

startling conjunction we have the two ages in a nutshell: the Commonwealth was an epic, the Restoration an opera.

The literary period covered by the life of Pope, 1688-1744, is marked off by no distinct line from the generation before it. Taste continued to be governed by the precepts of Boileau and the French classical school. Poetry remained chiefly didactic and satirical, and satire in Pope's hands was more personal even than in Dryden's, and addressed itself less to public issues. The literature of the "Augustan age" of Queen Anne (1702-1714) was still more a literature of the town and of fashionable society than that of the Restoration had been. It was also closely involved with party struggles of Whig and Tory, and the ablest pens on either side were taken into alliance by the political leaders. Swift was in high favor with the Tory ministers, Oxford and Bolingbroke, and his pamphlets, the *Public Spirit of the Whigs* and the *Conduct of the Allies*, were rewarded with the deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin. Addison became secretary of state under a Whig government. Prior was in the diplomatic service. Daniel De Foe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719, was a prolific political writer, conducted his *Review* in the interest of the Whigs, and was imprisoned and pilloried for his ironical pamphlet, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. Steele, who was a violent writer on the Whig side, held various public offices, such as Commissioner of Stamps, and Commissioner for Forfeited Estates, and sat in Parliament. After the Revolution of 1688 the manners and morals of English society were somewhat on the mend. The court of William and Mary, and of their successor, Queen Anne, set no such example of open profligacy as that of Charles II. But there was much hard drinking, gambling, dueling, and intrigue in London, and vice was fashionable till Addison partly preached and partly laughed it down in the *Spectator*. The women were mostly frivolous and uneducated, and not unfrequently fast. They are spoken of with systematic dis-

respect by nearly every writer of the time, except Steele. "Every woman," wrote Pope, "is at heart a rake." The reading public had now become large enough to make letters a profession. Dr. Johnson said that Pope was the first writer in whose case the book-seller took the place of the patron. His translation of Homer, published by subscription, brought him between eight and nine thousand pounds and made him independent. But the activity of the press produced a swarm of poorly-paid hack-writers, penny-a-liners, who lived from hand to mouth and did small literary jobs to order. Many of these inhabited Grub Street, and their lampoons against Pope and others of their more successful rivals called out Pope's *Dunciad*, or epic of the dunces, by way of retaliation. The politics of the time were sordid, and consisted mainly of an ignoble scramble for office. The Whigs were fighting to maintain the Act of Succession in favor of the House of Hanover, and the Tories were secretly intriguing with the exiled Stuarts. Many of the leaders, such as the great Whig champion, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, were without political principle or even personal honesty. The Church, too, was in a condition of spiritual deadness. Bishoprics and livings were sold, and given to political favorites. Clergymen, like Swift and Lawrence Sterne, were worldly in their lives and immoral in their writings, and were practically unbelievers. The growing religious skepticism appeared in the Deist controversy. Numbers of men in high position were Deists; the Earl of Shaftesbury, for example, and Pope's brilliant friend, Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, the head of the Tory ministry, whose political writings had much influence upon his young French acquaintance, Voltaire. Pope was a Roman Catholic, though there was little to show it in his writings, and the underlying thought of his famous *Essay on Man* was furnished him by Bolingbroke. The letters of the cold-hearted Chesterfield to his son were accepted as a manual of

conduct, and La Rochefoucauld's cynical maxims were quoted as authority on life and human nature. Said Swift:

As Rochefoucauld his maxims drew
From nature, I believe them true.
They argue no corrupted mind
In him; the fault is in mankind.

The succession which Dryden had willed to Congreve was taken up by Alexander Pope. He was a man quite unlike Dryden—sickly, deformed, morbidly precocious, and spiteful; nevertheless he joined on to and continued Dryden. He was more careful in his literary workmanship than his great forerunner, and in his *Moral Essays* and *Satires* he brought the Horatian epistle in verse, the formal satire and that species of didactic poem of which Boileau had given the first example, to an exquisite perfection of finish and verbal art. Dryden had translated Vergil, and so Pope translated Homer. The throne of the dunces, which Dryden had conferred upon Shadwell, Pope, in his *Dunciad*, passed on to two of his own literary foes, Theobald and Colley Cibber. There is a great waste of strength in this elaborate squib, and most of the petty writers, whose names it has preserved, as has been said, like flies in amber, are now quite unknown. But, although we have to read it with notes, to get the point of its allusions, it is easy to see what execution it must have done at the time, and it is impossible to withhold admiration from the wit, the wickedness, the triumphant mischief of the thing. In the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, the satirical sketch of Addison—who had offended Pope by praising a rival translation of Homer—is as brilliant as any thing of the kind in Dryden. Pope's very malignity made his sting sharper than Dryden's. He secreted venom, and worked out his revenges deliberately, bringing all the resources of his art to bear upon the question of how to give the most pain most cleverly.

