CHAPTER XVIII.

Female Politicians.—Female Employments.—Dress.—The Hoop-Petticoat.—Literary estimate of the Female Character.—The Stage estimate.—Congreve.—Swift's Polite Conversation.—Pope.—The Rape of the Lock.—Prude and Coquette.—Puppet Plays.—The Opera.—The Masquerade.—Young.—Fashionable Vices.—Drinking.—Extravagant dinners.—Duelling.—The Club Life of London.—Gaming.—The Bear-garden.—Popular Superstitions.—Witchcraft.—Ignorance of the Lower Classes.—Sports.—National taste for Music gone out.—The Small-Coal Man.

THE "Tatler" and "Spectator" were issued at a time when the ladies of England were amongst the keenest and noisiest of politicians. One object of the essayists was to lead the fair ones into calmer and pleasanter regions; and we therefore find little notice in their non-political writings of the vagaries which the female mind exhibited about the Church and the Protestant Succession. In the "Freeholder" Addison has several pleasant papers, in which we see the temper that filled many a household with the strifes of unreasoning Tories in hooped petticoats. "Women of this turn," he says, "are so earnest in contending for hereditary right, that they wholly neglect the education of their own sons and heirs; and are so taken up with their zeal for the Church, that they cannot find time to teach their children the Catechism. . . . . Such is our misfortune that we sometimes see a pair of stays ready to burst with sedition; and hear the most masculine passions expressed in the sweetest voices."* In another paper he says, "As our English ladies are at present the greatest stateswomen in Europe, they will be in danger of making themselves the most unamiable part of their sex, if they continue to give a loose to intemperate language, and to a low kind of ribaldry, which is not used among the women of fashion in any other country."* We must ascribe a great deal of this disposition to engage in party conflicts to the absence of occupations of an intellectual character, which might engage the women of the beginning of the eighteenth century. In condemning their political extravagances, the "Freeholder" does not attempt to address them as persons qualified to estimate the relative merits of opposite opinions. When he points out to the fair enemies of the Protestant Succession what they sac-

* "Freeholder," No. 26. † *Ibid.*, No. 23.

rifice by their disloyalty to the House of Brunswick, he tells them that they cannot go to court; that they forego the advantage of birthday suits; that they are forced to live in the country, and feed their chickens. "The women of England should be on the side of the Freeholder, and enemies to the person who would bring in arbitrary government and popery," because, "as there are several of our ladies who amuse themselves in the reading of travels, they cannot but take notice what uncomfortable lives those of their own sex lead, where passive obedience is professed and practised in the utmost perfection." Arbitrary power spoils the shape of the foot in China; hurries the Indian widow to her husband's funeral pile; makes the daughters of Eve in Persia mere chattels; gives a woman the twelfth share of a husband in the dominions of the Grand Turk; and renders them the slaves of duennas and gouvernantes in Spain and Italy. The ladies of England ought not to encourage the Roman Catholic religion, because a fish diet spoils the complexion; and a "whole Lent would give such a sallowness to the celebrated beauties of this island, as would scarce make them distinguished from those of France."* Much of this, no doubt, is the banter of the great humourist; but the ladies deserved it, who set a mark upon their faces to proclaim their politics, the fair Tories being "obliged by their principles to stick a patch on the most unbecoming side of their foreheads."† They could scarcely be addressed in any other style, when the whole time of the greater number was engrossed by idle visiting and ridiculous amusements. "I think," says Steele, "most of the misfortunes in families arise from the trifling way the women have in spending their time, and gratifying only their eyes and ears, instead of their reason and understanding." It must be remembered that the domestic accomplishments of the English lady were then almost unknown. Not one house in ten thousand contained a harpsichord, whilst in our days a pianoforte is as common as a sofa. Pope had borrowed, or hired, a harpsichord; and during a temporary absence from his house at Twickenham, his fashionable neighbour, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, desired a loan from him of the same cumbrous box of wires, which request the poet was unable to grant. Of the arts of design the best educated female had no conception. The greater number of fashionable women "spend their hours in an indolent state of body and mind, without either recreations or reflections." Stimulants, if we may believe the censor, were sometimes resorted to: "Palestris, in her drawing-room, is supported by spirits, to keep off the return of spleen and melancholy, before she

* "Freeholder," No. 40. ‡ *Ibid.*, No. 26.

