that he was the prince s confidential adviser or mouthpiece. A certain proud and sensitive independence was one of the most marked features in Sheridan’s parliamentary career. After a coolness arose between him and his Whig allies he refused a place for his son from the Government, lest there should be any suspicion in the public mind that his support had been bought.

His last years were harassed by debt and disappoint­ment. At the general election of 1812 he stood for Westminster and was defeated, and turned in vain to his old constituency of Stafford. He could not raise money enough to win back their confidence. As a member of parliament he had been safe against arrest for debt, but now that this protection was lost his creditors closed in upon him, and from this time till his death in 1816 the life of Sheridan, broken in health and fortune, discredited in reputation, slighted by old associates, so enfeebled and low-spirited as to burst into tears at a compliment, yet at times vindicating his reputation as the wittiest of boon companions, is one of the most painful passages in the biography of great men. Doubtless, in any attempt to judge of Sheridan as he was apart from his works, we must make considerable deductions from the mass of floating anecdotes that have gathered round his name. It was not without reason that his granddaughter Mrs Norton denounced the unfairness of judging of the real man from unauthenticated stories about his indolent procrastination, his recklessness in money matters, his drunken feats and sallies, his wild gambling, his ingenious but discreditable shifts in evading and duping creditors. The real Sheridan was not a pattern of decorous respect­ability, but we may fairly believe that he was very far from being as disreputable as the Sheridan of vulgar legend. Against the stories about his reckless management of his affairs we must set the broad facts that he had no source of income but Drury Lane theatre, that he bore from it for thirty years all the expenses of a fashionable life, and that the theatre was twice burnt to the ground during his proprietorship. Enough was lost in those fires to account ten times over for all his debts. His bio­graphers always speak of his means of living as a mystery. Seeing that he started with borrowed capital, it is possible that the mystery is that he applied much more of his powers to plain matters of business than he affected or got credit for. The records of his wild bets in the betting book of Brook’s Club date in the years after the loss of his first wife, to whom he was devotedly attached. The reminiscences of his son’s tutor, Mr Smyth, show anxious and fidgetty family habits, curiously at variance with the accepted tradition of his imperturbable recklessness. Many of the tricks which are made to appear as the unscrupulous devices of a hunted and reckless debtor get a softer light upon them if we ascribe them to a whimsical, boyish, ungovernable love of fun, which is a well-attested feature of his character. But the real Sheridan, as he was in private life, is irrecoverably gone. Even Moore, writing so soon after his death, had to lament that he could “ find out nothing about him.” Moore seems to have made an imperfect use of the family papers, and it is on record that Lord Melbourne, who had undertaken to write Sheridan’s life, always regretted having handed over his materials to the professional biographer. He died on the 7th of July 1816, and was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey.

There is, unfortunately, no complete authoritative biography of Sheridan. Mrs Norton, his granddaughter, questioned the accuracy of Moore’s *Life* in many particulars, and announced her intention of writing a history of the Sheridans from the family papers, of which Moore had made very partial use. But she never carried out the project The current statements about the father and grandfather of the dramatist are inaccurate and misleading in

several important respects. The best account of them—making allowance for a slight bias of family pride—is to bo found in the *Memoirs of Mrs Frances Sheridan,* by her granddaughter, the dramatist’s niece, Miss Lefanu. There is an excellent sketch of Sheridan’s political career in Mr W. Fraser Rae’s *Wilkes, Sheridan, aml Fox,* and Mrs Oliphant’s *Sheridan,* in the “ English Men of Letters ” series, interprets his character with the luminous breadth and sympathy always to be expected from her. (W. M. )

SHERIF, or Shereef. See Mecca, vol. xv. p. 672.

SHERIFF. For the office of sheriff in England, see County. For his jurisdiction in the revision of voters, see Registration. The position of the sheriff as an executive officer in the United States is very similar to that of the English sheriff. He is usually appointed by popular election. The marshals of the United States and their deputies have in each State the same powers in executing the laws of the United States as the sheriffs and their deputies have in executing the laws of the State.

So far as is known the sheriff, notwithstanding the Saxon etymology of his name (shire grieve or reeve), did not exist in Scotland before the beginning of the Norman period. In the feudal system he became the centre of the local administration of justice, the representative of the crown in executive as well as judicial business, and was always a royal officer appointed by and directly responsible to the king. The earliest sheriffs on record belong to the reigns of Alexander I. and David I., and the office was common before the death of Alexander III. In many cases it had become hereditary, the most remarkable instance being that of Selkirk, where a De Sinton held it from 1265 to 1305. The ordinance of Edward I. in 1305 recognized most of the existing officers, but rejected the hereditary character of the office by a declaration that the sheriffs were to be appointed and removable at the discretion of the king’s lieutenant and the chamberlain. The inveterate tendency of feudalism reasserted itself, however, notwith­standing various attempts to check it, and an Act of James II. shows that the office had again become here­ditary.

One of the consequences was that sheriffs ignorant of law required deputes to discharge their judicial duties. In the course of succeeding reigns, down to that of James VI., the jurisdiction of the sheriffs came to be much limited by grants of baronies and regalities which gave the grantees the right to hold both civil and criminal courts of less or greater jurisdiction to the exclusion of the sheriff.

The civil jurisdiction of the sheriff was originally of very wide extent, and was deemed specially applicable to questions relating to the land within the shire, but after the institution of the court of session in 1532 it became restricted, and all causes relating to property in land, as well as those requiring the action called declarator for establishing ultimate right, and most of those requiring equitable remedies, were withdrawn from it. Nor did it possess any consistorial jurisdiction, as its subjects (marriage, legitimacy, and wills) belonged to the officials of the bishop after the Reformation, when it was trans­ferred to the commissary courts, and at a later period to the court of session. Practically, therefore, the civil jurisdiction of the sheriff fell under the head of actions concluding for payment of money and actions to regulate the possession of land. The criminal jurisdiction of the sheriff was in like manner in its origin of almost universal extent. But this was first limited to oases where the offenders were caught in or shortly after the act, after­wards to cases in which the trial could be held within forty days, and subsequently further restricted as the business of the justiciary court became more organized. The punishment of death, having by long disuse come to be held beyond the power of the sheriff, and the sta­tutory punishments of transportation or penal servitude