

House of Stuart; and when the queen, in an interval of consciousness, delivered the staff of the highest office to the duke of Shrewsbury—who had been in concert with the dukes of Somerset and Argyle—her death, on the morning of the 1st of August, gave the power of the government to the friends of the House of Brunswick.

## CHAPTER XV.

Literature and Manners of the earlier part of the eighteenth century.—The Tatler.—News-writers and Pamphleteers.—Dunton's "Athenian Gazette."—Defoe's Review.—The Spectator and the Guardian.—Influence and objects of the Essayists.—Low state of education.—The Essayists diffusers of knowledge.—Joint labours of Steele and Addison.—The Spectator's Club.—Fiction.—Reading for females.—Literary Piracy.—Copyright Act.—Literature as a Profession.—The Poets.—Alexander Pope.

ADDISON has shadowed out an "imaginary historian, describing the reign of Anne I.," some two or three hundred years after his time, "who will make mention of the men of genius and learning who have now any figure in the British nation." He fancies a paragraph which he has drawn up "will not be altogether unlike what will be found on some page or other of this imaginary historian." It runs thus: "It was under this reign that the 'Spectator' published those little diurnal essays which are still extant. We know very little of the name or person of this author, except only that he was a man of a very short face, extremely addicted to silence, and so great a lover of knowledge, that he made a voyage to Grand Cairo for no other reason but to take the measure of a pyramid. His chief friend was one Sir Roger de Coverley, a whimsical country knight, and a Templar, whose name has not been transmitted to us. He lived as a lodger at the house of a widow-woman, and was a great humourist in all parts of his life. This is all we can affirm with any certainty of his person and character. As for his speculations, notwithstanding the several obsolete words and obscure phrases of the age in which he lived, we still understand enough of them to see the diversions and characters of the English nation in his time."\* It was a bold effort of imagination to believe that any historian would turn from Marlborough and the Pretender, from Mrs. Masham and Dr. Sacheverel, to "little diurnal essays;" or bestow any attention upon "the diversions and characters of the English nation." Tindal wholly leaves such frivolous matters to their own perishableness. Smollett merely notices the expulsion of Mr. Steele from the House of Commons, and only mentions Mr. Addison as Secretary of State. Our readers will pardon us in going farther than the "imaginary histo-

\* "Spectator," No. 101.

rian"—in turning aside from battles and sieges, from lord-treasurers and ladies of the bedchamber, to linger with some of "the men of genius and learning" who illustrated this period, in companionship with the short-faced man "who was a great humourist in all parts of his life," and with his brother humourist who rejoiced in the name of Bickerstaff. We cannot look at one of these agreeable moralists as separated by superiority of intellect or refinement from the other. Never were two men more fitted than Addison and Steele to be fellow-labourers in the works which have associated their names for all time. These works form a broad and safe foundation for a general outline of the minuter characteristics of the national mind and manners, in the three, and partially in the four, first decades of the eighteenth century. We offer this outline as supplementary to the graver views of England's industrial and social condition, which we have given at the beginning of this volume.

On Tuesday, the 12th of April, 1709, appeared a small folio half-sheet, of four columns, which professed to teach "politick persons what to think," and "moreover, to have something which may be of entertainment to the fair sex," in honour of whom the title of "Tatler" was chosen. Further it was said, "forasmuch as this globe is not trodden upon by mere drudges of business only, but thit men of spirit and genius are justly to be esteemed as considerable agents in it, we shall not upon a dearth of news present you with musty foreign edicts, or dull proclamations, but shall divide our relation of the passages which occur in action or discourse throughout this town, as well as elsewhere, under such dates of places as may prepare you for the matter you are to expect, in the following manner: All accounts of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment shall be under the article White's Chocolate-house; poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-house; learning under the title of Grecian; foreign and domestic news you will have from St. James's Coffee-house; and what else I shall on any other subject offer, shall be dated from my own apartment." This is a comprehensive scheme, and withal a very complex one. But the reason of these devices is obvious. The ingenious editor desired to avail himself of the advantages of his official appointment as Gazetteer, to produce something like a newspaper; but the man of wit would also aim at something better than the conductors of newspapers proper aimed at, of which one of their fraternity said, "We read more of our affairs in the Dutch papers than in any of our own."\* This complaint of the newspapers was written in the year 1709—the year in which Isaac Bicker-

