

we must honestly confess that we would rather have been the writer of "Inkle and Yarico" than of the "Vision of Mirza."

Looking at the united labours of Steele and Addison as a whole, we are astonished not only at the variety of their productions, but at the continuity of their periodical contributions from the spring of 1709 to the autumn of 1713, with very slight cessation. Of the "Tatler," "Spectator," and "Guardian," Steele wrote five hundred and ten papers; Addison wrote three hundred and sixty-nine. What a void did these two associates fill up, when they opened the fountains of their learning, of their experience, of their humour, of their imagination, to delight a people who had almost forgotten the noble literature of a century earlier, and had very little to attract them, and less to improve, in the literature of their own time. For women, especially, studies "for delight, for ornament, and for use," were almost unknown. The "Tatler" proposed to take into serious consideration, the means of forming "a Female Library"—to recommend "a collection of books that shall consist of such authors as do not corrupt while they divert."* Steele never carried out his notion. Addison took up the idea designing "to recommend such particular books as may be proper for the improvement of the sex." His intention equally failed. But Addison gave a catalogue of books which he found in the library of a lady of more than common education. Some few she had bought for her own use, but most had been got together "either because she had heard them praised, or because she had seen the authors of them." This may account for "Sir Isaac Newton's works" being there; and "Locke on the Human Understanding, with a paper of patches in it." "The lady's own reading has lain very much among romances;" and accordingly we find in this curious library, "Cassandra," "Cleopatra," "Astræa," "The Grand Cyrus." These were the famous translations, each in enormous folios, or in a dozen duodecimo volumes, from the French of Monsieur Calprenede, or of Mademoiselle Scudery. Their interminable stupidity was scarcely driven out till Richardson and Fielding appeared. But common sense dawned upon the readers for amusement when the essayists came; and from the publication of the "Tatler," "Spectator," and "Guardian," we may date the general taste for reading, which has gradually spread throughout our land.

The "men of genius and learning" who were contemporaries of Addison and Steele, rendered no considerable assistance to their admirable design of affording instruction and entertainment

* "Tatler," No. 248.

to a larger class of readers than "men of genius and learning" had previously thought worthy of their care. Swift only contributed two entire papers to the "Tatler" and "Spectator," with some dozen fragments. Congreve wrote one article in the "Tatler." Parnell furnished two essays to the "Spectator" and two to the "Guardian." Berkeley was a more diligent friend, having in the "Guardian" fourteen excellent papers on the sceptical opinions of the time. Of Pope's writing we find two articles in the "Spectator" and eight in the "Guardian." Of men of inferior note there are here and there an essay. The organization of periodical literature was at that time very imperfect. Ephemeral verse-makers could obtain a guinea from a bookseller for an occasional Ode, or a Political Satire. Two guineas for a "Letter to a Noble Lord," was the reward which Grub-street bestowed upon its patriots. Addison, in the "Tatler" already quoted has a pleasant account of "a general dealer"—intended, we may guess, for Tom D'Urfey. "The merry rogue said, when he wanted a dinner, he sent a paragraph of Table Talk, and his bookseller, upon sight, paid the reckoning." The humble gains of these caterers for public taste were rendered more uncertain by the rogueries of piratical publishers, who were as unscrupulous towards authors using the same tongue, as if the breadth of the Atlantic had legalized their frauds. The famous "Act for the encouragement of learning," under which the term and other conditions of copyright subsisted for a century, was passed in that session of the Parliament of Anne, which began on the 13th of November, 1709. On the 1st of December, Addison, with the evident desire to promote this enactment for the benefit of literature, wrote a paper in the "Tatler," which thus commences: "The progress of my intended account of what happened when Justice visited mortals, is at present interrupted by the observation and sense of an injustice against which there is no remedy, even in a kingdom more happy in the care taken of the liberty and property of the subject than any other nation upon earth." That injustice was perpetrated by "men who are rogues within the law . . . a set of wretches we authors call pirates, who print any book, poem, or sermon, as soon as it appears in the world, in a smaller volume, and sell it, as all other thieves do stolen goods, at a cheaper rate." The Statute which was passed a few months afterwards sets forth the same fraudulent practice, and gives to authors a limited enjoyment of their own property, which, under the common law, was held to endure for ever. But the common law did not give a prompt remedy against piracy, which was attained by the Statute of Anne. It is from the passing of this Act that we may date the