can get over half of the day, for want of something to do; while the wench in the kitchen sings and scours from morning to night."* We can scarcely impute the extravagances of female dress in Anne's reign to the defects of education; for in our age, when reading is universal, and every woman, not wholly condemned to be a domestic drudge, has other salutary modes of occupation always at hand, the absurdities at which the satirists unceasingly laughed a hundred and fifty years ago have again come around. Is it Mr. Bickerstaff, or is it Mr. Punch, who published "The humble petition of William Jingle, coachmaker," showing that the petticoats of ladies being too wide to enter into any coach in use before their invention, he has contrived "a coach for the reception of one lady only, who is to be let in at the top?" Is it in 1709, or in 1859, that the prevailing fashion is thus described? "The design of our great-grandmothers in this petticoat was to appear much bigger than the life, for which reason they had false shoulder-blades like wings, and the ruff, to make the upper and lower parts of their bodies appear proportionable; whereas the figure of a woman in the present dress bears the figure of a cone, which is the same with that of an extinguisher, with a little knob at the upper end, and widening downward till it ends in a basis of most enormous circumference."† There must be something of innate virtue in the hooped petticoat, now called by the pretty name of crinoline. It lasted in various forms through the reigns of the first and second Georges; kept its place, to the amusement of the profane vulgar, on court days, till a very recent period; and has now started up, to the terror of all those of the male creation who cannot afford "a coach for the reception of one lady only."

In the period from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century, there was unquestionably a very low estimate of the female character. In theatrical representations of life there was scarcely an attempt to exhibit a woman of sense and modesty. The high ideal of female excellence which we find in Shakspere, and which to a certain extent he must have derived from the realities of the age of Elizabeth, could scarcely be expected from the Drydens and Farquhars and Wycherleys and Congreves of the age of the Revolution. We can scarcely look to the stage of their time for Perditas and Violas, and Imogens. If some of its women had the wit and address of Beatrice and Rosalind, they had the profligacy and cunning which made their cleverness hateful. Congreve, who did as much as any dramatist to render the female character odious, has a somewhat remarkable paper in the "Tatler,"

* "Tatler," No. 248.

† *Ibid.*, Nos. 1[illegible]3, [illegible].

in which he says, "It is not to be supposed that it was a poverty of genius in Shakspere, that his women made so small a figure in his dialogues." How diligently must Congreve have studied Shakspere to have made this discovery! He goes on to say, "But it certainly is, that he drew women as they were then in life; for that sex had not in those days that freedom of conversation; and their characters were only, that they were mothers, sisters, daughters, and wives." Was it really true of the age of the author of the "Old Bachelor," "Double Dealer," "Love for Love," and "Way of the World," that, as he and others have shown, the mothers were careless of their children, that the sisters were plotting against each other, that the daughters were undutiful, that the wives were adulteresses? As an essayist he then draws the character of "the divine Aspasia," whose "countenance is the lively image of her mind, which is the seat of honour, truth, compassion, knowledge, and innocence;"—a lady who "adds to the severity and privacy of the last age all the freedom and ease of this." It is pleasant to find one exception to the ladies of Congreve's own time—"shining wits and politicians, virtuosæ, free-thinkers and disputants." When Shakspere "drew women as they were then in life," according to the creator of the Miss Prues and Lady Touchwoods, "vanity had quite another turn, and the most conspicuous woman at that time of day was only the best housewife."* It was some years before the domestic virtues, as exhibited on the stage, came to be regarded in any other point of view than as tiresome, if not ridiculous. But a sense of decency, denoting something more of respect for the female character, was slowly growing; and this is in some degree an evidence that the female character was itself improving. The great ladies ceased to be painted as profligate intriguers; and the citizens' wives as looking for licentious adventures in their masks. The "Tatler" originally professed to devote particular attention to the stage; and Steele had an especial relish for the theatre, with a keen sense of dramatic excellence. In the first week of the existence of the new journal, we have notices of two plays, whose wit, in the view of those times, redeemed them from the shame of their licentiousness. The "Love for Love," of Congreve, and the "Country Wife," of Wycherley, were tolerated for a century. We can scarcely, therefore, expect Steele to have condemned them; especially when he records that at the performance of "Love for Love," for Betterton's benefit, "there has not been known so great a concourse of persons of distinction: the stage itself was covered with

