

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY LITERATURE

GENERAL REMARKS

THE CLASSIC AGE (1700-1750)

THE 18th century is one of the most important, not only in English literature, but in the literature of Europe. It was not only a "Classic Age" in England: it was a classic age also upon the Continent. It laid the solid foundations for the whole of our 19th century literature. And it must occupy a very considerable part of these lectures on the general history of English literature. We shall probably devote the whole of this year to the 18th century. Therefore, to begin with, it is necessary to make the course of this study appear as plain and simple as possible. In almost every history of English literature you will find that the literary periods of the 18th century have been differently arranged. Every professor has his own way of dividing up the literature of the 18th century. You will find also that even the popular names given to this period are not the same. The 18th century has been called "the Augustan Age," "the Age of Pope," "the Classic Age," and "the Age of Queen Anne." All of these definitions are loosely made and unless correctly defined as to time and duration, such titles can only serve to bewilder the students. It is quite true that no period of English literature can be said to begin exactly, or to end exactly, either with a century or with a reign. But I should advise you to leave fine distinctions for specialists, and not to trouble yourselves about how much of the 18th century work should be called Queen Anne literature, and how much of it called the literature of the Age of King George. I am going to make the division as simple as possible, even though it may not be absolutely exact.

Let me begin, then, by simply saying that the whole of

18th century literature may be roughly divided into two parts. The history of the first part lasts from the beginning of the century to a little beyond the middle of it; and the greatest figure of this first half of the century was Pope. The second period of 18th century literature includes the remainder of the century; and the greatest figure belonging to it was Dr. Johnson. If you only remember that, you will know quite enough about the two chief facts of the chronology.

The first half of the century was really, however, a classic age. We may quite correctly give it that name. Why? Because it was the age of critical Latin studies and of the application to English literature of those principles established by Greek and Latin authors which are called "classic rules." Moreover it was the age in which French classic influence became supreme in England. I mean by this that it was the age in which the Greek and Latin studies made by the great French critics and poets were particularly studied in England, and resulted in changing and fixing English forms of poetry and prose. It has been called the Augustan Age for this reason, that the age of the Roman Emperor Augustus was the time in which Latin literature reached its highest perfection. I think, however, the term "classic age" best describes the first half of the 18th century. To speak of this period as the period of Queen Anne is really wrong,—because Queen Anne ascended the throne in 1702, and her reign only lasted until 1714. Now Alexander Pope did not die until 1744, thirty years later; and his influence continued to dominate literary circles even after his death. So let us call the first half of 18th century literary history "the Classic Period."

But let us be first quite clear as to the meaning of the word "classic," used so extensively to-day both as an adjective and as a noun. What does it mean? The word comes from the Latin "classicus"—originally meaning rank, order, or degree. Later on the word came to mean among the Romans not merely "rank" in a general sense, but the highest rank, and therefore the best of anything. So a book of poetry, or of prose, which represented the highest form of literature came to be called by

the Romans themselves a classic book; that is to say, a book of the highest class in literature.

With the general introduction of Latin studies into Western countries after the Renaissance the Roman word was adopted, in its literary meaning, into every European language. A classic author came to mean any Greek or Roman author of the best periods of Greek and Roman literature, as distinguished from later Greek or Byzantine authors, and the later Latin authors, who wrote in the corrupt Latin of the Middle Ages. "The Classics" came to mean the whole body of first class Greek and Latin authors. And in every university in Europe the term "classical studies" still means the study of the Greek and Latin texts.

But you will very properly ask, why, then, are English and French and German books called classics? Why do we say that a book by Goldsmith, or a poem by Pope, is a classic? Why do we call the great French dramas of Corneille and Racine classics? Why do we call Goethe's *Faust*, or La Motte Fouqué's *Undine*, a classic? In all these cases the word "classic" only means "of the first rank,"—the best production of the English or French or German literature of that time.

