ment,
The famed Armada, by the Pope baptized,
With purpose to invade these realms——

Sir Christ. H. Is sailed,
Our last advices so report.

Sir Walter R. While the Iberian admiral's chief hope,
His darling son——

Sir Christ. H. Ferolo Whiskerandos hight——

Sir Walter R. The same—by chance a prisoner hath
been ta'en,
And in this fort of Tilbury——

Sir Christ. H. Is now
Confined—'tis true, and oft from yon tall turret's top
I've marked the youthful Spaniard's haughty mien
Unconquer'd, though in chains.

Sir Walter R. You also know——

Dangle. Mr. Puff, as he *knows* all this, why does
Sir Walter go on telling him ?

Puff. But the audience are not supposed to
know anything of the matter, are they ?

Sneer. True ; but I think you manage ill ; for
there certainly appears no reason why Sir Walter
should be so communicative.

Puff. 'Pore Gad, now, that is one of the most
ungrateful observations I ever heard ; for the less
inducement he has to tell all this, the more, I
think, you ought to be obliged to him ; for I am
sure you'd know nothing of the matter without it.

Dandle. That's very true, upon my word.

Puff. But you will find he was *not* going on.

Sir Christ. H. Enough, enough—'tis plain—and I no more
Am in amazement lost!—

Puff. Here, now you see, Sir Christopher did not in fact ask any one question for his own information.

Sneer. No, indeed :—his has been a most disinterested curiosity !

Dangle. Really, I find, we are very much obliged to them both.

Puff. To be sure you are. Now then for the commander-in-chief, the Earl of Leicester, who, you know, was no favourite but of the Queen's.—We left off—" in amazement lost ! "

Sir Christ. H. Am in amazement lost.—
But see where noble Leicester comes ! supreme
In honours and command.

Sir Walter R. And yet, methinks,
At such a time, so perilous, so fear'd,
That staff might well become an abler grasp.

Sir Christ. H. And so, by Heav'n ! think I; but soft,
he's here !

Puff. Ay, they envy him.

Sneer. But who are these with him ?

*Puff** O ! very valiant knights : one is the governor of the fort, the other the Master of the Horse.—And now, I think, you shall hear some better language : I was obliged to be plain and intelligible in the first scene, because there was so much matter of fact in it ; but now, i'faith, you

have trope, figure, and metaphor, as plenty as noun-substantives.

Enter Earl of LEICESTER, *the* GOVERNOR, *and others*

Leic. How's this, my friends ! is't thus your new-fledged zeal

And plumèd valour moulds *in* roosted sloth ?

Why dimly glimmers that heroic flame,

Whose redd'ning blaze, by patriot spirit fed,

Should be the beacon of a kindling realm ?

Can the quick current of a patriot heart

Thus stagnate *in* a cold and weedy converse,

Or freeze in tideless inactivity ?

No ! rather let the fountain of your valour

Spring through each stream of enterprise,

Each petty channel of conducive daring,

Till the full torrent of your foaming wrath

O'erwhelms the flats of sunk hostility !

Puff. There it is,—followed up.

Sir Walter R. No more ! the freshening breath of thy rebuke

Hath fill'd the swelling canvas of our souls !

And thus, though fate should cut the cable of

[All take hands.]

Our topmost hopes, in friendship's closing line

We'll grapple with despair, and if we fall,

We'll fall in Glory's wake !

Leic. There spoke old England's genius !
Then, are we all resolved ?

All. We are—all resolved.

Leic. To conquer—or be free ?

All. To conquer——or be free.

Leic. All ?

All. All.

Dangle. *Nem. con.* egad !

Puff. But you will find he was *not* going on.

Sir Christ. H. Enough, enough—'tis plain—and I no more
Am in amazement lost!—

Puff. Here, now you see, Sir Christopher did not in fact ask any one question for his own information.

Sneer. No, indeed :—his has been a most disinterested curiosity !

Dangle. Really, I find, we are very much obliged to them both.

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Then, are we all resolved ?

All. We are—all resolved.

Leic. To conquer—or be free ?

All. To conquer—or be free.

Leic. All ?

All. All.

Dangle. *Nem. con.* egad !

Puff. O yes,—where they *do* agree on the stage, their unanimity is wonderful.

Leic. Then, let's embrace——and now——[*Kneels*]

Sneer. What the plague, is he going to pray?

Puff. Yes ; hush !—in great emergencies there is nothing like a prayer.

Leic. O mighty Mars !

Dangle. But why should he pray to *Mars* ?

Puff. Hush!

Leic. If in thy homage bred,
Each point of discipline I've still observed ;
Nor but by due promotion, and the right
Of service, to the rank of major-general
Have ris'n ; assist thy votary now !

Govern. Yet do not rise,—hear me ! [*Kneels*]

M. of Horse. And me ! [*Kneels*]

Knight. And me ! [*Kneels*]

Sir Walter R. And me ! [*Kneels*]

Sir Christ. H. And me ! [*Kneels*]

Puff. Now, pray all together.

All. Behold thy votaries submissive beg,
That thou will deign to grant them all they ask:
Assist them to accomplish all their ends,
And sanctify whatever means they use
To gain them !

Sneer. A very orthodox quintetto !

Puff. Vastly well, gentlemen.—Is that well managed or not ? Have you such a prayer as that on the stage ?

Sneer. Not exactly.

Leicest. [To PUFF.]—But, sir, you haven't settled how we are to get off here.

Puff. You could not go off kneeling, could you ?

Sir Walter R. [To PUFF.]—O no, sir; impossible !

Puff. It would have a good effect, i'faith, if you could exeunt praying !—yes, and would vary the established mode of springing off with a glance at the pit.

Sneer. O, never mind ; so as you get them off ! I'll answer for it the audience won't care how.

Puff. Well, then, repeat the last line standing, and go off the old way.

All. And sanctify whatever means we use
To gain them.

[*Exeunt.*

Dangle. Bravo ! a fine exit.

Sneer. Well, really, Mr. Puff—

Puff. Stay a moment.

The SENTINELS get up

1st Sent. All this shall to Lord Burleigh's ear.

2nd Sent. 'Tis meet it should.

[*Exeunt SENTINELS.*

Dangle. Hey !—why, I thought those fellows had been asleep ?

Puff. Only a pretence ; there's the art of it : they were spies of Lord Burleigh's.

Sneer. But isn't it odd they were never taken notice of, not even by the commander-in-chief ?

Puff. O Lud, sir, if people who want to listen, or overhear, were not always connived at in a

tragedy, there would be no carrying on any plot in the world.

Dangle. That's certain !

Puff. But take care, my dear Dangle ; the morning gun is going to fire. *[Cannon fires.]*

Dangle. Well, that will have a fine effect.

Puff. I think so, and helps to realise the scene.—*[Cannon twice.]*—What the plague !—*three* morning guns !—there never is but one !—ay, this is always the way at the theatre : give these fellows a good thing, and they never know when to have done with it.—You have no more cannon to fire ?

Prompt. *[From within.]* No, sir.

Puff. Now, then, for soft music.

Sneer. Pray, what's that for ?

Puff. It shows that Tilburina is coming ;—nothing introduces you a heroine like soft music. Here she comes.

Dangle. . And her confidant, I suppose ?

Puff. To be sure. Here they are—inconsolable to the minuet in Ariadne. *[Soft music.]*

Enter TILBURINA and CONFIDANT

Tilb. Now has the whispering breath of gentle morn
Bade Nature's voice and Nature's beauty rise ;
While orient Phoebus, with unborrow'd hues,
Clothes the wak'd loveliness which all night slept
In heav'nly drapery ! Darkness is fled.
Now flowers unfold their beauties to the sun,
And, blushing, kiss the beam he sends to wake them—
The striped carnation, and the guarded rose,

The vulgar wallflower, and smart gillyflower,
 The polyanthus mean—the dapper daisy,
 Sweet William, and sweet marjoram,—and all
 The tribe of single and of double pinks !
 Now, too, the feather'd warblers tune their notes
 Around, and charm the list'ning grove. The lark !
 The linnet ! chaffinch ! bullfinch ! goldfinch ! greenfinch !
 —But O, to me no joy can they afford !
 Nor rose, nor wallflower, nor smart gillyflower,
 Nor polyanthus mean, nor dapper daisy,
 Nor William sweet, nor marjoram—nor lark,
 Linnet, nor all the finches of the grove !