\* Prospectus of Evening Post.—Andrews' "History of British Journalism," vol. i. p.

staff was making provisions against "a dearth of news;" the year of negotiations for peace, which ended in the carnage of Malplaquet; the year in which the adverse camps of High-church and Low-church, of Tory and Whig, were alive with the keenest excitement of preparation for a great coming struggle. "A dearth of news" at such a period! Yet if we consider of what materials the newspaper of the beginning of the eighteenth century was constructed, we shall cease to be surprised at the machinery which Steele devised to make his quasi-newspaper entertaining. Cumbrous as that machinery may now appear to us, it was contrived with considerable skill. The real news-writer was surrounded with a hundred difficulties and perils. The "Tatler" pretended that he was obliged to keep "an ingenious man" to go daily to the coffee-houses to pick up his intelligence; and no doubt such was the mode in which the greater part of the news of the "Observer," of the "Postboy," of the "Flying Post," of the "News Letter," was concocted. The news-writer was shut out of the House of Lords and out of the House of Commons; he never went into the law courts, for, except on great occasions, the people took no interest in their proceedings; he ran extreme risk in giving any political news, for the "publisher of false news" was a person for whom the pillory was an especial terror; he had no correspondents in distant parts of England; at the beginning of the century, Stamford and Norwich were the only towns that had their especial papers, from which he could transfer their meagre paragraphs about a murder or an execution; Scotland and Ireland had as little intelligence to furnish the London journalist as had the American colonies: and so the coffee-house, with its rumours about public events, became the "Staple of Newes," and the discreet reporter always prefaced his information with "We hear"—"It is said"—"There is a talk"—"They continue to say." The cheap tract-writer tasked his imagination to produce much more exciting narratives than the dull paragraph-monger. The pamphleteer was the "Penny-a-liner" of the time of the "Tatler." He had the same inexhaustible materials to work upon as the "penny-a-liner" of our own time; although the mode in which this form of genius is now developed is somewhat changed. He of the earlier day is thus described: "His brain, which was his estate, had as regular and different produce as other men's land. From the beginning of November until the opening of the campaign, he writ pamphlets and letters to members of parliament or friends in the country. But sometimes he would relieve his ordinary readers with a murder, and lived comfortably a week or two upon strange and lament-

able accidents. A little before the armies took the field, his way was to open your attention with a prodigy; and a monster, well writ, was two guineas the lowest price. This prepared his readers for his great and bloody news from Flanders in June and July.\* Steele tried to interest the town in a different way. The worthy quidnunc, attracted by the name of Bickerstaff, to which name Swift had given popularity, gladly received the first number of the "Tatler" which was delivered without charge, or he expended a penny when the "gratis stock" of the first number was exhausted. But he must have been wonderfully surprised when reading the opening "relation of the passages which occur in action or discourse throughout this town," he found a brief narrative of "the deplorable condition of a very pretty gentleman," which article "may be of great instruction to all who actually are, or who ever shall be, in love."

The "Athenian Gazette," of the eccentric bookseller, John Dunton, had given the public of the time of William III. some notion of a weekly paper without politics. It professed to resolve "all the most nice and curious questions proposed by the ingenious;" but it fell far short of the magnificent intention of its projector, "to raise the soul, as 'twere, into daylight, and restore the knowledge of truth and happiness." † It commenced in 1691, and was continued till 1696—a jumble of quaint nonsense with occasional gleams of meaning. The "Review" of Defoe appeared, in penny weekly numbers, five years before the "Tatler." It was subsequently issued twice a week. The "Review" was principally occupied by Defoe's earnest speculations on political affairs. It also contained lighter matters, in describing the proceedings of a "Scandal Club." Some of these papers on manners are valuable, chiefly because their writer looked upon the town from another point of view than that of the wits and gossipers of the coffee-houses. But he saw only the broader aspects of society; felt little interest in its amusements; despised its frivolities; and confined his observation to the green pastures of virtue and wisdom, and the sands and morasses of vice and folly, without caring much for that great border-land which supplied "human nature's daily food." Defoe was no model for Steele, although the honour of being the leader in the march of the essayists has been assigned to him. Defoe was indeed the only writer of high talent who first saw the power of the periodical mode of publication. Dunton had preceded Defoe in this discovery, which ultimately revolutionized the entire system of our lighter literature, and turned an age of pamphlets