But in speaking of the first half of the 18th century, "the Age of Pope," as "the Classic Age," what do we mean? We do not mean the same thing. The 18th century classic age means the age in which English literature was constructed and governed upon the same principles as those established by the old Greek and Roman writers—more especially by Aristotle. This influence was not direct. French critics and poets, particularly Boileau, first followed and advocated the classic laws; and English again followed French. So in speaking of the Age of Pope as the Classic Age we mean the age in which Greek and Roman teaching shaped the whole course of English literature through French.

*

*

*

*

*

*

The great age of Elizabeth has often been compared to the splendid sunrise; and as it was especially the age of romantic feeling, we often hear such expressions as “the Sun of Romanticism.” For then, indeed, romantic feeling made all the field of literature flowery and warm, like the light of the great sun.

Now what happened afterwards reminds me of a story. Once there was a King who discovered that the sun had spots upon his face. So he asked his Wise Men, his Astrologers, and Magicians whether they could take away the spots from the face of the sun. They answered that they could do it very easily, and the King told them to go to work. Accordingly they climbed up to the sun and began to rub and scrub the face of him as you would rub and scrub a plate. They thought they could thus polish the sun—make him brighter. But the more they rubbed and scrubbed, the more the spots appeared; and the sun moreover began to get dim. Then the King got very angry; and he told his servants to take those Wise Men, and bake them alive. So they were put into ovens, and baked, even as traitors are burnt.

But after a little while there went to the King other Wise Men who said that they could make the sun all right again. They had a wonderful medicine, and with this they wanted to rub the face of the sun. The King warned them that he would not forgive any mistake; but allowed them to begin their work. They began to rub the face of the sun with the medicine, and the sun became very, very dim, and gave only half as much light as before; and the world became very cold. Then the King told his servants to take those Wise Men and boil them alive. So they were put into pots and boiled even as arch-traitors are boiled.

And always after that, the King sat in his chair before a great fire, rubbing his knees which were cold, and muttering to himself: “Some were baked, some were boiled!”

The moral of this story is that of the old English proverb, “Let well enough alone,” but it seems to illustrate in a partial way the history of the struggle between romantic and classical feelings. There were many spots on the sun of Elizabethan

poetry,—many faults,—many obscurities; but it was glorious poetry, full of fire and sincerity. The later 17th century could only see the faults, it could not feel the generous warmth and beauty that had been. It attempted to improve, and it succeeded only in making poor imitations from which the true fire was almost absent. The 18th century, the Classic Age, went still further with the attempt to improve; and the result was that all romantic feeling, all the essence of true poetry, vanished from the English-speaking world. In the poetry of the 18th century there is only one form—with, of course, some rare exceptions. No age was more barren of real poetic feeling than the period we are going to discuss. Some critics indeed have boldly said that the 18th century was the age of prose, and that it had no real poetry. These called the work of Pope and his school prose. But this is playing with the word; for the words prose, prosy, and prosaic, are all used in the sense of commonplace, uninteresting, dull. We cannot deny that in so far as form was concerned the poetry of the 18th century has never been surpassed in its own limitation—that is to say, in English literature. But those limitations were very narrow indeed. The first thing for the students to remember clearly about the poetry of the Classic Age is that only one form of poetry was much used. In the previous ages hundreds of forms had been used—indeed almost every form of verse now known to English literature. But the school of Pope attempted no serious work except in one form; that was the heroic couplet. The word couplet implies rhyme;—in this measure every two successive lines rhymed together. The measure is what we call iambic pentameter. You know that the Greek word pentameter signifies measure by five,—pentameter is therefore a verse consisting of five feet. And an iambus is a foot consisting of one short syllable followed by one long syllable, therefore the measure would be thus expressed:—

|| ◡ — | ◡ — | ◡ — | ◡ — | ◡ — |

Or we might write it this way:—

|| do dō | do dō | do dō | do dō | do dō |

It is as monotonous as the beating of a drum in the street, —as the beating of the little drum that the toy-sellers in Tokyo beat to call the attention of the little children. But, for more than fifty years, this was the classic measure of English poetry; nothing else was considered so dignified, so divine, so worthy of the true scholar and the poet. To have written in any other measure would have been to resist the fashion. And the fashion became tyrannic: even into the 19th century it lingered. Even Byron wrote in this form at times; and we may say that it was not until about the time of the youth of Tennyson that heroic couplet was altogether abandoned. So hard it is to fight any kind of fashion. Crabbe wrote altogether in this form, and quite a number of men whose names appeared in the early literature of the following century.