Puff. Your white handkerchief, madam.—

Tilb. I thought, sir, I wasn't to use that till
 " heart-rending woe."

Puff. O yes, madam, at " the finches of the
 grove," if you please.

Tilb. Nor lark,
 Linnet, nor all the finches of the grove ! *[Weeps.*

Puff. Vastly well, madam !

Dangle. Vastly well, indeed !

Tilb. For, O, too sure, heart-rending woe is now
 The lot of wretched Tilburina !

Dangle. Oh !—'tis too much.

Sneer. Oh !—it is indeed.

Con fid. Be comforted, sweet lady ; for who knows,
 But Heav'n has yet some milk-white day in store ?

Tilb. Alas ! my gentle Nora,
 Thy tender youth as yet hath never mourn'd
 Love's fatal dart. Else wouldst thou know, that when
 The soul is sunk in comfortless despair
 It cannot taste of merriment.

Dangle. That's certain.

Confid. But see where your stern father comes :
It is not meet that he should find you thus.

Puff. Hey, what the plague !—what a cut is here !—why, what is become of the description of her first meeting with Don Whiskerandos—his gallant behaviour in the sea fight—and the simile of the canary bird ?

Tilb. Indeed, sir, you'll find they will not be missed.

Puff. Very well—very well!

Tilb. The cue, ma'am, if you please.

Confid. It is not meet that he should find you thus.

Tilb. Thou counsel'st right; but 'tis no easy task
For barefaced grief to wear a mask of joy.

Enter GOVERNOR

Govern. How's this !—in tears ?—O, Tilburina,
shame !

Is this a time for maudling tenderness,
And Cupid's baby woes ?—hast thou not heard
That haughty Spain's pope-consecrated fleet
Advances to our shores, while England's fate,
Like a clipp'd guinea, trembles in the scale ?

Tilb. Then is the crisis of *my* fate at hand !
I see the fleet's approach—I see——

Puff. Now, pray, gentlemen, mind. This is one of the most useful figures we tragedy writers have, by which a hero or heroine, in consideration of their being often obliged to overlook things that *are* on the stage, is allowed to hear and see a number of things that are not.

Sneer. Yes ; a kind of poetical second-sight!

Puff. Yes.—Now then, madam.

Tilb. I see their decks
Are clear'd—I see the signal made !
The line is form'd !—a cable's length asunder !—
I see the frigates station'd in the rear ;
And now, I hear the thunder of the guns !
I hear the victor's shouts ! — I also hear
The vanquish'd groan !—and now 'tis smoke——and now
I see the loose sails shiver in the wind !
I see—I see——what soon you'll see——

Govern. Hold, daughter ! peace ! this love hath
turn'd thy brain :
The Spanish fleet thou *canst* not see—because
——It is not yet in sight !

Dangle. Egad, though, the governor seems to make no allowance for this poetical figure you talk of.

Puff. No, a plain matter-of-fact man ;—that's his character.

Tilb. But will you then refuse his offer ?

Govern. I must—I will—I can—I ought—I do.

Tilb. Think what a noble price.

Govern. No more—you urge in vain.

Tilb. His liberty is all he asks.

Sneer. All *who* asks, Mr. Puff ? Who is—

Puff. Egad, sir, I can't tell : here has been such cutting and slashing, I don't know where they have got to myself.

Tilb. Indeed, sir, you will find it will connect very well.

——And your reward secure.

Puff. O, if they hadn't been so devilish free with their cutting here, you would have found that Don Whiskerandos has been tampering for his liberty, and has persuaded Tilburina to make this proposal to her father ; and now, pray, observe the conciseness with which the argument is conducted. Egad, the *pro* and *con* goes as smart as hits in a fencing-match. It is, indeed, a sort of small-sword logic, which we have borrowed from the French.

Tilb. A retreat in Spain !

Govern. Outlawry here !

Tilb. Your daughter's prayer !

Govern. Your father's oath !

Tilb. My lover !

Govern. My country !

Tilb. Tilburina !

Govern. England !

Tilb. A title !

Govern. Honour !

Tilb. A pension !

Govern. Conscience !

Tilb. A thousand pounds !

Govern. Hah ! thou hast touch YI me nearly !

Puff. There, you see—she threw in *Tilburina*. Quick, parry cart with *England* !—Hah ! thrust in tierce " a title " !—parried by " honour." Hah ! " a pension " over the arm !—put by by " conscience." Then flankonade with " a thousand pounds "—and a palpable hit, egad !

Tilb. Canst thou—
Reject the *suppliant*, and the *daughter* too ?

Govern. No more ; I would not hear thee plead in
vain :

The *father* softens—but the *governor*
Is fix'd !

[*Exit.*

Dangle. Ay, that antithesis of persons is a most
established figure.

Tilb. 'Tis well,—hence then, fond hopes,—fond
passion, hence ;

Duty, behold I am all over thine——

Whiskerandos. [*Without.*] Where is my love—my——

Tilb. Ha !

Whiskerandos. [*Entering.*] My beauteous enemy——

Puff. O dear, ma'am, you must start a great
deal more than that: consider, you had just
determined in favour of duty—when, in a moment,
the sound of his voice revives your passion—over-
throws your resolution—destroys your obedience.
If you don't express all that in your start, you do
nothing at all.

Tilb. Well, we'll try again !

Dangle. Speaking from within has always a fine
effect.

Sneer. Very.

Whiskerandos. My conquering Tilburina ! How ! is't
thus

We meet ? why are thy looks averse ? what means
That falling tear—that frown of boding woe ?

Hah ! now indeed I am a prisoner !

Yes, now I feel the galling weight of these
Disgraceful chains—which, cruel Tilburina !

Thy dotting captive gloried in before.—

But thou art false, and Whiskerandos is undone !

Tilb. O, no ! how little dost thou know thy Tilburina !

Whiskerandos. Art thou then true ?—Begone cares,
doubts, and fears,
I make you all a present to the winds ;
And if the winds reject you—try the waves.

Puff. The wind, you know, is the established receiver of all stolen sighs, and cast-off griefs and apprehensions.

Tilb. Yet must we part !—stern duty seals our doom :
Though here I call yon conscious clouds to witness,
Could I pursue the bias of my soul,
All friends, all right of parents, I'd disclaim,
And thou, my Whiskerandos, shouldst be father
And mother, brother, cousin, uncle, aunt,
And friend to me !

Whiskerandos. O, matchless excellence !—and must we part ?
Well, if—we must—we must—and in that case
The less is said the better.

Puff. Hey-day ! here's a cut !—What, are all the mutual protestations out ?

Tilb. Now, pray, sir, don't interrupt us just here : you ruin our feelings.

Puff. *Your* feelings !—but zounds, *my* feelings, ma'am !

Sneer. No ; pray don't interrupt them.

Whiskerandos. One last embrace.—

Tilb. Now,—farewell, for ever.

Whiskerandos. For ever !

Tilb. Ay, for ever.

[*Going.*]

Puff. 'Sdeath and fury !—Gad's life !—sir ! madam ! if you go out without the parting look, you might as well dance out—Here, here !

Confid. But pray, sir, how am I to get off here ?

Puff. You, pshaw ! what the devil signifies how you get off ! edge away at the top, or where you will—[Pushes the CONFIDANT off.] Now, ma'am, you see——

Tilb. We understand you, sir.

Ay, for ever.

Both. Oh ! [Turning back, and exeunt.

Scene closes.

Dangle. O, charming !

Puff. Hey !—'tis pretty well, I believe : you see I don't attempt to strike out anything new—but I take it I improve on the established modes.

