satisfying the tastes of the one, than in ministering to the enjoyment of the other. And this is the true triumph of genius in all the arts. In painting, sculpture, music, or litera­ture, those works which have pleased the greatest number for the longest space of time, may be pronounced the best ; for, however mediocrity may enshrine itself in the admiration of the few, the palm of excellence can only be awarded by the many. The defects of the School for Scandal, if they can be allowed to amount to defects, are in a great measure traceable to the amalgamation of two distinct plots, out of which the piece was formed. From this cause has devolved that excessive opulence with which the dialogue is almost overloaded, and which Sheridan himself used to mention as a fault which he was conscious of in his work. From be­ginning to end it is a continued sparkling of point and po­lish ; and the whole of the characters might be compre­hended under one common designation of wits, even Trip, the servant, being as shining and brilliant ns the rest. “ In short,” says Mr Moore, “ the entire comedy is a sort of El Dorado of wit, where the precious metal is thrown about by all classes, as carelessly as if they had not the least idea of its value.”

Soon after the appearance of this comedy, Sheridan made a further purchase of theatrical property, amounting to L. 17,000 ; and amongst the visible signs of his increased influence in the affairs of the house, was the appointment, this year, of his father to be manager. At the beginning of the year 1779, Garrick died, and Sheridan, who had fol­lowed his body to the grave, wrote a monody to his me­mory, which was recited after the play in the month of March following. In the course of the same year he pro­duced the entertainment of the Critic, which was his last legitimate offering at the shrine of the dramatic muse. In this incomparable farce, we have a striking instance of the privilege which genius assumes of taking up subjects that had passed through other hands, and giving them new value and currency. The plan of the Rehearsal was first adopted for the purpose of ridiculing Dryden ; but although there is much laughable humour in some of the dialogue, the salt was not of a very conservative nature, and the piece con­tinued to be served up to the public long after it had lost its relish. Fielding tried the same plan in a variety of pro­ductions, but without much success, except, perhaps, in the comedy of Pasquin. It was reserved for Sheridan to give vitality to this form of dramatic humour, and to invest even his satirical portraits with a generic, which, without weak­ening the particular resemblance, makes them representa­tives of the whole class to which the original belonged. Bayes, on the other hand, is a caricature made up of little more than personal peculiarities, but may amuse as long as reference may be had to the prototype, but fall lifeless the moment the individual that supplied them is no more.

Having terminated his dramatic career, in which he had been eminently successful, Sheridan now prepared to act a part in a widely different scene. His thoughts had been gra­dually drawn to the seducing subject of politics, on which he had tried his hand at some very fair remarks on absen­teeism ; he had also rendered some service to the party with which he had connected himself, by taking an active share in a periodical publication called the Englishman ; and his first appearance before the public was made in conjunction with Mr Fox, at the beginning of 1780, when the Resolu­tions on the State of the Representation, together with a Heport on the same subject, were laid before the public. The dissolution of parliamcnt, which took place in the autumn of 1780, at length afforded the opportunity to which his ambition had so eagerly looked forward ; and Stafford was destined to have the honour of first choosing him for its representative. It is not our intention, how­ever, to investigate his political with the same minuteness ashis literary life ; and this is the less necessary, seeing

that the amplest narrative would probably be the heaviest, and that the masterly pen of Lord Brougham has sketched an outline which must be fully sufficient to satisfy the in­quiries of the most curious and inquisitive.

“ His first effort,” says Lord Brougham, “ was unambi­tious, and it was unsuccessful. Aiming at but a low flight, he failed in that humble attempt. An experienced judge, Woodfall, told him it would never do ; and counselled him to seek again the more congenial atmosphere of Drury Lane. But he was· resolved that it should do ; he had taken his part ; and as he felt the matter was in him, he vowed not to desist till he had brought it out. What he wanted in acquired learning and natural quickness, he made up by indefatigable industry. Within given limits, towards a present object, no labour could daunt him ; no man could work for a season with more steady and unwearied appli­cation. By constant practice in small matters, or before private committees, by diligent attendance upon all debates, by habitual intercourse with all dealers in political wares, from the chiefs of parties and their more refined coteries, to the providers of daily discussion for the public, and the chroniclers of parliamentary speeches, he trained himself to a facility of speaking, absolutely essential to all but first- rate genius, and all but necessary even to that ; and he ac­quired what acquaintance with the science of politics he ever possessed, or his speeches ever betrayed. By these steps he rose to the rank of a first-rate speaker, and as great a debater as a want of readiness, and need for preparation, would permit.

“ He had some qualities which led him to this rank, and which only required the habit of speech to bring them out into successful exhibition ; a warm imagination, though more prone to repeat with variations the combinations of others, or to combine anew their creations, than to bring forth original productions ; it fierce, dauntless spirit of attack ; a familiarity, acquired from his dramatic studies, with the feel­ings of the heart and the ways to touch its chords ; a faci­lity of epigram and point, the yet more direct gift of the same theatrical apprenticeship ; an excellent manner, not unconnected with that experience ; and a depth of voice which perfectly suited the tone of his declamation, be it in­vective, or be it descriptive, or be it impassioned. His wit, derived from the same source, or sharpened by the same previous habits, was eminently brilliant, and almost always successful. It was, like all his speaking, exceedingly pre­pared, but it was skilfully introduced, and happily applied ; and it was well mingled also with humour, occasionally de­scending to farce. How little it was the inspiration of the moment, all men were aware who knew his habits ; but a singular proof of this was presented by Mr Moore when he came to write his life; for we there find given to the world, with a frankness which must almost have made the author shake in his grave, the secret note-books of this famous wit ; and are thus enabled to trace his jokes, in embryo, with which he had so often made the walls of St Stephen’s shake, in a merriment excited by the happy appearance of sudden un­premeditated effusion.

“ The adroitness with which he turned to account sud­den occasions of popular excitement, and often at the ex­pense of the Whig party, generally too indifferent to such advantages, and too insensible to the damage they thus sus­tained in public estimation, is well known. On the mutiny in the fleet, he was beyond all question right ; on the French invasion, and on the attacks upon Napoleon, he was almost as certainly wrong ; but these appeals to the people, and to the national feelings of the House, tended to make the orator well received, if they added little to the states­man’s reputation ; and of the latter character he was not ambitious. His most celebrated speech was certainly the one upon the Begum charge, in the proceedings against Hastings ; and nothing can exceed the accounts left us of