* "Tatler," No. 42.

gentlemen and ladies." * There was a third drama which Mr. Bickerstaff notices in his eighth number in a way which absolves him from the charge of having gone along with his age in all its theatrical improprieties. He tells us that a play, whose name is by us scarcely mentionable, was acted "before a suitable audience who were extremely well-diverted with that heap of vice and absurdity;" and he makes "a gentleman of just taste" express his indignation, "upon occasion of seeing human nature fall so low in their delights." Yet that infamous comedy by Edward Ravenscroft, which was first acted in 1682, kept the stage till 1754, being annually performed at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, on Lord Mayor's day, in ridicule of the London citizens. Garrick, in 1752, had the good taste to break through this custom of presenting, for the gratification of the ignorant and licentious, a picture of manners which was never other than exceptionally true; and which was originally devised to make the libertines of fashion believe that the households of the industrious and thrifty part of the community were as corrupt as their own exclusive circles.

Swift was not, habitually, a libeller of the female character. He was fond of the society of accomplished women. His "Journal to Stella," with much grossness, and some childish talk assuming her inferiority, is not far below what a man of high intellect would address to an intelligent woman who had his confidence. He wrote a paper on "The Education of Ladies," in which he says, "There is a subject of controversy which I have frequently met with in mixed and select companies of both sexes, and sometimes only of men—whether it be prudent to choose a wife who has good natural sense, some taste of wit and humour, able to read and relish history, books of travels, moral or entertaining discourses, and be a tolerable judge of the beauties in poetry? This question is generally determined in the negative by women themselves, but almost universally by we men." It is not banter when he observes "that in this debate, those whom we call men and women of fashion are only to be understood; not merchants, tradesmen, or others of such occupation, who are not supposed to have shared in a liberal education." The essay is incomplete; but Swift evidently inclines to the opinion that a better education of women would be preferable to "the modern way of training up both sexes in ignorance, idleness, and vice." He was a hard censor, and therefore we must receive what he says with much qualification. His "Polite Conversation" is a caricature. Like many other caricatures it presents a coarser reality than an exact copy of persons and manners would

* "Tatler,' No. 1.

give; but it may be nevertheless faithful in the same degree as Hogarth's exaggeration of the squint of Wilkes. Lady Smart, Miss Notable, and Lady Answerall, would have lost half their raciness, if they had been mere inventions of the humorist, and not highly coloured recollections of the days when he feasted in the fashionable world of London. When the great ladies are not coarse they are foolish and insipid:

> "*Lady Smart.* Madam, do you love bohea tea?
> *Lady Answerall.* Why, madam, I must confess I do love it, but it does not love me.
> *Miss Notable.* Indeed, madam, your ladyship is very sparing of your tea. I protest, the last I took was no more than water bewitched."

The modern kitchen would be ashamed of the trashy talk of the old drawing-room.

In 1712 Pope published his first sketch of the "Rape of the Lock." Though only in his twenty-fourth year, he had been long familiar with the world of letters and of fashion—with the coffee-houses and the saloons. Whether in town or country, Pope habitually lived amongst what is termed the best society. He was not humiliated by those occasional glimpses of the interior of her temple to which Fashion, in our days, sometimes condescends to invite Genius. He was an admirer of women, according to that mode which implies the superiority of the admirer in the exuberance of his flattery. His brilliant conversation made him a welcome companion; and his graceful homage, and perhaps even his freedoms, gave him the reputation of a charming correspondent. Ridiculous we know he must sometimes have been, when he appeared in the character of a gay tempter; but his diminutive figure and infirm health perhaps gave him a readier admission to female confidence than the handsome Congreves and Wycherleys had attained. His intimacy with the fair ones does not appear, on the whole, to have won them his respect. He walked by moonlight in the gardens of Hampton Court with the maid of honour, Mary Lepell; and he sat with duchesses in their barges on the Thames, listening to "music on the water." But he came to the conclusion that in women only two passions "divide the kind"—

> "The love of pleasure and the love of sway."