\* "Tatler," No. 101.

† Dunton's "Life and Errors," p. 248.

into an age of magazines and miscellanies. The mode of continuous publication, under one title, converted the political tracts into Reviews and Examiners. Defoe saw the advantage of furnishing small quantities of printed thought to a nation not greatly advanced in the mere ability to read—to say nothing of the general indisposition of the gentry and the mercantile class to read anything which did not thoroughly address itself to their religious and political sympathies. Defoe would find his readers in the dissenting congregations, however some might differ from him. He found them, too, in those honest thinkers who took no lead in politics, with whom England has ever abounded. Whilst there were too many tricksters in high places conducting the affairs of the nation, there were many who were taking that common-sense view of public measures which the opinion of a people habitually free very commonly takes—that the prosperity and happiness of communities is not wholly dependent upon which party is in or which party is out of office. Defoe addressed his "Review" to men who clung to the great principles of civil liberty and religious toleration, and were therefore essentially Whigs. But he offended Dissenters and Whigs by his differences with them upon many points; and he was, therefore, a better representative of the few who thought for themselves. Steele, on the other hand, addressed himself in the "Tatler," to the far larger class who had not very strong political or religious convictions; and who were glad to find a new kind of literature set on foot that, on the face of it, promised amusement rather than instruction. In a very short time the articles of foreign intelligence from "St. James' coffee-house," became rarer and rarer. With Tournay, and Malplaquet, and Mons, the news department of the "Tatler" seems to have been closed. The approaching return of the duke of Marlborough to England is announced in its news on the 1st of November. There is an arrival of more importance to his interests which Mr. Bickerstaff does not announce. Addison has come to town from Ireland. He has made a few contributions to Steele's penny paper. He has discovered his true powers as a writer; and he will unite henceforward with honest Dick in making that half-sheet, which is despatched from London three times a week, on every post-day of Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, a vehicle for instructing the people without setting-up for instructors, and for amusing the people without condescending to be ribalds. We have it on record that the "Tatler" found its way into the fens of Lincolnshire, under the auspices of Maurice Johnson, a native of Spalding, who had some literary and antiquarian tastes. He laboured to form a

reading society in that very uncongenial district. "Taking care not to alarm the country gentlemen by any premature mention of antiquities, he endeavoured at first to allure them into the more flowery paths of literature. In 1709, a few of them were brought together every post-day, at the coffee-house in the Abbey-yard; and after one of the party had read aloud the last published number of the "Tatler," they proceeded to talk over the subject among themselves."\*

The "Spectator" was read in a similar manner by the gentlemen of Spalding. This successor of the "Tatler" commenced March 1, 1711, and was published daily,—a circumstance which at once exhibits the confidence of the writers in their power to interest a very miscellaneous class of readers, and the fertility of the soil, hitherto so barren, which they proposed to cultivate. The "Guardian" succeeded the "Spectator," and was also published daily. It was fortunate for the circulation of these works that the better regulation of the Post had not been neglected by the government, amidst their party-conflicts. The Statute of 1710 made the delivery of letters to Edinburgh and Dublin more regular, by establishing chief letter-offices in those cities, and having a more equal charge for England. Thus, with a blank leaf for adding private correspondence to the printed matter, the "Tatler" was circulated in English provincial towns. In Perthshire even, when "the gentlemen met after church on Sunday to discuss the news of the week, the Spectators were read as regularly as the Journal."†