Sneer. You do, indeed. But, pray, is not Queen Elizabeth to appear ?

Puff. No, not once—but she is to be talked of for ever; so that, egad, you'll think a hundred times that she is on the point of coming in.

Sneer. Hang it, I think it's a pity to keep her in the green-room all the night.

Puff. O no, that always has a fine effect—it keeps up expectation.

Dangle. But are we not to have a battle ?

Puff. Yes, yes, you will have a battle at last; but, egad, it's not to be by land, but by sea—and that is the only quite new thing in the piece.

Dangle. What, Drake at the Armada, hey ?

Puff. Yes, i'faith—fire-ships and all; then we shall end with the procession. Hey ! that will do,

Sneer. No doubt on't.

Puff. Come, we must not lose time ; so now for the under-plot.

Sneer. What the plague, have you another plot?

Puff. O, Lord, yes ; ever while you live have two plots to your tragedy. The grand point in managing them is only to let your under-plot have as little connexion with your main plot as possible. —I flatter myself nothing can be more distinct than mine ; for as in my chief plot the characters are all great people, I have laid my under-plot in low life ; and as the former is to end in deep distress, I make the other end as happy as a farce.—Now, Mr. Hopkins, as soon as you please.

Enter UNDER PROMPTER

Under Prompt. Sir, the carpenter says it is impossible you can go to the park scene yet.

Puff. The park scene ! no ; I mean the description scene here, in the wood.

Under Prompt. Sir, the performers have cut it out.

Puff. Cut it out!

Under Prompt. Yes, sir.

Puff. What! the whole account of Queen Elizabeth ?

Under Prompt. Yes, sir.

Puff. And the description of her horse and side-saddle ?

Under Prompt. Yes, sir.

Puff. So, so; this is very fine indeed.—Mr. Hopkins, how the plague could you suffer this?

Hopkins. [*From within.*] Sir, indeed the pruning-knife——

Puff. The pruning-knife—zounds!—the axe! Why, here has been such lopping and topping, I sha'n't have the bare trunk of my play left presently.—Very well, sir—the performers must do as they please; but, upon my soul, I'll print it every word.

Sneer. That I would, indeed.

*Puff** Very well, sir; then we must go on.—Zounds! I would not have parted with the description of the horse!——Well, sir, go on——Sir, it was one of the finest and most laboured things——Very well, sir; let them go on——there you had him and his accoutrements from the bit to the crupper.—Very well, sir; we must go to the park scene.

Under Prompt. Sir, there is the point: the carpenters say, that unless there is some business put in here before the drop, they shan't have time to clear away the fort, or sink Gravesend and the river.

Puff. So! this is a pretty dilemma, truly!—Gentlemen, you must excuse me—these fellows will never be ready unless I go and look after them myself.

Sneer. O dear, sir, these little things will happen.

Puff. To cut out this scene !—but I'll print it—
egad, I'll print it every word ! *[Exeunt.*

ACT III

SCENE I

The Theatre, before the Curtain

Enter PUFF, SNEER, and DANGLE

Puff. Well, we are ready ;—now then for the justices.

Curtain rises—JUSTICES, CONSTABLES, etc. discovered

Sneer. This, I suppose, is a sort of senate scene.

Puff. To be sure ; there has not been one yet.

Dangle. It is the under-plot, isn't it ?

Puff. Yes.—What, gentlemen, do you mean to go at once to the discovery scene ?

Justice. If you please, sir.

Puff. O, very well.—Hark'ee, I don't choose to say anything more ; but, i'faith, they have mangled my play in a most shocking manner.

Dangle. It's a great pity !

Puff. Now, then, Mr. Justice, if you please.

Justice. Are all the volunteers without ?

Constable. They are.
Some ten in fetters, and some twenty drunk.

Justice. Attends the youth, whose most opprobrious
fame

And clear convicted crimes have stamp't him soldier ?

Constable. He waits your pleasure ; eager to repay
The blest reprieve that sends him to the fields
Of glory, there to raise his branded hand
In honour's cause.

Justice. 'Tis well——'tis justice arms him !
O ! may he now defend his country's laws
With half the spirit he has broke them all !
If 'tis your worship's pleasure, bid him enter.

Constable. I fly, the herald of your will.

[Exit CONSTABLE.]

Puff. Quick, sir !

Sneer. But, Mr. Puff, I think not only the
Justice, but the clown seems to talk in as high a
style as the first hero among them.

Puff. Heaven forbid they should not, in a free
country !—Sir, I am not for making slavish dis-
tinctions, and giving all the fine language to the
upper sort of people.

Dangle. That's very noble in you, indeed.

Enter JUSTICE'S LADY

Puff. Now, pray mark this scene.

Lady. Forgive this interruption, good my love ;
But as I just now past a pris'ner youth,
Whom rude hands hither lead, strange bodings seized
My flutt'ring heart, and to myself I said,
And if our *Tom* had lived, he'd surely been
This stripling's height !

Justice. Ha ! sure some powerful sympathy directs
Us both——

Re-enter CONSTABLE with SON

What is thy name ?

Son. My name's *Tom Jenkins*—*alias* have I none—
Though orphan'd, and without a friend 1

Justice. Thy parents ?

Son. My father dwelt in Rochester——and was,
As I have heard——a fishmonger——no more.

Puff. What, sir, do you leave out the account
of your birth, parentage, and education ?

Son. They have settled it so, sir, here.

Puff. Oh ! oh !

Lady. How loudly nature whispers to my heart!
Had he no other name ?

Son. I've seen a bill
Of his sign'd *Tomkins*, creditor.

Justice. This does indeed confirm each circumstance
The gipsy told !——Prepare !

Son. I do.

Justice. No orphan, nor without a friend art thou—
i" am thy father ; *here's* thy mother ; *there*
Thy uncle——this thy first cousin, and those
Are all your near relations !

Mother. O ecstasy of bliss !

Son. O most unlook'd for happiness !

Justice. O wonderful event !

[They faint alternately in each other's arms.]

Puff. There, you see relationship, like murder,
will out.

Justice. Now let's revive——else were this joy too
much !

But come——and we'll unfold the rest within ;
And thou, my boy, must needs want rest and food.
Hence may each orphan hope, as chance directs,
To find a father——where he least expects ! *[Exeunt.]*

Puff. What do you think of that ?

Dangle. One of the finest discovery-scenes I

ever saw.—Why, this under-plot would have made a tragedy itself.

Sneer. Ay, or a comedy either.

Puff. And keeps quite clear, you see, of the other.

Enter SCENEMEN, taking away the seats

Puff. The scene remains, does it ?

Sceneman. Yes, sir.

Puff. You are to leave one chair, you know.—But it is always awkward, in a tragedy, to have you fellows coming in in your playhouse liveries to remove things—I wish that could be managed better.—So now for my mysterious yeoman.

Enter a BEEFEATER

Beefeater. **Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee.**

Sneer. Haven't I heard that line before ?

Puff. No, I fancy not—Where, pray ?

Dangle. Yes, I think there is something like it in Othello.

Puff. Gad ! now you put me in mind on't, I believe there is—but that's of no consequence ; all that can be said is, that two people happened to hit on the same thought—and Shakespeare made use of it first, that's all.

Sneer. Very true.

Puff. Now, sir, your soliloquy—but speak more to the pit, if you please—the soliloquy always to the pit—that's a rule.

Beefeater. Though hopeless love finds comfort in despair,

It never can endure a rival's bliss !

But soft—I am observed. [EXIT BEEFEATER.

Dangle. That's a very short soliloquy.

Puff. Yes—but it would have been a great deal longer if he had not been observed.

Sneer. A most sentimental Beefeater that, Mr. Puff.

Puff. Hark'ee—I would not have you be too sure that he *is* a Beefeater.

Sneer. What, a hero in disguise ?

Puff. No matter—I only give you a hint.—But now for my principal character.—Here he comes—*Lord Burleigh* in person ! Pray, gentlemen, step this way—softly—I only hope the Lord High Treasurer is perfect—if he is but perfect!