Pope's masterpiece is, perhaps, the *Rape of the Lock*, a mock heroic poem, a "dwarf *Iliad*," recounting, in five

cantos, a society quarrel, which arose from Lord Petre's cutting a lock of hair from the head of Mrs. Arabella Fermor. Boileau, in his *Lutrin*, had treated with the same epic dignity a dispute over the placing of the reading-desk in a parish church. Pope was the Homer of the drawing-room, the boudoir, the tea-urn, the ombre-party, the sedan-chair, the parrot cage, and the lap-dogs. This poem, in its sparkle and airy grace, is the topmost blossom of a highly artificial society, the quintessence of whatever poetry was possible in those

Tea-cup times of hood and hoop,
And when the patch was worn,

with whose decorative features, at least, the recent Queen Anne revival has made this generation familiar. It may be said of it, as Thackeray said of Gay's pastorals: "It is to poetry what charming little Dresden china figures are to sculpture, graceful, minikin, fantastic, with a certain beauty always accompanying them." The *Rape of the Lock*, perhaps, stops short of beauty, but it attains elegance and prettiness in a supreme degree. In imitation of the gods and goddesses in the *Iliad*, who intermeddle for or against the human characters, Pope introduced the Sylphs of the Rosicrucian philosophy. We may measure the distance between imagination and fancy, if we will compare these little filagree creatures with Shakspeare's elves, whose occupation it was

To tread the ooze of the salt deep,
Or run upon the sharp wind of the north, . . .
Or on the beached margent of the sea
To dance their ringlets to the whispering wind.

Very different are the offices of Pope's fays:

Our humble province is to tend the fair;
Not a less pleasing, though less glorious, care;
To save the powder from too rude a gale,
Nor let the imprisoned essences exhale. . . .
Nay oft in dreams invention we bestow
To change a flounce or add a furbelow.

Pope was not a great poet ; it has been doubted whether he was a poet at all. He does not touch the heart, or stimulate the imagination, as the true poet always does. In the poetry of nature, and the poetry of passion, he was altogether impotent. His *Windsor Forest* and his *Pastorals* are artificial and false, not written with "the eye upon the object." His epistle of *Eloisa to Abelard* is declamatory and academic, and leaves the reader cold. The only one of his poems which is at all possessed with feeling is his pathetic *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. But he was a great literary artist. Within the cramped and starched regularity of the heroic couplet, which the fashion of the time and his own habit of mind imposed upon him, he secured the largest variety of modulation and emphasis of which that verse was capable. He used antithesis, periphrasis, and climax with great skill. His example dominated English poetry for nearly a century, and even now, when a poet like Dr. Holmes, for example, would write satire or humorous verse of a dignified kind, he turns instinctively to the measure and manner of Pope. He was not a consecutive thinker, like Dryden, and cared less about the truth of his thought than about the pointedness of its expression. His language was closer-grained than Dryden's. His great art was the art of putting things. He is more quoted than any other English poet but Shakspeare. He struck the average intelligence, the common sense of English readers, and furnished it with neat, portable formulas, so that it no longer needed to "vent its observation in mangled terms," but could pour itself out compactly, artistically in little ready-made molds. But this high-wrought brilliancy, this unceasing point, soon fatigue. His poems read like a series of epigrams ; and every line has a hit or an effect.

From the reign of Queen Anne date the beginnings of the periodical essay. Newspapers had been published since the time of the civil war; at first irregularly, and then regularly. But no literature of permanent value appeared in periodical

form until Richard Steele started the *Tatler*, in 1709. In this he was soon joined by his friend, Joseph Addison ; and in his successor, the *Spectator*, the first number of which was issued March 1, 1711, Addison's contributions outnumbered Steele's. The *Tatler* was published on three, the *Spectator* on six, days of the week. The *Tatler* gave political news, but each number of the *Spectator* consisted of a single essay. The object of these periodicals was to reflect the passing humors of the time, and to satirize the follies and minor immoralities of the town. "I shall endeavor," wrote Addison, in the tenth paper of the *Spectator*, "to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality. . . . It was said of Socrates that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven to inhabit among men ; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought Philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses." Addison's satire was never personal. He was a moderate man, and did what he could to restrain Steele's intemperate party zeal. His character was dignified and pure, and his strongest emotion seems to have been his religious feeling. One of his contemporaries called him "a parson in a tie wig," and he wrote several excellent hymns. His mission was that of censor of the public taste. Sometimes he lectured and sometimes he preached, and in his Saturday papers he brought his wide reading and nice scholarship into service for the instruction of his readers. Such was the series of essays in which he gave an elaborate review of *Paradise Lost*. Such also was his famous paper, the *Vision of Mirza*, an oriental allegory of human life. The adoption of this slightly pedagogic tone was justified by the prevalent ignorance and frivolity of the age. But the lighter portions of the *Spectator* are those which have worn the best. Their style is at once correct and easy, and it is as a humorist, a sly observer of manners, and, above all, a delightful talker, that Addison is best known to posterity. In the personal sketches of the mem-