At the opening of the last parliament of the reign of Anne, when the member for Stockbridge rose to second the nomination of Sir Thomas Hanmer as Speaker, he was saluted by some of the Tory squires with cries of "Tatler! Tatler!" It was not with the intent to honour the new Whig member that these knights of the shire, and patrons of decayed boroughs, uttered the one word which has associated his name with the memory of the pleasantest, the most influential, and on many accounts the most original, branch of the literature of what is called our Augustan age. By the side of Richard Steele sat, on the same opposition benches, his friend and fellow-labourer, Joseph Addison. He must have smiled to hear the race of fox-hunters yelping out in their ignorant pride such a reproach as this against one who, under the name of Bickerstaff, never designed to give any man any secret wound by his conceal-

\* "The Gentleman's Society at Spalding;" privately printed, 1851. See, also, Nichols's "Literary Anecdotes," vol. iv. p. 68.  
Bisset's "Life of Addison," quoted in Drake's Essays.

ment, and who, at the close of his work, published his name to his writings, and gave himself up to the mercy of the town, with all his imperfections on his head.\* Addison himself, Swift tells us, was so popular, that when he was elected to a parliament in which the Tories carried it six to one, his election passed "easy and undisputed; and I believe, if he had a mind to be king, he would hardly be refused."† What gave Addison to a great extent this popularity? That which the squires thought a reproach. He and his coadjutor Steele had opened for the people such fountains of playful humour, of gentle satire, of familiar criticism, of tolerant morality, that they had become to their readers as personal friends. The "Tatler," and "Spectator," and "Guardian," had appeared at a time when the High Churchmen were urging to religious hatred, and the right-divine parliament men were trying to back the old state coach into the sloughs from which the revolution had dragged it. Under their periodical companionship, many a fiery Templar was calmed by the pleasant lessons that he read as he sipped his morning chocolate; and many a court beauty was taught that there were more graceful and enduring charms than those of the female politician. Steele and Addison produced a permanent influence upon their age, because, in this new journalism, they mingled as little as possible with the temporary animosities of the age. They kept their politics for the "Whig Examiner" and the "Englishman." The Tory squires, who despised the penny literature which was the delight of old and young, of the London coffee-house and the provincial club, have passed to their natural obscurity. Steele has "Tatler" written upon his tomb as his greatest glory.

Johnson has said, and his opinion may be taken with very slight qualification, "Before the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator,' if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no masters of common life." He adds, "We had many books to teach us more important duties, and to settle opinions in philosophy and politics." Addison himself, in his "Freeholder," a series of Political Essays, whilst maintaining that "papers of entertainment" might be advantageously mixed with graver speculations upon state topics, has recorded his own view of what he and his coadjutors accomplished in the "Tatlers and Spectators," which, he says, "were so generally dispersed in single sheets, and have since been printed in so great numbers. . . . They diverted raillery from improper objects, and gave a new turn to ridicule,

\* "Tatler, No. 271."—Concluding Address.

† "Journal to Stella."

which for many years had been exerted on persons and things of a sacred and serious nature. . . . Our nation are such lovers of mirth and humour, that it is impossible for detached papers, which come out on stated days, either to have a general run, or long continuance, if they are not diversified, and enlivened from time to time, with subjects and thoughts accommodated to this taste, which so prevails among our countrymen. No periodical author, who always maintains his gravity, and does not sometimes sacrifice to the Graces, must expect to keep in vogue for any considerable time.\* Nothing but the remarkable talents of Steele and Addison, their knowledge of human nature, and their kindly dispositions, could have made their ridicule of transient follies of any permanent value. In avoiding the bitter exaggerations of the professed satirist, they give us real pictures of the every-day life of their time. In presenting what the old dramatists called humours, they offer us something of higher art than caricatures of individuals who have no features in common with their fellow-men. They exhibit to us the representatives of classes. But these first and greatest of the essayists have a further especial value in our eyes. They reflect the general character of the education of the people in the first quarter of the eighteenth century. "Papers of entertainment," said Addison, "are necessary to increase the number of readers, especially among those of different notions and principles." The "Tatler" and "Spectator," and "Guardian," addressed themselves to the largest number of those who had the ability and the leisure to read. The whole tone of these books show how limited the number was; and how necessary it became to deal with the higher parts of knowledge in the most familiar manner, and to advocate the noblest interests of religion and morals in the pleasantest spirit. Johnson has truly said, speaking of the time when Addison and Steele hit upon their vocation as popular instructors, "Men, not professing learning, were not ashamed of ignorance; and in the female world any acquaintance with books was distinguished only to be censured." The cheap periodical literature of our own day, taken as a whole, does not address a less-educated class than those addressed in the same manner during the last four years of Anne. The difference is that with us the readers have been multiplied a hundredfold.