Pope, in the dedication of the "Rape of the Lock" to its heroine, Miss Arabella Fermor, says "it was intended only to divert a few young ladies, who have good sense and good humour enough to laugh not only at their sex's little unguarded follies, but at their own. . . . The character of Belinda, as it is now managed, resembles you in nothing but in beauty." The guardian-sylph has hovered

over Belinda in her morning dream; and he has whispered in her ear words which are not complimentary to the modesty or sense of women; but they are meant as compliments. Belinda is waked by her lap-dog, and her "eyes first opened on a billet-doux." The toilet is completed with the aid of "Betty" and her sylphs. "Awful beauty puts on all its charms." In the company of "fair nymphs and well-dressed youths" Belinda is launched on the silver Thames. Ariel and his attendant sprites sit on the sails of "the painted vessel." Their province is to tend the fair; to guard their powder, their essences, and their washes; even in dreams to bestow invention—

"To change a flounce, or add a furbelow."

The gay company repair to Hampton Court:

"In various talk th' instructive hours they pass'd,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
One speaks the glory of the British queen,
And one describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
At every word a reputation dies;
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that."

The game of ombre succeeds; and then comes coffee. The tempting lock is cut off Belinda's hair, by an adventurous baron,

"As o'er the fragrant steams she bends her head."

She shrieks, as ladies shriek,

"When husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last."

Rage, resentment, and despair take possession of her soul. The fierce Thalestris "fans the rising fire." Gnomes come from "the cave of spleen" to make her curse the detested day, when the favourite curl was snatched from her head. A wise monitor, the grave Clarissa, counsels forgiveness and a return to good humour; but she counsels in vain. Good sense and good humour are to "preserve what beauty gains,"—

"That men may say, when we the front-box grace,
Behold the first in virtue as in face."

That men may say! This, then, was the reward of virtue. Duty had no charms of its own:

"Oh! if to dance all night, and dress all day,
Charm'd the small-pox, or chased old age away;
Who would not scorn what housewife's cares produce,
Or who would learn one earthly thing of use."

Exquisite poem! Was it originally read as a gentle satire, or a true picture, of the ladies of the court of Anne? At twenty-four Pope was not a professed satirist. At forty-seven he wrote his "Epistle to a Lady on the Characters of Women," in which, out of his mature experience he said:

"Men, some to business, some to pleasure take,
But every woman is at heart a rake."

False as this may be, no satirist would now dare to make the assertion, because a total change of manners has deprived him of such materials for the exercise of his art. We apprehend that there was no want in Pope's age of single figures and groups to be drawn at full length, as he has drawn his Rufa, and Silia, and Narcissa, and Flavia, and Chloe—exceptions to his general rule, that

"Most women have no characters at all."

The Essayists have two very marked species of the genus *mulier*—the coquette and the prude. Steele describes the coquette as "a sect among women of all others the most mischievous." He says, "as a rake among men is the man who lives in the constant abuse of his reason, so a coquette among women is one who lives in continual misapplication of her beauty." According to the same authority, "the prude and the coquette, as different as they appear in their behaviour, are in reality the same kind of women. The motive in both is the affectation of pleasing men. They are sisters of the same blood and constitution, only one chooses a grave and the other a light dress. The prude appears more virtuous, the coquette more vicious, than she really is." Addison, in his "Vision of Justice," is scarcely less severe upon the beautiful creatures who come to look into "the mirror of truth." When the real character was shown without regard to the external features, "multitudes started at their own form, and would have broke the glass if they could have reached it. . . . I observed that some few were so humble as to be surprised at their own charms." By way of apology, Addison concludes his paper by expressing his belief that his vision had "not done justice to the sex." He attempts, then, to repair "the partiality and extravagance of his vision," not in his own words, or by quotation from a poet of his own age, but in a passage written by one who had formed his notions of woman upon the models of a more heroic time—that which produced Lucy Hutchinson and Anne Fanshawe:

"When I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
And in herself complete, so well to know
Her own, that what she wills to do or say
Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;

> All higher knowledge in her presence falls
> Degraded; wisdom in discourse with her
> Loses discountenanc'd and like folly shows;
> Authority and reason on her wait,
> As one intended first, not after made
> Occasionally; and, to consummate all,
> Greatness of mind, and nobleness, their seat
> Build in her loveliest, and create an awe
> About her, as a guard angelic plac'd." *

Addison has supposed that his "imaginary historian, in looking back upon the "Spectator's" representations of the "diversions and characters of the English nation," would "make allowance for the mirth and humour of the author." If his words (he says) were interpreted in their literal meaning, "we must suppose that women of the first quality used to pass whole mornings at a puppet-show;" and "that a promiscuous assembly of men and women were allowed to meet at midnight in masks within the verge of the court." We can scarcely imagine that the antiquity or the wit of the puppet-show attracted "women of the first quality." In Ben Jonson's time the puppet-show had a different name:

> "'Twas a rare *motion* to be seen in Fleet Street."