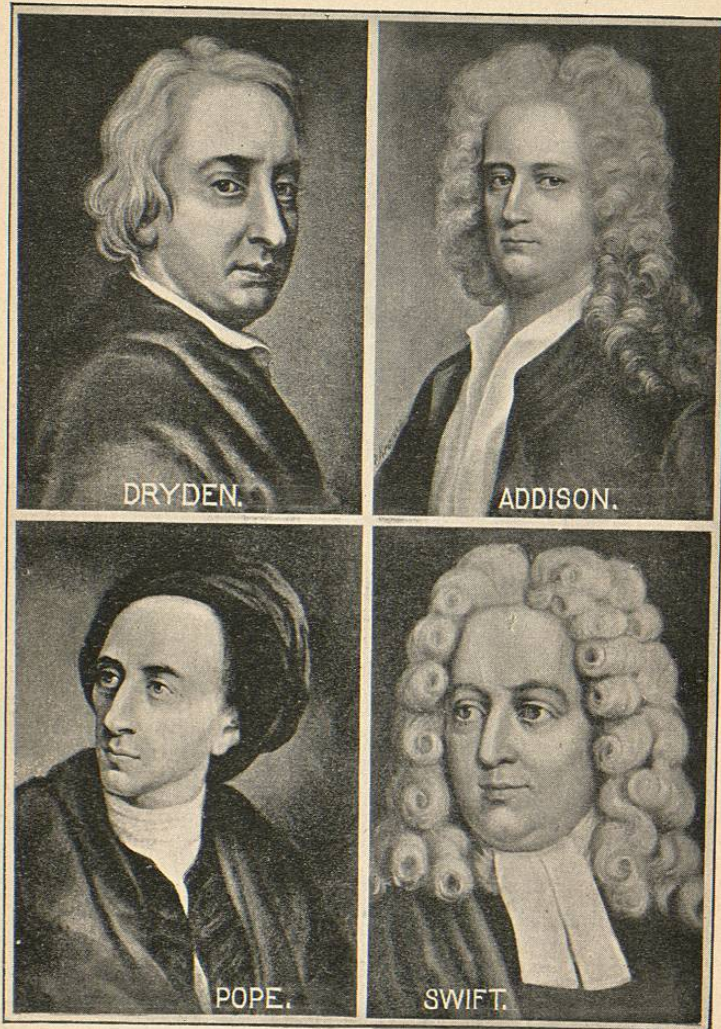
bers of the Spectator Club, of Will Honeycomb, Captain Sentry, Sir Andrew Freeport, and, above all, Sir Roger de Coverley, the quaint and honest country gentleman, may be found the nucleus of the modern prose fiction of character. Addison's humor is always a trifle grave. There is no whimsy, no frolic in it, as in Sterne or Lamb. "He thinks justly," said Dr. Johnson, "but he thinks faintly." The *Spectator* had a host of followers, from the somewhat heavy *Rambler* and *Idler* of Johnson, down to the *Salmagundi* papers of our own Irving, who was, perhaps, Addison's latest and best literary descendant. In his own age Addison made some figure as a poet and dramatist. His *Campaign*, celebrating the victory of Blenheim, had one much admired couplet, in which Marlborough was likened to the angel of tempest, who,

Pleased the Almighty's orders to perform,
Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.

His stately, classical tragedy, *Cato*, which was acted at Drury Lane Theater in 1712, with immense applause, was pronounced by Dr. Johnson "unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius." It is, notwithstanding, cold and tedious, as a whole, though it has some fine declamatory passages—in particular the soliloquy of Cato in the fifth act—

It must be so: Plato, thou reasonest well, etc.

