

Elizabeth, and Alicia (Mrs. Lefanu). He was himself a prolific, though scarcely a distinguished writer. From both his parents, then, Sheridan derived his taste for the theatre. It is perhaps fair to suppose that the maternal was the stronger influence. His father's work was scarcely of a kind greatly to impress him, nor were their relations, though respectful and attentive on the part of the son, uniformly close and cordial. Other and stronger influences were brought to bear. The elopement, for to this it amounted, with Elizabeth Ann Linley, the daughter of Thomas Linley, the well-known composer, herself distinguished as a vocalist and renowned as a beauty, and the two duels with Major Mathews, a married admirer and persecutor, introduced into Sheridan's life a strong flavour of romance, and were in part responsible for his overwhelming popularity. With his literary career, with which alone we are concerned, these things, like his parliamentary triumphs, are but indirectly related, though the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger in *The Rivals* may perhaps be regarded as a direct outcome of his experiences as a duellist.

To the beauty and distinction of the first wife, testimony is borne from many quarters. Horace Walpole describes her as handsome 'in the superlative degree,' and adds that the King (George III) 'ogles her as much as he dares to do in so holy a place as an oratorio' (*Letters*, vol. viii, p. 255, ed. Toynbee). John Wilkes speaks of her as the most modest, pleasing, and delicate flower he had seen for a long time; and Fanny Burney, no friend politically of her husband, says 'the elegance of Mrs. Sheridan's beauty is unequalled by any I ever saw, except Mrs. Crewe'. (*Diary and Letters*, i. 187, ed. 1904). Sir Joshua Reynolds painted her as St. Cecilia and as the Virgin in his 'Nativity'. By her Sheridan had one son, Tom, among whose progeny were three daughters—Helen, who married Lord Dufferin; Caroline, the wife, first of George Chappel Norton, Recorder of Guildford, by whom she had three children (the second son of whom, Thomas Brinsley, became Lord Grantley), and afterwards of Sir William Stirling-Maxwell, of Keir; and