You may ask, how such a thing was possible? It would not have been possible but for the supreme genius of one man. A great fashion in literature can only be set by some very great accomplishment. The accomplishment was effected by Pope. When the world saw the astonishing way in which Pope was able to use this single form of verse they readily imagined that the wonder of the thing belonged to the verse quite as much as to the man. Because Pope had been able to say more with fewer words than any other man had been able to do in any kind of verse, people said, “This indeed must be the most perfect form of verse.” And the difficulty which other men found in trying to imitate Pope did not change public opinion in the least. A generation,—indeed two generations were to pass before the great mistake was fully perceived. Pope was a man with a very special and very limited kind of genius. By perpetually working in only one form of verse he became so perfect in it that no one has ever been able to approach him. I doubt whether the greatest masters of Victorian poetry could make a single page of heroic couplet quite equal to the best work of Pope.

The prose of the century also became fixed in one style, —though in a less degree than the poetry. The poetry became

rigid, frozen—cold, sparkling, motionless like ice. The prose became, to a great extent, what we would call “wooden.” Every sentence was turned out with the same precision that a plank is turned out by a carpenter. Of course the plank may be very beautiful, very smooth, very precious, but it is only wood. 18th century prose was much more a thing for form than of life. During the first 50 years, the style of the essay, as fixed by Addison, Steele, Shaftesbury, and others—but especially by Addison and Steele,—became the typical fashion of English writing. People did not abandon the notion of Addison’s style as the best possible, until very recently. Even yet pages of these authors have to be studied in English schools;—but at the beginning of the century they were studied to the exclusion of much more valuable texts. What was the reason of these changes?

The popular opinion was that Pope had discovered the secret of making English verse as perfect as Greek or Latin verse; and that Addison had discovered how to write English as well as the masters of antiquity wrote Greek or Latin. Probably these authors themselves thought this; for none of them were sufficiently great scholars to recognize that the language of the antiquity were much more perfect and flexible than English or even French. But undoubtedly the aim of these men had been to try to do what the public really believed that they had done. They were not the first to try this. In the course of these lectures you will remember that the English people had tried to do the same thing since the 14th century. The 19th century has realized that it never can be done. But the 18th century really made the greatest attempt known to English literature in this direction.

None of the men who made this effort went directly to the best classic authors for their guidance,—except perhaps Addison, who must at least have studied some Latin authors very closely. The teaching of the ancients about literature was learned in England through the French masters. The ultimate authority was the *Poetics* of Aristotle, but the Greek text had been studied in France, scarcely at all in England. Pope learned

his rules almost entirely from Boileau. He tried to hide this fact; but it is now known that there is scarcely a single poem in all Pope's work which cannot be traced to the study of Boileau up to the time when Pope had passed middle age.

What had English literature to gain by all this, and what to lose? What it lost, though only for a time, was the spirit of poetry and the freedom of imagination and sentiment. What it gained was very considerable; but the results show themselves only to-day in their fully developed value.

The great gain was in workmanship. The Elizabethans had not been at all careful about their measures. A line might be a foot or even three feet too long; accents might be entirely wrong; and yet nobody complained. To be quite perfect was not even imagined possible. And you must remember that irregularity is quite natural to the Northern languages, which, being much younger than the Southern languages, are much less easily manipulated. The ruggedness and stiffness of the English tongue appears through the whole chain of centuries behind the 18th till we get back to the primitive forms of Anglo-Saxon. Nearly all English poetry, and most English prose, showed the imperfection of the language up to the time of the 18th century. Then by tremendous labour, precision was at last obtained. It was found possible to write English verse in a certain measure with absolute correctness, and to imitate with considerable success certain resonant qualities of the Latin prose—rhythm. The attempt to be perfect was very much like the work of a boy who learns to write an elegant hand by constant practice every day. In order to succeed he must abandon play and many kinds of enjoyment; and he does this cheerfully because he knows that a good hand will afterwards be of service to him in obtaining some commercial position. You can think of the Classic Age as the time when England gave up her real pleasure of poetry, and set to work steadily practising the simple art of learning to write correctly! Observe the difference to be noticed in the literature of dull periods before and after the 18th century! In the dull period immediately preceding the age of Pope there was scarcely any perfectly