The greatest of the Queen Anne wits, and one of the most savage and powerful satirists that ever lived, was Jonathan Swift. As secretary in the family of Sir William Temple, and domestic chaplain to the Earl of Berkeley, he had known in youth the bitterness of poverty and dependence. Afterward he wrote himself into influence with the Tory ministry, and was promised a bishopric, but was put off with the deanery of St. Patrick's, and retired to Ireland to "die like a poisoned rat in a hole." His life was made tragical by the forecast of the madness which finally overtook him. "The stage dark-



ened," said Scott, "ere the curtain fell." Insanity deepened into idiocy and a hideous silence, and for three years before his death he spoke hardly ever a word. He had directed that his tombstone should bear the inscription, *Ubi saeva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit*. "So great a man he seems to me," wrote Thackeray, "that thinking of him is like thinking of an empire falling." Swift's first noteworthy publication was his *Tale of a Tub*, 1704, a satire on religious differences. But his great work was *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726, the book in which his hate and scorn of mankind, and the long rage of mortified pride and thwarted ambition found their fullest expression. Children read the voyages to Lilliput and Brobdingnag, to the flying island of Laputa and the country of the Houyhnhnms, as they read *Robinson Crusoe*, as stories of wonderful adventure. Swift had all of De Foe's realism, his power of giving veri-similitude to his narrative by the invention of a vast number of small, exact, consistent details. But underneath its fairy tales *Gulliver's Travels* is a satire, far more radical than any of Dryden's or Pope's, because directed, not against particular parties or persons, but against human nature. In his account of Lilliput and Brobdingnag, Swift tries to show that human greatness, goodness, beauty disappear if the scale be altered a little. If men were six inches high instead of six feet, their wars, governments, science, religion—all their institutions, in fine, and all the courage, wisdom, and virtue by which these have been built up, would appear laughable. On the other hand, if they were sixty feet high instead of six, they would become disgusting. The complexion of the finest ladies would show blotches, hairs, excrescences, and an overpowering effluvia would breathe from the pores of the skin. Finally, in his loathsome caricature of mankind, as Yahoos, he contrasts them, to their shame, with the beasts, and sets instinct above reason.

The method of Swift's satire was grave irony. Among his minor writings in this kind are his *Argument against*

Abolishing Christianity, his *Modest Proposal* for utilizing the surplus population of Ireland by eating the babies of the poor, and his *Predictions of Isaac Bickerstaff*. In the last he predicted the death of one Partridge, an almanac maker, at a certain day and hour. When the time set was past, he published a minute account of Partridge's last moments; and when the subject of this excellent fooling printed an indignant denial of his own death, Swift answered very temperately, proving that he was dead and remonstrating with him on the violence of his language. "To call a man a fool and villain, an impudent fellow, only for differing from him in a point merely speculative, is, in my humble opinion, a very improper style for a person of his education." Swift wrote verses as well as prose, but their motive was the reverse of poetical. His gross and cynical humor vulgarized whatever it touched. He leaves us no illusions, and not only strips his subject, but flays it and shows the raw muscles beneath the skin. He delighted to dwell upon the lowest bodily functions of human nature. "He saw blood-shot," said Thackeray.

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 2. Macaulay's Essay, The Comic Dramatists of the Restoration.
 3. The Poetical Works of John Dryden. Macmillan & Co., 1873. (Globe Edition.)
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 5. Sir Roger de Coverley. New York: Harpers, 1878.
 6. Swift's Tale of a Tub, Gulliver's Travels, Directions to Servants, Polite Conversation, The Great Question Debated, Verses on the Death of Dean Swift.
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CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE DEATH OF POPE TO THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

1744-1789.

POPE'S example continued potent for fifty years after his death. Especially was this so in satiric and didactic poetry. Not only Dr. Johnson's adaptations from Juvenal, *London*, 1738, and the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, 1749, but Gifford's *Baviad*, 1791, and *Maeviad*, 1795, and Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1809, were in the verse and the manner of Pope. In Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, 1781, Dryden and Pope are treated as the two greatest English poets. But long before this a revolution in literary taste had begun, a movement which is variously described as the Return to Nature or the Rise of the New Romantic School.

For nearly a hundred years poetry had dealt with manners and the life of towns—the gay, prosaic life of Congreve or of Pope. The sole concession to the life of nature was the old pastoral, which, in the hands of cockneys like Pope and Ambrose Philips, who merely repeated stock descriptions at second or third hand, became even more artificial than a *Beggar's Opera* or a *Rape of the Lock*. These at least were true to their environment, and were natural just because they were artificial. But the *Seasons* of James Thomson, published in installments from 1726-1730, had opened a new field. Their theme was the English landscape, as varied by the changes of the year, and they were written by a true lover and observer of nature. Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination*, 1744, published the year of Pope's death, was written, like the *Seasons*, in blank verse;