CHAPTER XXVIII.

GILLRAY was, beyond all others, the great political caricaturist of his age. His works form a complete history of the greater and more important portion of the reign of George III. He appears to have had less taste for general caricature, and his caricatures on social life are less numerous, and with a few exceptions less important, than those which were called forth by political events. The exceptions are chiefly satires on individual characters, which are marked by the same bold style which is displayed in his political attacks. Some of his caricatures on the extravagant costume of the time, and on its more prominent vices, such as the rage for gambling, are also fine, but his social sketches generally are much inferior to his other works.

This, however, was not the case with his contemporary, Thomas Rowlandson, who doubtless stands second to Gillray, and may, in some respects, be considered his equal. Rowlandson was born in the Old Jewry in London, the year before that of the birth of Gillray, in the July of 1756. His father was a city merchant, who had the means to give him a good education, but embarking rashly in some unsuccessful speculations, he fell into reduced circumstances, and the son had to depend upon the liberality of a relative. His uncle, Thomas Rowlandson, after whom probably he was named, had married a French lady, a Mademoiselle Chatelier, who was now a widow, residing in Paris, with what would be considered in that capital a handsome fortune, and she appears to have been attached to her English nephew, and supplied him rather freely with money. Young Rowlandson had shown at an early age great talent for drawing.