

press the new adventurers; he persevered, as was his custom, with great steadiness, until every glimmering of hope had vanished. He then found it necessary to muster his forces to oppose them in the ensuing season 1758—1759. He accordingly offered terms to Mrs. Fitzhenry, who hesitating to accept them, he rashly declared against entering into articles with any one of the company; the consequence of which was the immediate loss of Mr. King and Mr. Dexter, two performers of great use to the theatre. He then saw his mistake, altered his resolution, and signed a general article with all his company, and seemed determined on a resolute opposition. He engaged Mr. Digges and Mrs. Ward, Theophilus Cibber, and Maddox the wire-dancer (the two last of whom were cast away going to Dublin), and also acceded to the terms proposed by Mrs. Fitzhenry. This Lady, however, by this time began to entertain doubts of the payment of her salary, and demanded security for it; which demand, unprecedented on a manager, so much incensed Mr. Sheridan, that he wrote a letter immediately to show his resentment, and at the same time expressed his doubts of his being able to be in Dublin that season, as he had intended. This caused Mrs. Fitzhenry to engage with the rival theatre. The remainder of the very short season was productive of nothing but disgrace and disappointment; loss succeeded to loss, the receipts fell short, the performers and tradesmen were unpaid, and on the 27th of April 1759, the theatre on Mr. Sheridan's account was entirely closed.

During this period, however, Mr. Sheridan was not idle. He had composed his Lectures on Elocution, and began to deliver them in London, at Oxford, at Cambridge, and other places, with very great success. At Cambridge, on the 16th of March, 1759, he was honoured with the same degree he had received at Dublin, that of Master of Arts. In the winter of 1760, he engaged at Drury-lane with Mr. Garrick on certain shares, and produced there Mr. Brookes' Earl of Essex, in which he performed the capital character with great applause. He also represented Horatio and John in the Fair Penitent and King John, to Mr. Garrick's Lothario and Falconbridge; and some characters, as Hamlet and Richard, they each played with little difference as to the bulk of their audiences. This union, though favourable to both parties, was soon brought to an end. The marked approbation of his Majesty to Mr. Sheridan's King John excited the jealousy of Mr. Garrick, who would not permit the play to be after-

wards performed. Differences ensued between them, meetings of friends followed, but without effect, and they parted with mutual signs of animosity.

The performance of this season seems to have ascertained the real merits of Mr. Sheridan's acting. Churchill, in the *Roscid*, published in 1761, has summed up his excellencies and defects in the following terms, which every one who can remember Mr. Sheridan at this period will not refuse their assent to the truth of.

Next followed Sheridan—a doubtful name,

As yet unsettled in the rank of fame.
This, fondly lavish in his praises grown,
Gives him all merit—That allows him none.

Between them both we'll steer the middle course,

Nor, loving praise, rob judgment of her force.

Just his conceptions, natural and great;

His feelings strong, his words enforced with weight.

Was speech-fam'd *Quæ*rn himself to hear him speak,

Envy would drive the colour from his cheek:

But step-dame Nature, nigard of her grace,

Deny'd the social powers of voice and face.

Fix'd in one frame of features, glare of eye;

Passions, like chaos, in confusion lie;
In vain the wonders of his skill are try'd

To form distinctions Nature hath deny'd.

His voice no touch of harmony admits;
Irregularly deep and shrill by fits:

The two extremes appear like man and wife,

Coupled together for the sake of strife.
His action's always strong, but sometimes such,

That candour must declare he acts too much.

Why must impatience fall three paces back?

Why paces three return to the attack?

Why is the right leg too forbid to stir,
Unless in motion semicircular;

Why must the hero with the nailor vie,
And hurl the clove clenched fist at nose or eye?

In royal John, with Philip angry grown,
I thought he would have knock'd poor

DAVIDS down.

Inhuman tyrant! was it not a shame
To fright a king so harmless and so tame?