correct verse produced. At the present time,—that is to say, at the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, we have another dull period,—a time in which no great poet is doing anything of importance. But an immense amount of poetry, or verse at least, is now being written; and all that verse is remarkably correct. We have learned, of course, that mere correctness does not make poetry; nevertheless, correctness is of supreme value to poetical expressions. The fact is that since the death of Pope the best of English poetry has always been correct, and inferior poetry has been put into tolerably good verse. Before Pope, with the exception of Milton, it would be hard to mention a master of precision in prosody. Now they are common. I could easily mention a dozen names of modern verse-writers who cannot write poetry, but who could teach all the secrets of verse form to advanced students in a literary course. The whole subject reminds me of another modern development—the musical development which has taken place in Europe during the 19th century and which has extended even to America. Formerly Italian opera, Italian music, in which melody supremely dominated, was believed to be the best of all possible music. To-day, I need scarcely tell you, German music in which harmony is everything and melody subsidiary has supplanted it. Now this means more than a simple change of fashion. It really means a higher development of the musical sense. In the same way the poets and even the prose-writers of the 19th century have developed beyond their predecessors to the possession of what we are accustomed to call “the Correct Ear.” For this development, beyond all doubt we must thank the monotonous and artificial writers of the age of Pope. Their theory as to the real functions of literary art was all wrong; and in the first half of the 19th century “the Romantic Sun” appeared again brighter than ever. We are still in a romantic age. But if it had not been for that mistaken theory of the classic writers the art of poetry and prose to-day could not possibly be what it has become.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY POETS OF THE CLASSIC AGE

ALEXANDER POPE

It has been said very truly of Pope¹ that, in order to discover any poetry in him, we must read him by *lines*,—that is to say, one line at a time. If you do that occasionally, I think that you will recognize some of his extraordinary merits; but they are merits only of form. You will not find emotional poetry in Pope. You will not find poetical variety in Pope. You will not find any tenderness, any deep originality, any lovable quality. The vast body of his work consists entirely of satire—even much of it that appears under different titles to those of the avowed *Satires*. For example, the so-called *Imitations of Horace*,² and several of the *Epistles* are among the wickedest of the satire. Wit must be acknowledged; but can we call wicked wit poetry? And wicked wit represents the larger part of Pope's work outside of his translations of *Homer*.³ Much of this is horrible and painful reading. No man to-day, in any country of Europe, could write as Pope wrote without being put promptly into prison. We know that the whole age was coarse, and that Pope was fighting with men quite as venomous as himself, though less skilful in spitting out the venom. But imagine the age in which a poet could describe the Father of all the Gods sitting in a water-closet, and using the prayers of stupid poets in the same way that the water-closet paper is commonly used! I refer to the scene compiled between lines 83 and 102 in the Second Book of *The Dunciad*. And in the same Book the same picture in the lines 157—190 is even more filthy. Yet this does not represent Pope's worst malignity. How wicked he could be is perhaps best shown in the monstrous line written about a woman whom he once pretended to worship:—

Perplexed by her love, and poisoned by her hate.

¹ Alexander Pope (1688-1744).

² *Satires and epistles of Horace imitated* 1732-38.

³ *Homer's Iliad* tr. 1715-20. *Homer's Odyssey* tr. 1725-26.

When we see things like this we understand the great difficulty which the most generous critics have had in making an impartial judgment of Pope. He offends every delicate sense at once; and it is very hard not to hate him.