Pepys saw the "puppet-plays" in Covent Garden; and the same performance was exhibited at Whitehall before Charles II.† In the days of the "Spectator," "one Powell" placed his show under the piazzas of Covent Garden. The sexton of the adjacent church of St. Paul complains that when he tolls in for week-day prayers, he finds that his congregation take the warning of the bell, morning and evening, to go to the puppet-show. "I have placed my son at the Piazzas, to acquaint the ladies that the bell rings for church, and that it stands on the other side of the garden; but they only laugh at the child." Mrs. Rachel Eyebright has left the church for the puppet-show; and the sexton has lost the fees that gentlemen used to pay to be placed "over against" the fair lady. He has now "none but a few ordinary people, who come to church only to say their prayers." ‡ Powell exhibited Whittington and his Cat; and he introduced a pig to dance a minuet with Punch. The town was divided between the attractions of the puppet-show and of the Italian Opera. The wits of the time of Anne tried to laugh down what they treated as an absurdity—"that an audience would sit out an evening to hea[r] a dramatical performance written in a language which they did not understand." In their view it was a monstrous practice. "But what makes it more astonishing,

* "Paradise Lost," book viii.

† "Diary," Oct. 8, 1662.

‡ "Spectator," No. 14.

it is not the taste of the rabble, but of persons of the greatest politeness which has established it." Addison argues that "if the Italians have a genius for music above the English, the English have a genius for other performances of a much higher nature, and capable of giving the mind a much nobler entertainment." He bitterly complains that the tragedy of "Phædra and Hippolitus"—a dull mythological affair on the French model—was scarcely heard a third time, amongst a people "so stupidly fond of the Italian Opera." The tragedy-writers strove in vain against the new attraction. Addison thought to supplant it by his opera of "Rosamond;" which poem had no success. It failed; because though the dialogue was intelligible, the music was heavy and spiritless. Gay wrote his "Beggar's Opera" in ridicule of the opera of Fashion. Its object has long since been forgotten. Its popularity mainly rests upon the charming old English airs to which its songs are adapted.

The Italian Opera, once planted in England, has survived the assaults of the witty and the prejudices of the vulgar. It is thoroughly acclimated. The interchange of taste has made that popular which was once only genteel. It is fortunate that a promiscuous assembly of men and women in masks is now wholly confined to the disreputable portion of society. What the Masquerade was has been told by Addison with such original humour, in that portion of his Essays which is little known, that we may give its leading features without much curtailment. * The Tory Fox-hunter comes to town in the second year of George II., and, having travelled all night, arrives about daybreak at Charing Cross. There, "to his great surprise, he saw a running footman carried in a chair, followed by a waterman, in the same kind of vehicle. He was wondering at the extravagance of their masters, that furnished them with such dresses and accommodations, when on a sudden he beheld a chimney-sweeper, conveyed after the same manner with three footmen running before him. During his progress through the Strand, he met with several other figures no less wonderful and surprising. Seeing a great many in rich morning gowns, he was amazed to find that persons of quality were up so early; and was no less astonished to see many lawyers in their bar-gowns, when he knew by his almanac that Term was ended." Four heads are popped out of a hackney-coach, and seeing the fox-hunter, "with his long whip, horse-hair periwig, jockey-belt, and coat without sleeves, fancied him to be one of the masqueraders on horseback, and received him with a loud peal of laughter." He concluded

* "Freeholder," No. 44.