Enter BURLEIGH, goes slowly to a chair, and sits

Sneer. Mr. Puff !

Puff. Hush ! vastly well, sir ! vastly well ! a most interesting gravity !

Dangle. What, isn't he to speak at all ?

Puff. Egad, I thought you'd ask me that—yes, it is a very likely thing—that a minister in his situation, with the whole affairs of the nation on his head, should have time to talk !—but hush ! or you'll put him out.

Sneer. Put him out ! how the plague can that be, if he's not going to say anything ?

Puff. There's a reason ! why, his part is to

think ; and how the plague do you imagine he can *think* if you keep talking ?

Dangle. That's very true, upon my word !

BURLEIGH *comes forward, shakes his head, and exit*

Sneer. He is very perfect indeed.—Now, pray, what did he mean by that ?

Puff. You don't take it ?

Sneer. No, I don't, upon my soul.

Puff. Why, by that shake of the head he gave you to understand, that even though they had more justice in their cause, and wisdom in their measures—yet, if there was not a greater spirit shown on the part of the people, the country would at last fall a sacrifice to the hostile ambition of the Spanish monarchy.

Sneer. The devil!—did he mean all that by shaking his head ?

Puff. Every word of it—if he shook his head as I taught him.

Dangle. Ah ! there certainly is a vast deal to be done on the stage by dumb show and expression of face ; and a judicious author knows how much he may trust to it.

Sneer. O, here are some of our old acquaintance.

Enter HATTON and RALEIGH

Sir Christ. H. My niece, and your niece too !

By Heav'n ! there's witchcraft in't—He could not else
Have gain'd their hearts—But see where they ap-
proach ;

Some horrid purpose low'ring on their brows !

Sir Walter R. Let us withdraw, and mark them.

[They withdraw.]

Sneer. What is all this ?

Puff. Ah ! here has been more pruning !—but the fact is, these two young ladies are also in love with Don Whiskerandos.—Now, gentlemen, this scene goes entirely for what we call *situation* and *stage effect*, by which the greatest applause may be obtained without the assistance of language, sentiment, or character : pray mark !

Enter the Two NIECES

Ist Niece. Ellena here !

She is his scorn as much as I—that is
Some comfort still !

Puff. O dear, madam, you are not to say that to her face !—*aside*, ma'am, *aside*.—The whole scene is to be *aside*.

Ist Niece. She is his scorn as much as I—that is
Some comfort still ! *[Aside.]*

2nd Niece. I know he prizes not Pollina's love ;
But Tilburina lords it o'er his heart. *[Aside,*

Ist Niece. But see, the proud destroyer of my peace.
Revenge is all the good I've left. *[Aside,*

2nd Niece. He comes, the false disturber of my quiet.
Now, vengeance, do thy worst.———*[Aside.]*

Enter WHISKERANDOS

Whiskerandos. O hateful liberty—if thus in vain
I seek my Tilburina !

Both Nieces. And ever shalt !

Sir CHRISTOPHER and Sir. WALTER come forward

Sir Christ. H. and Sir Walt. Hold ! we will avenge you.

*Whiskerando*8. Hold you—or see your nieces bleed !

[The two Nieces draw their daggers to strike WHISKERANDOS : the two Uncles at the instant, with their two swords drawn, catch their two Nieces arms, and turn the points of their swords to WHISKERANDOS, who immediately draws two daggers, and holds them to the two Nieces' bosoms.]*

Puff. There's situation for you ! there's an heroic group !—You see the ladies can't stab Whiskerandos—he durst not strike them, for fear of their uncles—the uncles durst not kill him, because of their nieces—I have them all at a dead lock !—for every one of them is afraid to let go first.

Sneer. Why, then, they must stand there for ever.

Puff. So they would, if I hadn't a very fine contrivance for't——Now mind——

Enter BEEFEATER, with his halberd

Beefeater. In the Queen's name I charge you all to drop Your swords and daggers.

[They drop their swords and daggers.]

Sneer. That is a contrivance indeed.

Puff. Ay—in the queen's name.

Sir Christ. H. Come, niece !

Sir Walter R. Come, niece !

[Exeunt, with the two Nieces.]

Whiskerandos. What's he, who bids us thus renounce our guard ?

Beefeater. Thou must do more—renounce thy love !

Whiskerandos. Thou liest——base Beefeater !

Beefeater.

Ha ! hell ! the lie !

By Heav'n, thou'st roused the lion in my heart !
Off, yeoman's habit !—base disguise ! off ! off !

*[Discovers himself, by throwing off his upper dress,
and appearing in a very fine waistcoat.*

Am I a Beefeater now ?

Or beams my crest as terrible as when

Tn Biscay's Bay I took thy captive sloop ?

Puff. There, egad ! he comes out to be the very captain of the privateer who had taken Whiskerandos prisoner—and was himself an old lover of Tilburina's.

Dangle. Admirably managed, indeed.

Puff. Now, stand out of their way.

Whiskerandos. I thank thee, fortune ! that hast thus bestow'd

A weapon to chastise this insolent.

[Takes up one of the swords.

Beefeater. I take thy challenge, Spaniard, and I thank thee,

Fortune, too !———*[Takes up the other sword.*

Dangle. That's excellently contrived !—it seems as if the two uncles had left their swords on purpose for them.

Puff. No, egad, they could not help leaving them.

Whiskerandos. Vengeance and Tilburina !

Beefeater. Exactly so——

[They fight—and after the usual number of wounds given, WHISKERANDOS falls.

Whiskerandos. O cursed parry !——that last thrust in tierce

Was fatal——Captain, thou hast fenced well !

And Whiskerandos quits this bustling scene

For all eter——

Beefeater. —nity—he would have added, but stern death

Cut short his being, and the noun at once !

Puff. O, my dear sir, you are too slow : now mind me.—Sir, shall I trouble you to die again ?

Whiskerandos. And Whiskerandos quits this bustling scene

For all eter——

Beefeater. —nity—he would have added——

Puff. No, sir—that's not it—once more, if you please.

Whiskerandos. I wish, sir, you would practise this without me—I can't stay dying here all night.

Puff. Very well; we'll go over it by and by—— I must humour these gentlemen !

[*Exit* WHISKERANDOS.]

Beefeater. Farewell, brave Spaniard! and when next——

Puff. Dear sir, you needn't speak that speech, as the body has walked off.

Beefeater. That's true, sir—then I'll join the fleet.

Puff. If you please. [*Exit* BEEFEATER.] NOW, who comes on ?

Enter GOVERNOR, with his hair properly disordered

Govern. A hemisphere of evil planets reign !

And every planet sheds contagious phrensy !

My Spanish prisoner is slain ! my daughter,

Meeting the dead corse borne along, has gone

Distract !

[*A loud flourish of trumpets.*]

But hark ! I am summoned to the fort :
Perhaps the fleets have met ! amazing crisis t
O Tilburina ! from thy aged father's beard
Thou'st pluck'd the few brown hairs which time had left!

[Exit GOVERNOR.

Sneer. Poor gentleman !

Puff. Yes—and no one to blame but his daughter !

Dangle. And the planets——

Puff. True.—Now enter Tilburina !

Sneer. Egad, the business comes on quick here.

Puff. Yes, sir—now she comes in stark mad in white satin.

Sneer. Why in white satin ?

Puff. O Lord, sir—when a heroine goes mad, she always goes into white satin—don't she, Dangle ?

Dangle. Always—it's a rule.

Puff. Yes—here it is—[looking at the book.]
" Enter Tilburina stark mad in white satin, and her confidant stark mad in white linen."

Enter TILBURINA and CONFIDANT, mad, according to custom

Sneer. But, what the deuce, is the confidant to be mad too ?

Puff. To be sure she is : the confidant is always to do whatever her mistress does ; weep when she weeps, smile when she smiles, go mad when she goes mad.—Now, madam confidant—but keep your madness in the background, if you please.

