baronet. Her marriage with the actor was the result of romantic circumstances, fully detailed in the *Memoirs of Mrs Frances Sheridan,* mentioned below.

4. Richard Brinsley Butler Sheridan (1751— 1816), second son of Thomas and Frances Sheridan, was born in Dublin in September 1751. Moore records for the encouragement of slow boys that the future drama­tist was "by common consent of parent and preceptor pronounced an impenetrable dunce.” The plain fact is that the expression occurs in a smart letter about him and his sister, written by his mother to a schoolmaster. Mrs Sheridan wrote that she had been the only instructor of her children hitherto, and that they would exercise the schoolmaster in the quality of patience, “for two such impenetrable dunces she had never met with.” One of the children thus humorously described was Richard Brinsley, and the age of the “ impenetrable dunce ” at the time was seven. At the age of eleven he was sent to Harrow. There, to please orthodox biographers, he gave no such sign of future eminence as is implied in taking a high place in school. Dr Parr, who was one of his masters, “saw in him vestiges of a superior intellect,” but, though he “ did not fail to probe and tease him,” by no harassing or tormenting process could he incite the indolent boy to greater industry than was “just sufficient to save him from disgrace.” But these facts about young Sheridan’s determined indolence in the study of Latin and Greek should be taken in connexion with his father’s peculiar theories on the subject of English education. The father’s theories possibly did not encourage the son to learn Latin and Greek. Why, with his views on the unprofitableness of those studies, he sent his younger son to Harrow, is not obvious ; but it was probably as much for social as for educational reasons. If so, the purpose was answered, for Sheridan was extremely popular at school, winning somehow, Dr Parr confesses, “ the esteem and even admiration of all his schoolfellows,” and giving a foretaste of his mysterious powers of getting things done for him by making the younger boys steal apples for his own private store and good-humouredly defying the masters to trace the theft home to him.

Sheridan left Harrow at the age of seventeen, having impressed his schoolfellows at least, who are sometimes better judges than their masters, with a vivid sense of his powers. It was probably his father’s design to send him afterwards to Oxford, but the family circumstances were too straitened to permit of it, and the educationist, who had just then returned from France, and was about to launch his appeal to the king on behalf of his new plan of education, took his son home and himself directed and superintended his studies. What his plans were for his brilliant son’s future we have no means of knowing, but the probability is that, if the projected academy had become an accomplished fact, he would have tried to make Richard Brinsley an upper master in some one of its numerous departments. There are traces of method in the superficially harum-scarum Irishman’s courses, and it looks as if he had intended both of his sons to help him in the magnificent project from which his sanguine tempera­ment expected such great things,—the elder, who had been with him in France, in what would now be called the modern side, and the classically educated younger in the ancient side. Meantime, pending His Majesty’s resolution on the projector’s offer, Brinsley, besides being trained by his father daily in elocution, and put through a course of English reading in accordance with the system, received the accomplishments of a young man of fashion, had fencing and riding lessons at Angelo’s, and began to eat terms at the Middle Temple. His destination apparently was the bar, if fortune should deny him the more glorious

career of lieutenant in the new academy through which young England was to be regenerated.

As to how young Sheridan, with a cooler head to regulate his hot Irish blood, looked at his father’s grand schemes, we have no record. But it is of importance to remember those schemes, and the exact stage they had now reached, in connexion with the accepted view of Sheridan’s behaviour at this time, which represents him as a mere idler, hanging on at home like an ordinary ne’er- do-well, too indolent to work for any profession, simply enjoying himself and trusting recklessly to chance for some means of livelihood. The fact would seem to be that over and above whatever he did in the way of qualifying him­self for a regular career—which possibly was little enough —he began from this time with fundamentally steady purpose to follow the bent of his genius. After leaving Harrow he kept up a correspondence with a school friend who had gone to Oxford. With this youth, whose name was Halhed, he had not competed for school honours ; but both had dreams of higher things ; and now they concocted together various literary plans, and between them actually executed and published metrical translations of Aristøenetus —an obscure Greek or pseudo-Greek author brought to light or invented at the Renaissance, a writer of imaginary amorous epistles. The two literary partners translated his prose into verse which has the qualities of lightness, neatness, and wit, and is in no respect unworthy of being the apprentice-work of Sheridan.

In conjunction with the same young friend he began a farce entitled *Jupiter.* It was not completed, but the fragment is of interest as containing the same device of a rehearsal which was afterwards worked out with such brilliant effect in *The Critic.* Some of the dialogue is very much in Sheridan’s mature manner. It would seem indeed that at this time, idle as he appeared, Sheridan was deliberately exercising his powers and preparing himself for future triumphs. Moore’s theory is that his seeming indolence was but a mask ; and extracts given from papers written in the seven years between his leaving Harrow and the appearance of *The Rivals—*sketches of unfinished plays, poems, political letters, and pamphlets—show that he was far from idle. He was never much of a reader ; he preferred, as he said, to sit and think—a process more favourable to originality than always having a book in his hand ; but we may well believe that he kept his eyes open, and his father’s connexion with fashionable society gave him abundant opportunities. The removal of the family to Bath in 1771 @@1 extended his field of observation. Anstey’s *New Bath Guide* had just been published and had greatly stimulated interest in the comedy of life at this fashionable watering-place.

Presently, too, already a favourite in Bath society from his charming manners and his skill as a writer of graceful and witty verses, the youth played a part in the living comedy which at once made him a marked man. There was in Bath a celebrated musical family—“a nest of nightingales,”—the daughters of the composer Linley, the head of his profession in the fashionable town. The eldest daughter, a girl of sixteen, the prima donna of her father’s concerts, was exceedingly beautiful, and very much run after by suitors, young and old, honourable and dis­honourable. In the latter class was a Captain Mathews, a married man; in the former, young Sheridan. Mathews had artfully won the girl’s affections, and persecuted her with his importunities, threatening to destroy himself if she refused him. To protect her from this scoundrel’s designs the younger lover, who seems to have acted at first

@@@1 Miss Lefanu corrects Moore’s date of 1770, considering the difference important as bearing on Sheridan’s education *(Memoirs,* p. 348).