"that all the persons he saw in these strange habits were foreigners, and received a great indignation against them, for pretending to laugh at an English country-gentleman. But he soon recovered out of his error, by hearing the voices of several of them, particularly of a shepherdess quarrelling with her coachman, and threatening to break his bones in very intelligible English, though with a masculine tone. His astonishment still increased upon him, to see a continued procession of harlequins, scaramouches, punchinellos, and a thousand other merry dresses, by which people of quality distinguished their wit from that of the vulgar." The worthy squire having observed half-a-dozen nuns, "who filed off one after another up Katherine-street to their respective convents in Drury-lane," asks a porter what religion these people were of. "The porter replied, 'They are of no religion; 'tis a masquerade.' Upon that, says my friend, I began to smoke that they were a parcel of mummers; and being himself one of the quorum in his own county, could not but wonder that none of the Middlesex Justices took care to lay some of them by the heels." A drunken bishop gives dire offence to his spirit of magistracy. "But his worship, in the midst of his austerity, was mollified at the sight of a very lovely milk-maid, whom he began to regard with an eye of mercy, and conceived a particular affection for her, till he found, to his great amazement, that the standers-by suspected her to be a duchess."

Young, whose genius as a satirist was munificently rewarded in his own day, scarcely attracts notice in our time, whilst Pope will never be obsolete. Young was not so finished an artist, but he had looked carefully upon the world around him, and in the last years of George I., when he wrote his "Universal Passion," he looked laughingly upon life—a mood very different from that in which the author of the "Night Thoughts" presents himself—perhaps a more natural mood. We may follow up the notice by the Essayists of the Puppet-show and the Masquerade, by some lines of Young, which describe what women were at a time when the cultivation of their own minds, the education of their children, the attainment of what we call accomplishments, were not the employment of the higher class of ladies,—certainly not of those who belonged to the middle ranks:—

> "Britannia's daughters, much more fair than nice,
> Too fond of admiration, lose their price;
> Worn in the public eye, give cheap delight
> To throngs, and tarnish to the sated sight;
> As unreserved, and beauteous as the sun,
> Through every sign of vanity they run;
> Assemblies, parks, coarse feasts in city halls,

> Lectures, and trials, plays, committees, balls,
> Wells, Bedlams, executions, Smithfield scenes,
> And fortune-tellers' caves, and lions' dens,
> Taverns, exchanges, Bridewells, drawing-rooms,
> Installments, pillories, coronations, tombs,
> Tumblers and funerals, puppet-shows, reviews,
> Sales, races, rabbits, and, still stranger, pews." *

The gentle satire of the essayists against coquettes and prudes might have made affectation less conspicuous. Their laugh against female follies in dress might have somewhat abated the rage for patches, or somewhat diminished the rotundity of the petticoat. Fine ladies might have abstained from the masquerade till it was purified from low company. Persons of quality might have been more careful of the sharper with a pack of cards in his pocket, after Steele's denunciation of the tribe. Ladies at the Bath might have been a little more decorous, when their "ease of conscience" was inferred from the circumstance "that they go directly from church to the gaming-table; and so highly reverence play, as to make it a great part of their exercise on Sundays." † Flagrant vices were not likely to yield quickly to a mild censorship. Drunkenness is one of the objects of their reprehension: "A method of spending one's time agreeably is a thing so little studied, that the common amusement of our young gentlemen, especially of such as are at a distance from those of the first breeding, is drinking." Yet we have abundant evidence that "those of the first breeding" were often the most intemperate. The moralists were not exempt from the common vice of our young gentlemen. Hear Swift: "I dined with Mr. Addison and Dick Stuart, lord Mountjoy's brother, a treat of Addison's. They were half fuddled, but not I; for I mixed water with my wine, and left them together between nine and ten." ‡ An early hour to leave gentlemen half fuddled, according to our modern computation. "In my own memory," writes Steele, "the dinner has crept by degrees from twelve o'clock to three; and where it will fix nobody knows." § After the wine came the cards. "I dined with lord Montrath, and carried lord Mountjoy and sir Andrew Fountaine with me; and was looking over them at ombre till eleven this evening, like a fool." ‖ The moralists, whether in earnest or not, began to complain, as our own moralists do, of extravagant dinners. Steele exhorts his readers to reconcile themselves to beef and mutton—the diet which bred the hardy race who won the fields of Cressy and Agincourt. The

* "Love of Fame, the Universal Passion." Satire V.

† "Guardian," No. 174.

‡ "Journal to Stella," Oct. 31, 1710.

§ "Tatler," No. 263.