Tilb. The wind whistles—the moon rises—see,
They have kill'd my squirrel in his cage !

Is this a grasshopper ?—Ha ! no ; it is my
Whiskerandos—you shall not keep him—

I know you have him in your pocket—

An oyster may be cross'd in love !—Who says

A whale's a bird ?—Ha ! did you call, my love ?

—He's here ! He's there !—He's everywhere !

Ah me ! He's nowhere !

[Exit TILBURINA.]

Puff. There, do you ever desire to see anybody
madder than that ?

Sneer. Never, while I live !

Puff. You observed how she mangled the
metre ?

Dangle. Yes—egad, it was the first thing made
me suspect she was out of her senses.

Sneer. And, pray, what becomes of her ?

Puff. She is gone to throw herself into the sea,
to be sure—and that brings us at once to the scene
of action, and so to my catastrophe—my sea-
fight, I mean.

Sneer. What, you bring that in at last ?

Puff. Yes, yes—you know my play is *called*
The Spanish Armada ; otherwise, egad, I have no
occasion for the battle at all.—Now then for my
magnificence !—my battle !—my noise !—and my
procession !—You are all ready ?

UNDER PROMPTER *within.* Yes, sir.

Puff. Is the Thames dressed ?

Enter THAMES, with two Attendants

Thames. Here I am, sir.

Puff. Very well indeed—See, gentlemen, there's a river for you !—This is blending a little of the masque with my tragedy—a new fancy, you know—and very useful in my case ; for as there *must be a procession*, I suppose Thames, and all his tributary rivers, to compliment Britannia with a fête in honour of the victory.

Sneer. But, pray, who are these gentlemen in green with him ?

Puff. Those ?—those are his banks.

Sneer. His banks ?

Puff. Yes, one crowned with alders, and the other with a villa !—you take the allusions ?—But hey ! what the plague ! you have got both your banks on one side—Here, sir, come round—Ever while you live, Thames, go between your banks. [*Bell rings.*] There, soh! now for't.—Stand aside, my dear friends !—away, Thames !

[*Exit THAMES between his banks.*

[*Flourish of drums, trumpets, cannon, etc., etc.*

Scene changes to the sea—the fleets engage—the music plays " Britons strike home."—Spanish fleet destroyed by fireships, etc.—English fleet advances—music plays " Rule Britannia."—The procession of all the English rivers, and their tributaries, with their emblems, etc., begins with Handel's water music, ends with a chorus, to the march in "Judas Maccabceus".—During this scene Puff directs and applauds everything—then]

Puff. Well, pretty well—but not quite perfect—so, ladies and gentlemen, if you please, we'll rehearse this piece again to-morrow.

[Curtain drops.]

NOTES

Mrs. Greville was Horace Walpole's *' pretty Fanny Macartney," 'the wife of Fulke Greville and mother of Lady Crewe. She died in 1789. In *' A Portrait, addressed to Mrs. Crowe," prefixed to *The School for Scandal*, Sheridan again refers to her :

" Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though Greville, or the Muse, should deign to teach."

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Mr. King. Thomas King (1730-1805) was the first Sir Peter Teazle.

Mr. Dodd. James William Dodd, who died in 1796, created the part of Dangle, as also of Sir Benjamin Backbite in *The School for Scandal* and of Lord Foppington in *A Trip to Scarborough*. Lamb spoke highly of his Sir Andrew Aguecheek.

Mr. Palmer was the original Joseph Surface.

Mr. Baddeley played Moses, the friendly Jew in *The School for Scandal*, and also Lory in *A Trip to Scarborough*. He gave the Twelfth Night cake to Drury Lane theatre.

Mr. Parsons as Sir Fretful, Miss Pope as Tilburina and Mr. Bannister as Don Ferolo, were the chief successes of the original cast.

Drury Lane Theatre and Covent Garden were till 1843 the only playhouses at which the spoken drama could legally be presented. Other theatres could only offer musical entertainments, burlettas or spectacular displays. Drury Lane Theatre was first opened on 8th April, 1663, with a play called *The Humourous Lieutenant*.

It was reconstructed in 1672 from plans by Christopher Wren. In Garrick's time, it held 2,000 spectators. It was rebuilt to hold 3,611 (more than the present house) in 1794. Burnt, with great loss to Sheridan in 1809, it was rebuilt in 1812, and nine years later was remodelled inside by Elliston, when it remained as it was till the present theatre was constructed. The only London theatre which can boast a permanent name and site from the Restoration, it is famous as the home of Garrick, Kemble, Mrs. Siddons, and Mac ready.

PROLOGUE

The Honourable Eichard Fitzpatrick (1747-1813) was the second son of John, first earl of Upper Ossory and Lady Evelyn Leveson Gower. He was known chiefly as a leader of fashion and bosom-friend of Charles James Fox. Both were keen on the theatre and both wrote verses. He entered the army in 1765 and Parliament in 1774. In 1777 (the year in which *The School for Scandal* was produced) he served in the war in America. He was chief secretary for Ireland in 1782 and a year later Secretary for War, which post he again held on Fox's return to power in 1806.

L. 1. The Sister Muses were those of Tragedy and Comedy.

L. 6. **When** Villiers criticised. George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham and favourite of Charles II, wrote a play *The Rehearsal* published in 1672, in which the author Bayes is a satire on Dryden. But Saintsbury, maintaining that it was Davenant who was the target, points out that Dryden was not laureate at the time it was begun. Nor had he written his most characteristic plays, *Aurungzebe* and *All for Love*. The heroic style, which Villiers ridiculed, degenerated into bombast and rant when used by less mighty craftsmen than Dryden. He was born in 1631, educated at Westminster and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was made Poet Laureate in 1670, and died on May Day, 1700. A satirist, a poet and a dramatist, he is the only great poet of his age and one of the

greatest of English literature. Pope, who met him once at Wills' coffee-house, called him "the glorious John."

L. 11-18. Her comic sister. These lines refer to the Restoration comedies, against which a revulsion had set in.

L. 25. Melpomene's cold numbers. Melpomene, of whom a statue is to be found in the room adjoining the Venus de Milo at the Louvre, Paris, was the tragic Muse. The others were: Clio, Muse of History; Ætherpe, lyric poetry; Thalia, comedy; Terpsichore, dance; Erato, love poetry; Polymna, hymns; Urania, astronomy and Calliope, epic poetry. Worship of the Muses was introduced from Thrace and Pieria into Boetia and their favourite haunt was Helicon.

L. 30. The yawning pit. The theatres of the time had no stalls, the whole floor being occupied by the pit. As it was stronger in numbers and more vociferous than other parts of the house, authors were at pains to please it. "Yawning" may here be taken literally, as well as meaning "empty."

Dr. Johnson, in his prologue to Goldsmith's *The Good-Natured Man*, wrote:

"Distrest alike, the stateman and the wit,
Whom one a borough courts and one the pit."

L. 36. not quite a novice. Sheridan had already had produced *The Rivals*, *St. Patrick's Day* and *The Duenna* in 1775. *The School for Scandal* and *A Trip to Scarborough* followed in 1777.

ACT I. SCENE T.

Brutus. The full name of the Roman Brutus was Lucius Junius Brutus, and the point of Sheridan's use of the name will be seen when it is remembered that at this time great interest was aroused by the appearance of *The Letters of Junius* (see Note).

Lord North (1732-92) was, in 1770, the first Tory to be Prime Minister since the Hanoverian succession in 1714. His majority was composed of the king's friends and he merely performed the king's will. George III decided all foreign policy and parliamentary matters, dispensed

all patronage and chose all the officials, whether in church or state. He forced North to continue the war with the American colonies three years after North was convinced it would ruin the country. The North ministry was impassive in foreign affairs and looked on unconcerned while Prussia, Russia and Austria divided Poland in 1782. They raised the civil list of the king by £100,000 (although it was notorious that George used this money for political bribery) and paid off vast amounts of the Royal debts. North's government dragged on till 1782, when it resigned.

