Fading in Sickness*

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

Night, Silence, Solitude, and the Sea combined will unhinge the cheerfulness of anyone where there has been length of Life enough to bring regret in reflecting on many past scenes, and to offer slender hope in anticipating the future. . . . How many years have passed since on these unreasoning, restless waters, which this night I have been gazing at and listening to, I bore poor E., who is now so near me fading in sickness, from all her natural attachments and affections. . . . What has the interval of my Life been, and what is left me but misery from Memory and a horror of Reflexion?

I stopt yesterday evening as we came over King's Down . . . and went to the spot where my life was strangely saved once. . . .¹ What an interval has passed since, and scarce one promise that I then made to my own soul have I attempted to fulfil. . . . My nerves are shook to pieces. The irregularity of all my Life and pursuits, the restless, contriving temper with which I have persevered in wrong Pursuits and Passions makes . . . reflexion worse to me than even to those who have acted worse. . . .

NOTES

During the last weeks of his wife's sickness, Sheridan kept up his spirits heroically before her; but sorrow sat on his countenance, and in his journal letter to Georgiana and her sister Lady Duncannon (later Lady Bessborough) the real man became articulate in his misery.

1. During a duel with Captain Thomas Mathews in 1772.

* From Walter Sichel, *Sheridan, from New and Original Material* (London: Constable, 1909) II 435, 437. Editor's title.