And yet there is a great deal to be said on the good side for Pope. To understand the reason of what he produced we must try to understand something about his life. I am not going to trouble you much with biographical details: I shall mention only what is absolutely necessary in order to illustrate his character. He was born, as you know, in 1688, in the family of a Roman Catholic London merchant. The family were rich—or at least very well off. The child was terribly weak and deformed in extraordinary ways. His body was all crooked; he could never in his life walk without difficulty; and he never could wear clothes like other people. Even as a man his stature was less than four feet; and his legs were so thin that it was necessary for him to wear three pairs of padded stockings—otherwise his legs would have looked like chickens' legs. Internally also his health was very bad;—the least indiscretion in eating or drinking made him terribly sick. It was utterly impossible for him to marry and equally impossible for him to enjoy any of the common pleasures of life. Thus he was doomed from the beginning to an existence of solitude and misery.

And what made this misery dreadful in this case was that he had a most extraordinary delicate nervous system. The least unkind word almost threw him into fits; and he could never forgive a verbal injury because he could never forget the pain that it caused him.

That was the physical man. Another grave misfortune for him was the fact of his being a Roman Catholic. He could not be educated. The English laws of that time did not allow the son of a Roman Catholic to enter great educational establishments; and Catholic teachers were not tolerated. Such an education as Pope could be given had to be given secretly in his own home by a priest. For a very short time he attended some schools for little boys,—small schools of the kind with

which the Government did not much concern itself. But anything like a good education was legally denied to the boy. Moreover the priest was not able to teach him much. So Pope taught himself. As a child he taught himself to write by copying the letters out of printed books; and, even to the end of his life, the results of this self-teaching were visible in the great beauty and clearness of his handwriting. He taught himself Latin, French, and Italian by translation—working patiently over a text, with dictionary and grammar, until he could get at its meaning. Still later he taught himself something of Greek in the same way. The way was bad; and Pope never attained to a really good knowledge of these languages. We know that he could read French very well; but we also know that he could not speak it,—because he accented French words in the English way. Nevertheless the knowledge thus obtained enabled Pope to become a classic poet in his own tongue. And this means an astonishing power of memory and of application.

Deformed, sickly, depending for education upon books, the only pleasure left for him in this world was reading; and he read and studied, even as a child, so furiously that he almost killed himself. At 12 years of age he was able to compose dramatic poems; at 20 years of age he was the greatest master of verse in England; at 22 he was beginning to influence all Europe. This was astonishing genius—but do not forget that the genius was of a very narrow order, directing itself entirely to form.

It was by translating Homer that he first made himself really rich. But, as I said before, his knowledge of Greek was not at all great; and Homer, to be correctly translated, taxes the best resources of modern scholarship. Pope's *Homer* is not a translation of Homer. It is only a paraphrase and a paraphrase in which the real spirit of Homer does not appear at all. Pope replaced the Greek feeling by the English feeling of his own artificial age. You will never learn anything about Homer by reading Pope. But the early 18th century would not have cared for a correct translation of Homer in verse;—much less would it have been able to appreciate a beautiful prose version

like that of Butcher, Myers, Leaf and Lang. It wanted a Homer in the fashion of the 18th century; and it was grateful to Pope for the gift. His *Homer* is not worth studying for classic reasons in the ancient sense; but it is worth reading for classic reason in the 18th century meaning of the word. It is a grand example of that form of verse which I told you about the other day.

After becoming quite independent financially, Pope's great quarrels began. Isolation had made him abnormally suspicious; he suspected his best friends, and lived in a condition of perpetual irritation and doubt. It has been said that he practised extraordinary stratagem even in asking for a cup of tea, and that, had he been a gardener, he would have practised diplomacy in the matter of cabbages.