slow but certain establishment of literature as a profession, deriving its support, like every other branch of industry, under the general laws of demand and supply. Addison, whose writings had procured for him lucrative offices, not only thinks that authors ought to have "the benefit that may arise from their writings; but that it has happened, and may often happen, that men of learning and virtue cannot qualify themselves for public employment or preferment." He therefore comes to this sound conclusion: "I have brought myself to consider things in so unprejudiced a manner, that I esteem more a man who can live by the products of his understanding, than one who does it by the favour of great men."* During the reign of Anne "the favour of great men" was the ruling idea of those who devoted their lives to authorship. Next to the service that was rendered to literature by passing the Copyright Act, was the real elevation of the literary character by the contempt for letters of George I. and sir Robert Walpole. The writer who attempted to "live by the products of his understanding" alone, had a terrible state of transition to pass through before he was equally free from "the patron and the gaol." But he finally rose above the condition of "the hirelings in garrets, at hard meat," described by Roger North; we even think far above the "artificial encouragement of a vast system of bounties and premiums," which supplied "the deficiency of the natural demand for literature."† We cannot conceive any more practical humiliation of genius and learning than the vaunted modes of their patronage in what is complacently called the Augustan age. Prior is sent abroad as an ambassador; Addison becomes an Under-secretary of State; Swift obtains the deanery of St. Patrick. Congreve, Rowe, Hughes, Philips, Stepney, had lucrative appointments. How great the deserts! How munificent the rewards! The notion is that these eminent gainers of high prizes met their patrons upon thoroughly independent terms. Was it so? Swift, indeed, always affects to be greater than the men to whom he was paying court. He fancies he is standing up for the dignity of letters, when he takes Parnell to Oxford's levee, and the great lord-treasurer is civil to him. "I value myself upon making the ministry desire to be acquainted with Parnell, and not Parnell with the ministry."‡ Yet what real meanness is there under all this show of independence! In 1709, before the fall of the Whigs, Swift assails Halifax for preferment in a style that would be ludicrous if it were not contemptible. He congratulates himself upon having "such a solicitor as your lordship." He has no timid reservations.

* "Tatler," No. 101. † Macaulay, "Essay on Johnson." ‡ "Journal," Jan. 31. 1713.

He boldly asks his noble solicitor, "that if you think this gentle winter will not carry off Dr. South, or that his reversion is not to be compassed, your lordship would please to use your credit that, as my lord Somers thought of me last year for the bishopric of Waterford, so my lord President may now think on me for that of Cork, if the incumbent dies of the spotted fever he is now under."* There is far more independence in Steele's request to the same patron of letters, that he would be liberal in subscribing to the new edition of the "Tatler:" "If any that your lordship recommends shall think fit to subscribe more than the sum proposed for a book, it may be said that it is for so many more books. This will make the favour more grateful by being conferred in an oblique way, and at the same time save the confusion of the Squire [Bickerstaff], whom I know to be naturally proud."† More honest than the impudent seeker of a prebend or a bishopric, or than the poor and proud essayist who desires a gift "in an oblique way," is Defoe, who tells Halifax that he "scorned to come out of Newgate at the price of betraying a dead master," but thanks him in a straightforward style for "the exceeding bounty I have now received;" and says, "I am a plain and unpolished man, and perfectly unqualified to make formal acknowledgments; and a temper soured by a series of afflictions renders me still the more awkward in the received method of common gratitude. I mean the ceremony of thanks."‡ The fate of Defoe was that of the great body of the men of letters. They sometimes had a purse tossed to them for a dedication; they had small pay from the booksellers; they starved; and their poverty, more than their dulness, consigned them to the tender mercies of "The Dunciad."