First L — dash D of the A — dash Y. John Montague, fourth Earl of Sandwich, was First Lord of the Admiralty. In 1778-9, there was considerable dissatisfaction at the lack of success in the naval warfare with the French. The Admiralty was attacked in the House of Commons and Lord Sandwich only narrowly escaped a vote of censure. Sir Charles Hardy, though he had retired from active service twenty years before, was called to succeed Keppel in command of the Channel fleet in 1779. An invasion by French and Spanish was feared, but Hardy warded off an engagement (for which he was criticised) and **the** enemy withdrew to Brest. He himself died in 1780.

St. Kitts. Byron (1723-1786), the English vice-admiral opposing the French in the West Indies, had been at St. Kitt's in July 1779. In *The London Chronicle*, September 30-October 2nd, 1779, is an "Extract of a letter from St. Christopher's lately received."

Coxheath. In July 1779, a large encampment of militia was formed at Coxheath, near Maidstone, in expectation of an invasion. *The London Chronicle* (October 14-16) contains news-items from Coxheath. A musical piece called *The Camp*, which was at one time attributed to Sheridan, **was** laid at Coxheath.

The Morning Chronicle, which specialised in theatrical news, was founded in 1769 and ran for 90 years. The first daily newspaper to be printed was *The Daily Courant*, which began in 1702, the year of Queen Anne's accession.

Quidnunc. **The** Latin derivation (*quid*, what, *nunc*,

now) should explain this meaning of newsmonger or gossip.

Maecenas died B.C. 8. He was the patron of Virgil and Horace. Virgil was indebted to him for the recovery of a farm, seized by soldiery in B.C. 41, and at Maecenas' request, wrote the *Georgics*. Horace received from his patron a farm in the Sabine country. Swift has some lines which aptly describe a "Mock Maecenas" :

" While Montagu, who claimed the station
To be Maecenas of the nation,
For poets open table kept,
But ne'er considered where they slept."

Dorindas, Pollys and Ophelias. Dorinda was the daughter of Lady Bountiful in Farquhar's *The Beaux Stratagem*. Polly was the heroine in Gay's opera of that name, sequel to *The Beggar's Opera*, and the point of mentioning Ophelia is that a performance of *Hamlet* preceded the first presentation of *The Critic*.

The Opera House. There had been a coalition between the patentees of Drury Lane and Covent Garden just before the season of 1778-9. This was the subject of a satire. "The Coalition," "a farce founded on facts," 1779.

One of the Westminster associations. These were voluntary militia. In 1760, a Scottish adventurer named MacGregor, prompted by the lack of militia in the city of Westminster, raised a regiment and sold commissions to sharpers and tradesmen. Mr. Vaughan in about 1782 was a "captain of a company of the Westminster volunteers."

The Artillery Ground of the Honourable Artillery Company, the oldest military body in England, dating from Henry VII, was near Bunhill Fields, London.

The Mirror of Nature. Dangle is quoting from *Hamlet* 3. 2. 24 ... "the purpose of playing whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." In 2. 2. 548, after the

players have rehearsed before him, Hamlet says " Let them be well used ; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time : after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live."

Mr. Sneer. In Fielding's *Pasquin* there is a critic called Sneerwell.

a style they have lately tried to run down. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) and Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775) were popularly supposed to have caused the downfall of " sentimental comedy." In the prologue attached to *The Rivals* on the tenth night, Sheridan ridiculed the Sentimental Muse and gave his own opinions of comedy.

Vanbrugh and Congreve were the two major dramatists of their time. The latter was the second son of Richard Congreve, one of the thirteen Staffordshire gentlemen on whom Charles intended to confer the order of the Royal Oak, had it been made. His first play, *The Old Bachelor*, was shaped by Dryden and put on in 1693. This was followed in the same year by *The Double Dealer*. His most famous plays are *Love for Love* and *The Way of the World*. Supposed to have been in love with Mrs. Bracegirdle, he died in 1729, leaving most of his money to Henrietta, Duchess of Marlborough.

Sir John Vanbrugh is described by Saintsbury as " at least the rival of Congreve at his best, but far more unequal." It is not certain where or when he was born ; he himself said it was in the Bastille and his dates are generally believed to be 1664-1726. His first play, *The Relapse*, was produced at Drury Lane at the end of the seventeenth century, *The Provoked Wife* followed a year after and *The Confederacy* in 1705. He was also a brilliant architect, well-known for Blenheim, over which he had disputes with Marlborough, and in connection with this side of his genius the epitaph of one Dr. Evans may be quoted: " Lie heavy on him earth, for he

Laid many heavy loads on thee."

He was knighted in 1714, when the Hanoverians came in. His first play was adapted by Cibber as *Love's Last Shift* **and** also, freely, by Sheridan, as *A Trip to Scarborough*. **With** Congreve he opened the King's Theatre in 1705.

Sir Fretful Plagiary. Sheridan was tilting at Richard Cumberland, the dramatist, who prefixed a Dedication to Detraction to his play, *The Cholerick Man*. See Introduction.

never send a play there. Sheridan had been charged with plagiarising from plays sent to him as manager of Drury Lane.

He, you know, never. If Sneer had been allowed to finish, he would have said " writes a tragedy." Sheridan wrote only comedies.

your commonplace-book. In *The Rehearsal*, Bayes kept a book of drama commonplaces, " the mother of many other plays."

tropes are words used metaphorically.

tambour is a circular frame on which silks are stretched to be embroidered. Cf. *The School for Scandal*, Act 2, Scene 1, where Sir Peter says, " Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I saw you first sitting at your tambour."

Linsey-woolsey. Dress-material of coarse, inferior wool, woven on cotton warp.

Marl is soil of clay and carbonate of lime, a valuable fertiliser.

Falstaff's page was called " Robin " in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and " Boy " in *Henry V*. In *Henry IV*, Part 2, Act 2, Lines 75-7, Prince Hal says, " And the boy that I gave Falstaff ; a' had him from me Christian ; and look, if the fat villain have not transformed him ape." Apes were alleged to imitate, as the verb implies, and the page mimicked Falstaff's jests.

Lady Rondeau. A rondeau is a poem of ten or thirteen lines, with two rhymes and the opening words used twice as a refrain. Cf. Austin Dobson's " In After Days," poem 826 in *The Oxford Book of English Verse*.

Mrs. Fugue. A fugue is a musical composition on one or two themes, contrapuntally harmonised and re-introduced from time to time. It is easy to see that these names are meant to characterise the owners.

SCENE II

Pasticcio means a composite opera and may be found bracketed in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* with *pastiche*.

Ritornello is an interlude in music between the theme and variations. It should be remembered that the Italian opera at the King's theatre in the Haymarket was then at the height of its brilliance.

Je dis, madame. This opening dialogue can be translated as :

Interpreter. I say, madam, that I have the honour to introduce, and to ask your protection for, Signor Pasticcio Ritornello and his charming family.

Signor Pasticcio. Ah, your Ladyship, we beg you to favour us with your protection.

1st Signor a. Your ladyship will do us that favour.

2nd Signora. Please, madam.

Interpreter. Madame—me interpret—that is to say—in English—that they beg you to do them the honour—
(Mrs. Dangle.)

Signor Pasticcio. This gentleman will explain.

Interpreter. Yes—me interpret—we have letters of recommendation for Mrs. Dangle to—
(Mrs. Dangle.)

Signor Pasticcio. Lady Rondeau is our patroness.

3rd Signora. Yes, father, and my lady Fugue.

Interpreter. O !—me interpret—madam, they say—in English—that they have the honour to be protected by these ladies.

Part of the humour in this lies in the fact that on each occasion that the interpreter says " in English," he breaks into French.

Monsieur Dangle, le grand bruit. Both the interpreter and Signor Pasticcio are saying " Mr. Dangle, the fame of your talent for criticism and of your influence with the directors of theatres— "

vicinage. District or neighbourhood.

Hygeia. The goddess of Health. But a quack doctor, James Graham, had just set up a Temple of Health in the Adelphi.

