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### "The Rivals"

"And I wonder too what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them - unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth."

These lines are extracted from the soliloquy of Sir Lucius O' Trigger in Act IV, Scene III, of Sheridan's 'The Rivals'. Sir Lucius is waiting for Captain Absolute with whom he wants to fight a duel with a view to removing him from his path by killing him in the duel, for he has offended his honour by proposing to marry Lydia. Sir Lucius believes that Lydia writes love-letters to him in the name of Delia. He, then, reflects how and why the girls fall in love with military officers. Recalling his past unsuccessful love-affair with Lady Dorothy

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Carmine, Sir Lucius wonders what charm these ladies see in military soldiers that they grow so fond of them. He thinks that perhaps it is the Satanic element in the character of these soldiers that tempts the ladies to fall in love with them. These soldiers as Satan tempted Eve to taste the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Sir Lucius observes that these ladies get caught by the glittering uniforms of the military personnel as poisonous serpents are caught in red cloth. It may be noted that Sir Lucius makes a very apt comparison, though his thinking is only biased. However, it is a known fact that women in the eighteenth century were seen to be specially attracted towards the soldiers. As out the vipers, Balston observed, "vipers are said to

great poems. They discover him to us in the solitary grandeur of his old age, when 'blind destitute and friendless, he testified of righteousness, and judgment to come, alone before a fallen world'. But this period though of the greatest importance to literature does not concern us much here in his book. It is quite sufficient for us to know that he married for a third time in 1664 for the very practical consideration of having somebody to look after him, that the marriage proved as happy as could be expected and that towards the end he enjoyed something of the renown and admiration which were his due. He died in 1674, on November 8th, and was buried in St. Giles' Church Cripplegate by the side of his father who had done so much to help him to shape his life and powers.

The end. //

Munir Bhushan Sinha  
Deptt. of English  
S.S. College, Jhansi