‖ "Journal," Oct. 2, 1710.

common people keep up the taste of their ancestors. "I would desire my readers to consider what work our countrymen would have made at Blenheim and Ramilies, if they had been fed with kickshaws and ragouts." Bickerstaff dines at a sumptuous table, but despises the larded turkey; turns with disgust from creams and sweetmeats; and could not but smile at the company "cooling their mouths with lumps of ice, which they had just before been burning with salts and peppers." He goes home to finish his dinner in his own fashion; and expresses the same rational wish that many a dinner-giver has expressed, too often without effect, a century and a half after him: "Two plain dishes, with two or three good-natured, cheerful, ingenious friends, would make me more pleased and vain, than all their pomp and luxury can bestow." * The famous dish of the great epicure of his age is known to us through Pope—"Darty's ham-pie." Dartineuf, in Lyttleton's "Dialogues of the Dead," laments that he lived in an age before the glories of turtle. He must have despised Swift, who dined in his company, and afterwards said, "We had such fine victuals I could not eat it." The travelled nobleman of the "Dunciad."

> "Tried all hors-d'œuvres, all liqueurs defined,
> Judicious drank, and greatly daring dined."

There are some evils which only the increasing good sense of society, under a healthful state of public opinion, will ever cure; and the moralist and the divine may preach against the particular enormity, and it is still as rampant. It was thus that Steele wrote, in his strongest tone, in reprobation of duelling. Again and again he denounced and he ridiculed this diversion of gentlemen. In 1712 the duke of Hamilton and lord Mohun fought in Hyde Park, and both were killed—without very great loss to the community. The fashion of duelling died out, when it ceased to be a peculiar privilege of the great to murder each other. When Mrs. Peachum, in the "Beggar's Opera," expresses her opinion that it is a great blessing that they have not had a murder amongst their gang for seven months, the more experienced Mr. Peachum replies, "What a dickens is the woman always whimpering about murder for? No gentleman is ever looked upon the worse for killing a man in his own defence; and if business cannot be carried on without it, what would you have a gentleman do?"

The actual club life of London forms one of the most conspicuous features in the delineations of manners by the great essayists. Their fictitious clubs must have had a broad foundation in reality,

* "Tatler," No. 148.

to have been as welcome to their contemporaries as they unquestionably were, and to have had such an enduring vitality as they have so long enjoyed. We accept them as perfect representations of the mixed social intercourse of a period when the distinctions of classes were far less rigid than in later times. It was thus that in an age of strong political animosities, and of equally strong religious prejudices, a spirit of friendliness and mutual respect was preserved. There was a large class of non-combatants—the busy lawyer, the careful merchant, the idle man about town—who looked upon politics and polemics rather as a game which Whig and Tory statesmen, and high and low churchmen, and moderate and severe dissenters, were playing, than with much of the feeling of partisans. The clubs opened their arms to the gossipers. The clubs were carrying on the general spread of intelligence more effectually, perhaps, than books. They induced a comparison of thought with thought. The meagre facts of the journalist supplied the text upon which the club politicians argued. It was not an age in which men were indifferent to the great events that were passing around them. The poor and shabby upholsterer that Mr. Bickerstaff encounters in St. James's Park, who eagerly inquires about the king of Sweden, and who is anxious about the mysterious hints of the "Postboy," that a certain prince has been taking measures which time will bring to light, is undoubtedly a type of a large class who "deposed princes, settled the bounds of kingdoms, and balanced the powers of Europe." * The haberdasher at the coffee-house, who "has a levee of more undissembled friends and admirers than most of the courtiers and generals of Great Britain," is of the same genus. "Every man about him has, perhaps, a newspaper in his hand; but none can pretend to guess what step will be taken in any court of Europe till Mr. Beaver has thrown down his pipe, and declares what measures the allies must enter into upon this new posture of affairs." † Such were the club-oracles of the humbler assemblies of the people, who left the nicer mysteries of state to the October club of the Tories and the Kit-cat club of the Whigs. Steele has delineated with exquisite humour the average club of "heavy honest men, with whom (he says) I have passed many hours with much indolence, though not with great pleasure." The conversation of the club at the Trumpet, in Shire-lane, "is a kind of preparation for sleep." Sir Jeoffrey Notch, a gentleman of an ancient family who has run out of a great estate, talks of hounds, horses, and cock-fighting. Major Matchlock discourses of battles, and "does not think any

* "Tatler," No. 155. † "Spectator," No. 49.