Caduceus. The messenger of the gods carried a staff, given him by Apollo. The white ribbons curling from it are, in later representations of Mercury, changed into two serpents.

the Marshalsea. This debtors' prison existed in Southwark from the reign of Edward III till 1849.

pressed. This means "impressed," or forced to take service in the navy.

Mr. Dapper. The audience would fully have appreciated this allusion, for under the name of Dapper, Colman, who managed the Haymarket theatre and wrote the Epilogue to *The School for Scandal*, had ridiculed a certain Mr. Vauglian in some papers called *The Geniics* (1761-2). This man busied himself in the Richmond theatre and wrote to *The Morning Post*. He was said to be the original for Sheridan's Dangle.

Mr. King. A joke lies in the fact that he was playing the part of Puff and thus had to shower these praises not only on his fellow-actors but on himself.

Mr. De Louthembourg. Philippe Jacques de Louthembourg (1735-1812) exercised great influence on the theatre by his scenic designs. An Alsatian, between 1773-1785 he was designing for the English stage, being first engaged by Garrick for Drury Lane. He was made an Academician in 1781. "Before his time," we are told, "the back was one broad fiat." Louthembourg broke up the scene with built-up scenery. By temperament a romantic, his craftsmanship inclined him towards realism and he invented many devices to increase stage illusion, among them transparent scenery. He was the first to pay attention to lighting and used coloured and stained glass for his lamps. When Kean revived *King Lear*, in 1820, he advertised "a land storm after the manner of Louthembourg." See Allardyce Nicholas *Development of the Theatre*, pp. 175-77. Sheridan tried to reduce his salary, so they quarrelled.

The Morning Post began in 1772. It first attained a wide circulation through the contributions of Coleridge from 1795-1800. *The Times* was not founded until 1788. Under the editorship of Henry Bate, a dissolute

clergyman, *The Morning Post* was well-known for scurrilous attacks. But his career was ended by imprisonment in 1780, for libelling the Duke of Richmond.

St. James's Street contained the chief clubs and coffee-houses. In Dickens' *Dictionary of London*, it may be read that "the political history of the last century centres in the club-houses of St. James's. White's was founded in 1730, the Cocoa Tree in 1746, Brooks's in 1764."

Paternoster Row. It is perhaps worth remarking that the *Letters of Junius* were published by "Henry Sampson Woodfall in Pater Noster Row MDCCLXXII."

Prosperine. In mythology, she was the daughter of Jupiter and Ceres. She was carried off by Pluto, the god of the nether regions, and only allowed to return to the upper world for a few months each year. This legend interpreted the change of seasons.

Fete Champetre is French for a woodland or garden entertainment such as we see in Watteau's pictures. The phrase was in common use in England in Sheridan's time to denote a large garden-party. The allusion here is to the fact that Prosperine was picking flowers when she was carried off.

Scan. Mag. is an abbreviation of Scandalum Magnatum, which is, in law, "the offence of speaking slanderously or in defamation of high personages."

tablature. "In painting, we may give to any particular work the name of tablature when the work is in reality a single work comprehended in one view, and formed according to one single intelligence, meaning, or design" (Lord Shaftesbury).

MY tragedy. Puff here gives himself away as the author of the puff direct, read by Dangle in the second speech of the play.

The style of Junius. The letters of Junius appeared in the *Public Advertiser* from January 1769-72. They attacked the king, the ministers—mainly the Duke of Grafton—and everything to do with the administration. They showed inside knowledge of official matters. They

were attributed to Edmund Burke, Lord Temple, Lord George Sackville, Wilkes, and especially to Philip Francis (1740). He entered the Civil Service and was in the War Office. He was an extreme Whig and duelled with Hastings. Saintsbury describes them thus : ". . . *The Letters of Junius*, while they display some of the worst qualities of the human soul . . . and hardly one really good or great quality . . . are far less intellectually and artistically remarkable than it used to be, and sometimes still is, the fashion to represent them . . . an affectation of affected moral indignation, claptrap rhetorical interrogations, the use of balanced antitheses, a very good ear for some, though by no means many cadences and rhythms, some ingenuity in trope and metaphor . . . these, though by no means all, are the chief features of the Junian method."

Paul Jones (1747-02) was a Scot, a naval adventurer, who served against England in the American war. He was cruising in the North Sea during the autumn of 1779 (when *The Critic* was produced) and threatening Leith and the Tyne.

Compel the Dutch. Paul Jones captured two English men-of-war off Flamborough Head and put into Texel. When England protested that the Dutch should give them up, he hoisted French colours and sold his captures to France.

the evening papers. The first evening papers in London were only supplementary editions of the daytime ones. The first important evening paper was *The Courier* (1792).

The Morning Herald was a Tory paper founded in the late eighteenth century and circulating till 1869.

The Public Advertiser. In 1726, the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* was founded. Its name was shortened in 1752. It was one of the five metropolitan papers flourishing in the reign of George III, and was famous for its publication of the *Letters of Junius*. It came to an end in 1798. The issue for 28th October, 1779, contained this announcement :

" Drury Lane theatre. On Saturday next, the tragedy of *Hamlet*, after which will be presented for

the first time a dramatic after-piece in two acts, called *The Critic ; or a Tragedy Rehearsed.*"

It afterwards spoke of the " miraculous scenery " which attended the representation.

Charles Fox. As *The Morning Post* supported the ministry, it would be glad to " shoot Charles Fox."

ACT II. SCENE I.

A most happy thought. England was then threatened with invasion, as she had been in the reign of Elizabeth.

You need not mind stopping. This does not mean that they may, but that they need not bother to stop, for the intervals.

SCENE II.

saves a description. The audience would remember the end of the first scene of *Hamlet*, where Horatius says :

" But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastern hill."

Sir Walter Raleigh was actually in Ireland at the time referred to. But he hurried back to England and took charge of the coastal defences.

Sir Christopher Hatton, in April 1587, was Lord Chancellor of England. In February of that year he had spoken at length in Parliament on the danger of a Spanish invasion. Hence his " cautious conjecture " is absurd. He was known as the " dancing Chancellor " because Queen Elizabeth was attracted by his graceful dancing at court in a masque. Leicester was jealous of her admiration for his dancing and offered to introduce her to a master who could excel him. But Elizabeth said " Pish! I will not see your man."

Had they been talking before ? In the second act of *The Rehearsal*, the Physician says to the Gentleman usher, " Sir, to conclude "—and when Smith exclaims " Before he begins ? " Bayes exclaims, " No sir, you must know they had been talking of this a pretty while without."

• Virgin majesty is, of course, Queen Elizabeth. When she reviewed her troops at Tilbury Fort in August 1588, she spoke what are, perhaps, the most famous of all her words ; " I know that I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart of a king and of a king of England, too."

Pallas. The goddess of war and wisdom.

Haughty Philip married Mary Tudor; Isabella of France, and then Anne of Austria. Elizabeth of England refused him.

Lord Burleigh in Armada year, 1588, was 68. The Queen said to him, " You are too old and doting ! " After the execution of Mary Queen of Scots, when she was trying to lay the blame on him, she said, " You are a traitor, a false dissembler and a wicked wretch. Avoid my presence."

the minuet in " Ariadne." Handel's opera was produced in 1733 and this minuet, which came at the end of the overture, was held to be the best thing in it.

Guarded. Because it has thorns.

Parry quarte. In fencing, parry quarte guards against the " thrust in quarte." " In tierce " is the third position, knuckles up and wrist down, for guard, parry or thrust. " Flankonade " appears to be Puff's own word; it clearly means an attack from the side.

A palpable hit. When Hamlet is duelling with Laertes, in Act 5, Scene 2, Osric cries out, " A hit, a very palpable hit."

Crupper is a strap buckled to the back of a saddle and passing under the horse's tail.