"It is a great pity," writes Addison, in 1713, "there should be no knowledge in a family. For my own part, I am concerned, when I go into a great house where perhaps there is not a single person that can spell, unless it be by chance the butler, or one of

\* "Freeholder," No. 45.

the footmen. What a figure is the young heir likely to make, who, is a dunce both by father's and mother's side."\* There was a system of education for the humble then in progress, which gave the butler and the footman this advantage over the other inmates of the great house. The institution of charity-schools appeared to the essayist the most proper means to recover the age "out of its present degeneracy and depravation of manners;" and to promise that "there will be few in the next generation who will not at least be able to write and read, and have not had an early tincture of religion."† How imperfectly this promise was realised during the eighteenth century, under the charity-school system, we had melancholy proofs. But we cannot look without admiration upon the judicious mode in which the first essayists endeavoured to diffuse some desire for knowledge, and some taste for the higher efforts of genius, throughout a nation with whom superior rank and riches did not necessarily infer a more liberal cultivation of the mind than amongst those who laboured for their bread. They pursued the only wise and safe course. They made no attempts to deal with the abstruse parts of learning, by addressing themselves to the few; nor to lower themselves to what the pedants would deem the popular capacity, in writing for the many. In an essay attributed to Gay we find how entirely the writings of the "Tatler" "have convinced our fops and young fellows of the value and advantages of learning;" and in a poem of 1712 we are told that the ladies, under the influence of Steele, "aspire to write correct, and spell;" and that in their familiar letters we no longer find "Wurthee Surr."‡

Nothing would more surprise us in the contents of a periodical paper of our own time, not addressed exclusively to children, than to find the most familiar passages from the great poets presented to its readers as novelties. In the conduct of the early numbers of the "Tatler," Steele evidently assumed that the literary acquirements of his subscribers had not extended to Shakspeare or Milton; and that it was desirable to approach these obscure writers by a tentative process. As a help to a right judgment of actors for "the less learned part of the audience," we have Hamlet's instructions to the players given at length. § The description of Dover Cliff, in Lear, "drawn with such proper incidents," is duly set forth. || Passages of Henry IV., of Richard III., of Othello, are given as if they had all the charm of freshness for the greater number. And they really had this charm for most readers. The

\* "Guardian," No. 155.

† See Drake's "Essays," vol. iii.

§ "Tatler," No. 35.

‡ *Ibid.*, No. 105.

|| *Ibid.*, No. 117.