Partly this was due to the cruel attacks that had been made upon him in various quarters, satirists ridiculing his weakness, his horrible deformity, and all things in regard to which he was most sensitive. Then the terrible little dwarf gathered himself together and answered his enemies in a most poisonous and most merciless, most abominable satire ever written. He destroyed them; but the cost to himself, to his reputation, to his honour, to his manhood, was very great. Nevertheless Pope had good qualities of heart, which he did not often show to the outer world. To his parents he is known to have been the most loving of sons; and to the weak and unfortunate he often showed much kindness. One-eighth part of his income was invariably expended in charitable ways. The most dishonourable thing which he ever did,—accepting a large sum of money on condition of suppressing a satire—was done for the sake of a woman whom he revered as a sister, and to whom he left all his property when he died. In order to understand why Pope seems to be so savagely vindictive we must remember that he was living in an age of social cruelty and jealousy. Knowing this we can find many excuses for him. And besides, one cannot help admiring the courage and force of this weak little manikin, when we remember that he actually conquered and crushed all opposition, in spite of every disad-

vantage—making himself so much feared that when, in his old age, he paid a visit to the chief theatre of the time, the actors became frightened at his presence, and could not properly perform their parts. What a triumph of mind over body does not Pope's personal history afford us?

Details of the appearance of his different works,—details of their character, I should judge to be unnecessary to this lecture; for I suppose you know already the names of his principal pieces and the history of not a few. His place in English literature does not, in any way, depend upon his subjects; but upon the perfection of his verse simply considered as verse,—and only this need we now dwell upon. As has been already said the best way to read Pope is to read a few lines at a time, and to study each line by itself. It matters very little where you read. If you want examples of Pope's ugly side, open any page of the *Satires*; if you want examples of his splendid side, examine any of the couplets in *The Rape of the Lock*,¹ or in the *Essay on Man*.² The wonder is not in anything that Pope says, but in the way that he says it. Let us take, for example, a few lines here and there from the *Essay on Man*. First let us look at the wonderful lines 61—66 in the First Epistle of the *Essay on Man*.

When the proud steed shall know why Man restrains
His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains:
When the dull Ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Ægypt's God:
Then shall Man's pride and dulness comprehend
His actions', passions', being's, use and end.

Now this is only a commonplace to say that man cannot understand why he must live in this world and obey laws, any more than the horse can understand why a man drives him now in one direction and now in another, or than the ox can understand why he is made to work at one time, and is treated with religious honours at another. But no other man ever expressed this commonplace so well in the English language.

¹ *The rape of the lock* 1712-14.

² *An essay on man* 1732-34.

Notice the extraordinary and ingenious economy in the use of the possessives in the last line read. Or take such a couplet as this (lines 43—44 of the Third Epistle) :—

Know, Nature's children all divide her care;
The fur that warms a monarch, warm'd a bear.

How much is signified by those few words. You might expand the same idea over three pages; but you could not make it any stronger. And here is another example of *multum in parvo* :—

For Forms of Government let fools contest;
Whate'er is best administer'd is best:
For Modes of Faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

(Epistle III. Lines 303-306).

Or,—

Order is Heav'n's first law; and this confest,
Some are, and must be, greater than the rest.

(Epistle IV. Lines 49-50).

Things of this kind pass into household saying; each of them sets thinking the mind that hears it for the first time, and it is not likely to become forgotten. Scores and scores of lines from the *Essay on Man* are known by heart to even the uneducated class—you will hear common working men in England quoting Pope as they labour in the streets. Very probably these could not tell you anything definite about Pope or his work; but they can quote many of his best lines as their fathers did before them. Does this mean poetry? Not at all!

The *Essay on Man* is not poetry. It is supremely perfect proverbial literature put into rhyme—that is all. But the literature of proverbs, being a storehouse of moral experience, has really a great value; and when Pope put old proverbs and old platitudes into the best verse possible, he greatly enriched the English proverbial literature. Excepting Shakespeare no English author is so much quoted from wherever the English language is spoken as Pope. But it is as a speaker of proverbs that he is quoted from—please to remember that.

Could he write poetry in the highest sense? I do not think that he could; and I do not think that any great critic of present time would venture to say that he could. But he could write pretty verse, delicate verse, dainty verse,—even picturesque verse, when he was in good humour. Great verse or emotional verse he never did write. But notice the grace of the lines in which he tells us jocosely what becomes of the souls of women when they die.

