

said, his familiar lines, the authorship of which is not generally known :—

'You write with ease to show your breeding,
But easy writing's curst hard reading.'

Before the production at Covent Garden on the 17th January, 1775, of *The Rivals*, Sheridan had married Elizabeth Ann Linley and fought his two duels with her unprincipled admirer, Mathews. It was natural that the contest in which he had been engaged should be supposed to have been indicated in his title, *The Rivals*. Writing from Bath Miss Linley, afterwards Mrs. Tickell, says to her sister, Mrs. Sheridan : 'I was told last night that it was his (Sheridan's) own story and therefore called *The Rivals*,' and adds very sensibly, 'but I do not give any credit to the intelligence.' It is, in fact, impossible to fit any of the characters of the real into the mimic drama. Neither Lydia Languish nor Julia bears any more resemblance to Miss Linley than does Captain Absolute or Faulkland to Sheridan. Bob Acres and Mrs. Malaprop have no one to correspond with them in the surrounding circle, and it would be complimenting Mathews too far to find in him a prototype of the chivalrous Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

At the suggestion of Harris, the manager, *The Rivals* was written for Covent Garden. Owing principally to the selection for the part of Sir Lucius of John Lee, a capable though old-fashioned and mannered actor, the favourable expectations generally formed were defeated, and the early performances were not a success. On Jan. 28th the obnoxious actor yielded his part to Clinch, and the piece, with a new prologue by the author, sprang into a popularity subsequently maintained in London, and was given during the season in Bath, Southampton, Bristol, and Liverpool. It would have been strange had matters been otherwise. As a comedy of manners nothing equal to it had been seen since 'Restoration' days, and *She Stoops to Conquer* by Goldsmith, given at the same house two years previously, was the only attempt at rivalry to which it was possible to point. Fault