

torious army was, however, Richardson's booth, at that epoch the great representative of travelling melo-drama. The performances "commanded" from its talented company were at once numerous and varied: they compelled those artistes who had passed their lives, if they had not been born, in the purple, delineating kings, and seldom condescending to be archdukes, to exchange robes with clown and harlequin, and some very curious and noteworthy acting was the result. The attentions, too, of our gentlemen cadets to the corps de ballet were what would be now designated, I suppose, as "marked with empressment." Richardson's booth was, in fact, to that honourable corps what Capua was to another victorious army, and with the same fatal consequences. While the young warriors indulged their taste for the drama and flirtation, the scattered forces of the enemy gathered together, and returned to the tented field in vastly augmented numbers. Armed with pitchforks and hedge-stakes, with bludgeons and rakes, they burst into the inclosure, and drove in the sentinels, with the most terrible cries for blood and vengeance. The besiegers in their turn became the besieged; and if the description should seem a joke it is the fault of the describer, for the reality had very little fun in it for either party. The bloodshed, if not the carnage, was something considerable.

Generalissimo Bex at once put himself at the head of a sallying party, but, though performing prodigies of valour, was driven back to his wooden walls—the booth. For, though it was called a booth, Richardson's was built of wood, and afforded the only tenable military position in the fair. The proverb that proclaims there is nothing like leather, was proved fallacious in the combat between belts and bludgeons. The cadets found their natural weapons inefficacious against the cold steel of the pitchforks and those other arms of their adversaries, which, if not "of precision," made a hole wherever they hit. They fell back, therefore, upon the theatrical armoury, and waged the combat with every description of mediæval weapon. Halberds of beefeaters, spears of knights, cross-handled swords of crusaders, were all pressed into the service. One gentleman cadet even donned a suit of armour belonging to Richard Cœur de Lion, and with a mace in one hand and a ballet-dancer in the other, defied the howling throng from the platform of the stage. The whole scene resembled that at Front de Bœuf's Castle, where Brian de Bois Guilbert escapes from the rabble of besiegers with the beautiful and accomplished Rebecca. Only there was no escape for his modern counterpart. Matters began to look very bad indeed for the corps of gentlemen cadets. They fought like men, even like heroes, and there was not an abusive epithet—much less a blow—which they did not return with interest. It is notorious that the use of strong language greatly strengthens and exhilarates our military in the field of