For when the Fair in all their pride expire,
To their first Elements their Souls retire:
The Sprites of fiery Termagants in Flame
Mount up, and take a Salamander's name.
Soft yielding minds to Water glide away,
And sip, with Nymphs, their elemental Tea.
The graver Prude sinks downward to a Gnome,
In search of mischief still on Earth to roam.
The light Coquettes in Sylphs aloft repair,
And sport and flutter in the fields of Air.

(*The Rape of the Lock*. Canto I. Lines 57-66.)

Whatever poetry this may be, it does not lack grace: it is a charming bit of ironical fun.

Or in a subject of greater seriousness,—nature realistically felt—let us see how Pope can paint with words. Take these few lines describing a river—the River Loddon—reflecting in its still surface the images of the trees, hills, and clouds. This little piece you will find in the poem entitled *Windsor-Forest*.¹

Oft in her glass the musing shepherd spies
The *headlong* mountains and the *downward* skies,
The wat'ry landscape of the *pendant* woods,
And *absent* trees that *tremble* in the floods;
In the clear azure *gleam* the flocks are seen,
And *floating* forest *paint* the waves with green.

I have italicized certain words here just to call your attention to a peculiar feature of Pope's art. None of these italicized words are at all remarkable in themselves;—they are not beautiful words; they are not even poetical. But the way that Pope

¹ *Windsor-Forest* 1704-10.

uses them makes them beautiful. Who else would have thought of describing the image of a mountain upside down in the water as “headlong”—the word we commonly use to express either falling or rushing head downwards. As for “downward” or “downwards,”—that is just the word we should have expected a commonplace poet to use in describing inverted images of trees or hills; but Pope uses the word only to describe the inverted image of the sky in the water; and by doing this he obtains a most artistic effect,—giving us the sensation of the depth of the sky perceived in the depth of the water. And again, how beautiful the use of the word “pendant” to describe the reflection of the trees. “Pendant,” you know, means hanging downwards, like a suspended lobe; and as anything suspended in the common way can easily be moved, the word gives us the sensation of trembling or shaking, as well as of hanging. “Absent”—a very common word—suddenly takes a ghostly beauty in Pope’s line by its use to suggest the unreality of the phantom scenery. Lastly, the word “tremble” becomes beautiful only by reason of its relation to this ghostly use of “absent.” The combination immediately suggests the motion of a spectre. This art of using a common word in a beautiful way is the distinguishing mark of all great poetry, but Pope, without being really a great poet, possessed the power of this art to an astounding degree. By the Roman writers this art was called *curiosa felicitas*, a “curious felicity,”—that is to say, an extraordinary and lucky success in obtaining the effect desired. Also, remark how, merely by the use of a few words well chosen, and reinforced by capital letters, Pope can make the very smallest trifles take an importance before unimagined. The subject is a woman’s dressing-table with her combs and brushes, perfume bottle and other little things lying upon it:—

This casket India’s glowing gems unlocks,
 And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
 The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
 Transform’d to combs, the speckled, and the white.

(The Rape of the Lock. Canto I Lines 133-36)

One might quote a whole page of this sort of thing. We know that the casket of Indian gems means only a diamond necklace in its case; that Arabia means nothing but toilet-perfume; the Tortoise and the Elephant mean only tortoise-shell and ivory; — but the use of the words and the capital letters decided upon by Pope transforms the commonplace by suggestions of all that is rich and remote. One other extract describing sylphs deserves quotation here—so dainty it is.

Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms, too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolv'd in light.

(The Rape of the Lock. Canto II. Lines 59-62)

Tennyson could not have bettered the 4th line of the above. Indeed I doubt whether he could have accomplished the same effect even with considerably more words. And we see in the line before, the excellent use of the word “fine”: this is the true Latin use, signifying rarity, not tenderness.