fourth folio edition of Shakspeare was published in 1685; the next edition, that of Rowe, appeared in the same year as the "Tatler." In very sensible and genial morsels of criticism upon Macbeth and Julius Cæsar, Steele quotes from his stage memory, as if no printed copy of the tragedies was accessible to him. His enthusiastic commendation of Betterton, as the great interpreter of Shakspeare's characters, points to the sources of his criticism. Steele preceded Addison in calling attention to Milton. He frequently quotes from Paradise Lost; and he transcribes "a passage in a mask writ by Milton," which he says, "made me forget my age, and renewed in me the warm desires after virtue, so natural to uncorrupted youth."\* But the first strenuous attempt to make the people of the reign of Anne fully impressed with the value of the great poet who had scarcely been heard in his own day, amidst "the barbarous dissonance of Bacchus and his revellers," was reserved for Addison. Yet in his famous series of papers on the "Paradise Lost," he had approached his subject with evident disinclination to hazard any heterodox opinion of the comparative merits of the ancients and the moderns. If the Paradise Lost falls short of the Æneid or the Iliad in the power of working on the imagination, "it proceeds rather from the fault of the language in which it is written than from any defect of genius in the author."† Addison, however, did admirably what he undertook to do; and he very wisely avoided what the learned Doctor Hurd complained that he did not do. He avoided metaphysical criticism; he did not attempt "to lay open the more secret and hidden springs of that pleasure which results from poetical composition." What Addison did, this grand philosophical critic thinks to be a very poor thing: "For what concerns his criticism on Milton in particular, there was this accidental benefit arising from it, that it occasioned an admirable poet to be read, and his excellences to be observed." All honour be to him who left the pedants to their own proper labours, and set manfully about his great duty of elevating the tastes and refining the manners of the people. Addison had very early professed a contempt for "all men of deep learning without common sense"—the "editors, commentators, interpreters, scholiasts, and critics,"—such as "set a greater value on themselves for having found out the meaning of a passage in Greek, than upon the author for having written it; nay, will allow the passage itself not to have any beauty in it, at the same time that they would be considered as the greatest men of the age for having interpreted it."‡ These were the natural haters of literature for the people. Whilst they would "write volumes

\* "Tatler," No. 98. † "Spectator," No. 417. ‡ "Tatler," No. 158.

upon an idle sonnet that is originally in Greek or Latin, give editions of the most immoral authors, and spin out whole pages upon the various readings of a lewd expression," they sneered at Addison for pointing out the beauties of "The children in the wood" and of "Chevy Chase." The pedants were joined by "the little conceited wits of the age," in ridiculing discourses upon old ballads that had only been "the delight of the common people."

Taking a broad view of the objects and tendency of these works, so especially characteristic of their age, we believe that they produced a far greater effect upon the intellectual and moral progress of the community by their cultivation of a taste for agreeable and healthful literature, than by their direct attacks upon vice and folly. Not the least of their services was to meet, in however limited a degree, that craving for fiction, which is even stronger amongst the imperfectly educated than amongst those of higher refinement. It has been said, that "no novel, giving a lively and powerful picture of the common life and manners of England, had appeared" before the time of the "Spectator;" that the narrative which connects together these essays, "gave to our ancestors their first taste of an exquisite and untried pleasure;" and that in this point of view, Addison is entitled "to be considered as the forerunner of the great English novelists."\* The famous Club of the "Spectator" thus referred to, was, in its original features, the creation of Steele. It was for Addison to work out many of its most refined delineations of character; but Steele, who had a wider range of observation, first produced to the admiring world, sir Roger de Coverley. Addison mitigated some of the coarser features of this favourite of mankind; and in his picture we recognise few traces of the fine gentleman who "had often supped with my lord Rochester and sir George Etherege, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked Bully Dawson in a public coffee-house." Steele gave the outline of the member of the Inner-Temple, "who was placed there to study the laws of the land, and is the most learned of any of the house in those of the stage." Steele created sir Andrew Freeport, who "calls the sea the British common," and can prove "that diligence makes more lasting acquisitions than valour." It is to Steele we owe the brave and modest Captain Sentry, who "is never overbearing, though accustomed to command men in the utmost degree below him; nor ever too obsequious from a habit of obeying men highly above him." Steele called up Will Honeycomb, who has all his life dressed well, knows the history of every mode, and is proud

\* Macaulay's "Essay on Addison."

to have "received a kind glance or blow of the fan from some celebrated beauty, mother of the present lord Such-a-one." Lastly, it was Steele who conceived that beautiful sketch of the clergyman, who seldom comes to the Club; "but when he does he adds to every one else a new enjoyment of himself;"—who is of too weak health to accept preferment; but who, without obtruding serious reflections, excites in his associates "an earnestness to have him fall on some divine topic." The essayist exultingly says, "these are my ordinary companions."