The poets of the reign of Anne, and of the reign of the first George, occupy the most considerable space in the literary history of those times. One half of Johnson's "Lives" is devoted to criticism upon the works of those who flourished in this period. Of that "body of English poetry" which the booksellers had determined to publish, and for which Johnson wrote those "Lives" as a series of prefaces, how much that belongs to this Augustan age is worth looking at, except for the gratification of a literary curiosity to know what was be-praised and be-pensioned in those halcyon days? Of these thirty "heirs of fame," who occupy about seven hundred pages of Johnson's biographies, § there are only about seven whom the world has not very "willingly let die." Rowe,

* "Letters of Eminent Literary Men," Camden Society, p. 343. † *Ibid.*, p. 345.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 321—323.

§ In Mr. Cunningham's edit.

Prior, Congreve, Gay are still talked about. Addison and Swift are read for their prose. Pope is almost the sole name in poetry that is not partially or hermetically sealed up in "the monuments of banished minds." Many of those who are rarely now "from the dust of old oblivion raked," were the lucky ones of the earth whom Halifax and Oxford were transforming from ill-paid verse-makers into flourishing commissioners, envoys, and secretaries. The ministers believed that patronage had made the poets,—

"Un Auguste peut aisément faire un Virgile"—

and it was still easier to make the rhymers into sinecurists. These have left few abiding memorials of their age in their Odes and Epigrams, their Songs and Love Verses,—even in their Tales, at which court ladies smiled and blushed behind the fan. We may glean from the one great poet of the time some illustrations of the national mind and manners, that are not the less real on account of the colouring which consummate art has bestowed upon them.

The circumstances of Pope's early life were eminently favourable to the attainment of his future excellence. His father, a Roman Catholic, had retired from business with a moderate competence. The precocious boy, after the age of twelve, had to form his own mind, and work out his own aspirations, in his "paternal cell" at Binfield. In this modest dwelling the young poet wrote his "Pastorals," his "Windsor Forest," his "Temple of Fame," his "Essay on Criticism," his "Rape of the Lock." Here his mind was saturated with a love of nature and natural things, held in subjection, indeed, by the powerful acuteness of his reasoning faculties, but running over with imagery, and often with tenderness and passion. We are told, "He set to learning Latin and Greek by himself, about twelve; and when he was about fifteen he resolved that he would go up to London and learn French and Italian."* He receives the first encouragement to cultivate his poetical talents from his neighbour sir William Trumbull, who had been an ambassador and a secretary of state. At sixteen, he formed an acquaintance with Wycherley, a man of seventy. He was known at that time to Congreve. At an earlier age he had been taken to a coffee-house to see Dryden. The wonderful lad was not a moping recluse in Windsor Forest, but went into the world, and talked with famous men, who were not mere authors,—leaders in high life, qualified by their own experience to display to his eager curiosity some of the best and many of the worst aspects of that region of luxury, and wit, and profligacy in which they had lived. Pope had

* Spence.

a very early training to afford him a far deeper insight into the realities of life, than he could have attained in the seclusion of a college or the bustle of a profession. His religious disqualification for place, and his ardent thirst for distinction, sent him to authorship as his proper work for profit and for fame; but his refined tastes, and his feeble health, saved him from the social perils that attended upon the professional writer. His small patrimony kept him from the shifts and humiliations that then, and long after, were the hard destiny of those who wrote for their daily bread. His resolute application won him higher rewards than literature had ever before won in its own open market. At the beginning of George I.'s reign, Halifax offered him a pension, saying that nothing should be demanded of him for it. The young poet had not then earned an independence by his Homer. "I wrote," he says, "to lord Halifax to thank him for his most obliging offer; saying, that I considered the matter over fully, and that all the difference I could find in having and not having a pension, was that if I had one I might live more at large in town, and that if I had not, I might live happily enough in the country. . . . So the thing dropped, and I had my liberty without a coach."*

* Spence, p. 231.