Laboured. Puff does not mean that the description was heavy, but that he had worked well at it ... a lot of labour had gone into it.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Jenkins. The Spaniards were accused of cutting off the ear of a merchant captain called Jenkins, and the clamour caused by this made Walpole declare war on

Spain in 1739. The war went badly and the Opposition accused Walpole of mismanagement.

Something like it in Othello. Dangle's knowledge of the theatre enables him to be right. Othello in Act 3, Scene 3, refers to Desdemona in these lines :

" Excellent wretch ! Perdition catch my soul,
But I do love thee ! And when I love thee not,
Chaos is come again ! "

Lord Burleigh shakes his head. Four patriots, in Fielding's *Historical Register*, meet, shake hands, but say nothing. " Sir, what they think now cannot well be spoke, but you may conjecture a great deal from their shaking their heads."

Stark **mad** in white satin. Mad heroines, raving in white, had been one of the stand-bys of bombastic tragedy. But, after *The Critic*, one such piece, *Zoraida*, by William Hodson, only ran for eight nights, because its heroine recalled Tilburina too forcibly.

Handel's " Water Music " is a suite of twenty-one movements, first performed on the Thames on 22nd August, 1715, when George I and his family travelled by river from Limehouse to Whitehall.

" Judas Maccabaeus." Handel's oratorio was first performed in London in 1747.

If you please. It may not be too fanciful to imagine that these last lines were addressed to the audience, on whose approval depended the success of Sheridan's burlesque.

SOME DATES OF THE PERIOD

- 1752. Richard Brinsley Sheridan born in Dublin.
- 1754. Henry Fielding died.
- 1755. Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* published.
- 1762. Catherine the Great took the throne in Russia.
- 1763. The Treaty of Paris.
- 1768. Goldsmith's *The Good-Natur'd Man* produced at Covent Garden.
- 1769. Napoleon born, in Corsica.
- 1770. William Wordsworth born.
- 1771. Tobias Smollet died.
- 1772. Sheridan eloped with Elizabeth Ann Linley.
Samuel Taylor Coleridge born.
- 1773. Sheridan married. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* produced at Covent Garden.
- 1775. Beginning of the American War of Independence.
The Rivals and *The Duenna* produced at Covent Garden. Charles Lamb born. Declaration of Independence, 4th July.
- 1776. Sheridan bought Garrick's share in Drury Lane theatre. Gibbons began *The Decline and Fall of the Holy Roman Empire*. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.
- 1777. Watts invented a steam engine. *The School for Scandal* produced at Drury Lane.
- 1778. Deaths of Voltaire and Jean Jacques Rousseau.
- 1779. *The Critic* produced at Drury Lane, where Sheridan was manager.
- 1780. Sheridan entered Parliament as M.P. for Stafford.
- 1783. First ministry of William Pitt the Younger.
End of the American War of Independence.
- 1784. Death of Dr. Johnson.
- 1786. Death of Frederick the Great.
- 1789. 14th July, Taking of the Bastille.

1792. Covent Garden theatre rebuilt. Birth of Shelley.
1794. Drury Lane theatre rebuilt. Gibbon died.
1795. Sheridan married again. John Keats born.
1798. *Lyrical Ballads* published.
1799. *Pizarro* (tr. from Kotzebue) produced at Drury Lane.
1804. Birth of Disraeli. .
1806. Dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire. -
1809. Drury Lane burnt, with great loss to Sheridan. Tennyson born.
1811. First two cantos of *Childe Harold* published.
1812. Drury Lane rebuilt.
1813. Shelley's *Queen Mah* published.
1815. Battle of Waterloo.
1816. Sheridan died.
1817. Keats' first book published.
1828. Birth of Henrik Ibsen.

QUESTIONS

1. " A kind of poetical second sight." What instances do you find in *The Spanish Armada* ?

2. Explain : puff collusive ; Mari ; never send a play there ; a very profitable consumption ; Prosperine's Fête Champêtre ; caducous ; her comic sister ; a theatrical Quidnunc ; Roman signatures.

3. Give the context of :

(1) " Your feelings ! But, zounds, my feelings, ma'am."

(2) " Now we must appear loving and affectionate.*"

(3) " There's an heroic group."

(4) " For I'm sure you'd know nothing of the matter without it."

(5) " The women are the best judges after all."

4. Write notes on : Coxheath intelligence ; the true sentimental ; Falstaffs page ; the Marshalsea ; stark mad in white satin ; not quite a novice.

5. What criticisms are made of Sir Fretful Plagiary's play and how did he refute them ?

6. Who were : Paul Jones ; Charles Hardy ; Mr. Dodd ; Lady Mary Myrtle ; the Hon. Richard Fitzpatrick ; Mr. De Louthembourg ; Tom Jenks ; the Beefeater ; Mr. Dapper ; Lady Rondeau ?

7. jWhat connection with *The Critic* have these plays : *The Historical Register*, *The Relapse*, *Hamlet*, *The Reformed House-Breaker*, *The Rehearsal*, *The Choleric Man* ?

8. " I have supported myself two years entirely by my misfortunes." What were they and in what other ways did the speaker continue to live ?

SUBJECTS FOR SHORT ESSAYS

1. Describe *The Spanish Armada* as originally written by Puff.

2. "What Shakespeare says of actors may be better applied to the purpose of plays." Can this view be carried too far ?

3. Criticise *The Critic* as you think Puff or Sneer would criticise it.

4. Write a short account of the theatre of the time.

5. Who else beside dramatists did Sheridan criticise in this play ?

6. Mr. Iolo Williams says, in his edition of the plays, "It is sad that Sheridan after writing one of the greatest comedies should have come down to being satisfied with a good joke." Discuss.

7. Write a conversation between Mrs. Dangle and Dangle on his return from the rehearsal.

8. "Free-spoken subjects give the best advice."

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY

1. R. Crompton Rhodes is the authority on all subjects to do with Sheridan. An article by him in *The London Mercury* for February 1927 threw interesting light on the texts. There is a good introduction and brief life by Henry Morley, in his edition of the plays published by Routledge. This gives general knowledge, which can be worked up by reference to the longer biographies. Brander Mathews and G. H. Nettleton both have reliable introductions to their editions and their notes have been used by most subsequent editors, including the present. *The School for Scandal* and *The Rivals* have already been published in the *English Literature Series*.

2. Sir Walter Besant's *Survey of London*, Volume 5, and H. D. Traill's *Social England* give detailed accounts of eighteenth-century life. In *The Collected Papers of W. P. Ker*, Volume 1, there is a paper on the eighteenth century, which gives the general trend of thought and expression. But to learn from those who lived in it, as well as to be delightfully entertained, use should be made of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Horace Walpole's *Letters* and Fanny Burney's *Diary*.

3. Dryden's *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* is the most important piece of writing on the theatre in the English language. It may be found, along with selections from his plays, in J. Earnshaw's *Selections from Dryden* published by Methuen in 1932. Professor Saintsbury's chapters on *The Drama Till the Closing of the Theatres* and *The Age of Dryden—Drama* in his *Short History of English Literature* should be read. *Shakespeare to Sheridan* by A. Thaler (Oxford University Press) covers the period, while the history of the drama is concisely traced in Ashley Duke's *Drama* in the Home University

Press, and more fully in Allardyce Nicoll's *The Development of the Theatre*. This book has many illustrations and is particularly valuable for its information on stage practice.

4. Professor Nicoll has made the eighteenth-century drama his special study, and his *Late Eighteenth-Century Drama* is a survey from 1750-1800 which has all the detail of his scholarship at its command. Professor Saintsbury's chapter on *Eighteenth-Century Drama* should be read, whatever else is neglected. Sheridan's preface to *The Rivals* is informative. Goldsmith has written on the eighteenth-century theatre in letter 79 of the *Citizen of the World* and there is an essay on *Sentimental Comedy* among his works.

5. In addition to sections on nineteenth-century drama which will be found in the more general of the above books, there is *Sheridan to Robertson* by E. B. Watson (Harvard University Press).

6. The best editions of Sheridan's plays are those of R. Crompton Rhodes and Iolo A. Williams.

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