Sir Roger de Coverley is by far the most renowned member of the Spectator's Club, but he is rarely produced in the Club. It is in the country that the baronet is exhibited in his native glory. We are all familiar with his domestic establishment; with his description of his ancestors; with his deportment at church; with his adventure with the gipsies; with his field sports; with his importance at the assizes. We have ventured to suggest that the portrait of sir Roger may be taken for as just a representation of the country gentleman of the reign of Anne and of William III., as some eloquent descriptions which exhibit his class as wholly steeped in ignorance and debauchery.\* If sir Roger had been a Whig we might have somewhat suspected the truth of the likeness. His Toryism, painted with the most delicate art, is not even made ridiculous. His prejudices are so natural that they almost command our respect. He is a much stronger Tory in the country than in town. He is brought into a gentle conflict of principles with sir Andrew Freeport, who is naturally inclined to the moneyed interest, whilst sir Roger as naturally leans to the landed interest. "This humour is so moderate in each of them, that it proceeds no farther than to an agreeable raillery, which very often diverts the rest of the Club."† Sir Roger is a thorough patriot. He exults in the glorious names of Henry V. and Queen Elizabeth, when he sees their tombs in Westminster Abbey. When he is rowed to Vauxhall by the waterman who had lost a leg in the battle of La Hogue, "the knight, in the triumph of his heart, made several reflections on the greatness of the British nation: as, that one Englishman could beat three Frenchmen; that we could never be in danger of popery so long as we took care of our fleet; that the Thames was the noblest river in Europe; that London Bridge was a greater piece of work than any of the seven wonders of the world; with many other honest prejudices which naturally cleave to the heart of a true Englishman." There is not a more charming incident in the traits of character and manners which are

\* *Addison*, p. 55.

† "Spectator," No. 126.

evolved out of the Spectator's Club, than the description of the mode in which the members receive the news of sir Roger de Coverley's death. He had, some weeks before he died, sent a book by the carrier, to be given to sir Andrew Freeport in his name. "Sir Andrew, opening the book, found it to be a collection of Acts of Parliament. There was in particular the Act of Uniformity, with some passages in it marked by sir Roger's own hand. Sir Andrew found that they related to two or three points which he had disputed with Sir Roger, the last time he appeared at the Club. Sir Andrew, who would have been merry at such an incident on another occasion, at the sight of the old man's handwriting burst into tears, and put the book into his pocket."\* Addison, speaking of the political and religious prejudices of his time, as exhibited in the country districts especially, says, "I am sometimes afraid that I discover the seeds of a civil war in these divisions." Gradually the extended intercourse of Whig and Tory, of Churchman and Dissenter, made the Sir Rogers and the Sir Andrews wiser than their ancestors; and it is not without reason that we may believe that such lay preachers as Addison and Steele had no inconsiderable influence in making their countrymen ashamed of "such a spirit of dissension," as rendered them "in a manner barbarous towards one another." Other animosities, other passions and prejudices, succeeded those of the generation in which these kindly moralists flourished. But their humanizing lessons have always been capable of a general application; and to the gradual spread of that education of high and humble, which they began by popularising literature, we may attribute the fact that, although Englishmen differ as keenly upon public subjects, they have long ceased to hate, as their forefathers hated.

The little tales of Steele in the "Tatler," also gave "the first taste of an exquisite and untried pleasure." There is material in every one of these simple and touching stories capable of expansion into several chapters of the modern writers of fiction; and yet they are so perfect, according to their own theory of art, that they must have set many a young imagination shaping forth scenes and dialogues to fill up the well-defined outline. In Steele's six or seven tragical sketches, the absence of elaboration, the directness with which we reach the catastrophe, give an impression of reality, such as we receive from the best passages of Defoe. The oriental tales and the allegories of Addison have their own charm, and exhibit the elegance of his taste and the beauty of his style. But

\* "Spectator," No. 517.