Selections from Pope, a few lines long, can be made and studied with the greatest possible advantage. Pope must be studied. But he should be studied, only while keeping in the mind the fact that he is useful only as a master of words, and that you have nothing to learn from him in the matter of generous feeling or fine thought. He should represent to the student only so much literary material—building material,—perfectly shaped stones of many colours which can be used for the building of the true poetical structure. And probably Pope himself knew his own limitation. Therefore he wisely kept, or almost kept to a single form of verse. When he leaves this form of verse, it is generally to write something very trivial,—some imitation or parody of other poetry—some half satire of a very light kind. Perhaps the best example of his deftness in handling one or two light kinds of verse is the cruel little poem *Phryne*. Phryne was a celebrated Greek courtesan, whose beauty inspired many famous sculptors—especially Praxiteles. In later times her name became a euphemism for a public pro-

stitute; and it is this professional person that Pope describes the life of in three wicked little stanzas of six lines each. They are wonderfully clever and the student of English literature ought to know them; but, unfortunately, they cannot very well be quoted in the class-room.

The great power of Pope almost withered up all the other poetry for many years. During Pope's lifetime it required some courage to write in any other measure than the heroic couplet, — unless some good excuse could be added in conformity with the literary canons of the age. So we find most of Pope's contemporaries obeying him and imitating him in all respects. There were multitudes of such disciples and such imitators; but only a few of the more important names need concern us. John Gay,¹ one of Pope's few intimate friends, particularly deserves attention; because he did some work that still remains very much alive. He wrote many things in the heroic couplet, but he also wrote lyrics, dramas and an opera or two which occasionally appears on the stage even now. The best work of Gay may be very briefly mentioned, — *The Beggar's Opera*,² the *Fables*,³ and the *Epistles*.⁴ The best of his lyrics are to be found in the operatic works. *The Beggar's Opera* remains his masterpiece and it has furnished many familiar phrases to English literature. It was written at the suggestion of that terrible man Swift, — also one of Pope's friends — who said that he thought a very nice opera would be made out of material furnished by the records of Newgate Prison. Gay took this ironical suggestion seriously, and he made a comical drama in which robbers were the heroes. The play was very successful, and brought its author a sum equal to twelve thousand *yen*. In Pope's time the poets could make a great deal of money if they happened to be in the fashion. The works of Gay have lately been published, and a good deal of his matter is worth attention. However, it is necessary only for the student to know

¹ John Gay (1685-1732).

² *The beggar's opera* 1727.

³ *Fables* (2 parts) 1727, a 1732 (II. 1738).

⁴ *Epistles* 1714, 1722.

something about *The Beggar's Opera*—because a knowledge of it will explain for him many allusions to the plays scattered through both 18th and 19th century literature.

Another person must be mentioned for a very peculiar reason—Ambrose Philips.¹ Philips wrote a great deal in the style of Pope; but none of what he wrote really deserves to live. Among other things which he composed was a volume of sentimental verses addressed to children of noble persons. There was a man living at that time called Carey,² — a song-writer: he made the song *Sally in our Alley*³ which is still a very famous English song and which you will find in any anthology. Carey was rather a strong character and he was disgusted with the verse that Ambrose Philips addressed to children; and he invented a nickname for Philips, — “Namby-Pamby.” Now this nickname has become an English adjective, signifying mawkish, maudlin, foolishly sentimental and commonplace. To-day a “namby-pamby” writer does not mean only a man who writes poetry like the poetry of Philips: it means any man who writes stupid and tiresome sentimental nonsense either in verse or prose. And that is all that we need say here about Ambrose Philips.

Thomas Tickell,⁴ another disciple of Pope, must be accorded considerable praise—not for the mass of his work, but for two short compositions which are still much admired. Both are elegies. One is a poem on the death of Addison:⁵ the other is on the death of an English lieutenant Cadogan,⁶ who served under the great general Marlborough. Nothing else need be said about Tickell.

An archdeacon of Clogher, named Parnell,⁷ one of Pope's proteges, wrote some verses also of which parts still appear in English anthologies. Unfortunately he died rather young; — otherwise, to judge from his skill in the use of the heroic coup-

¹ Ambrose Philips (1675?-1749).

² Henry Carey (d. 1743).

³ *The ballad of Sally in our alley* (in 1729 ed. of *Poems on several occasions*).

⁴ Thomas Tickell (1686-1740).

⁵ *To the Earl of Warwick on the death of Mr. Addison* (in *Addison's Works*, vol. I. 1721.)

⁶ *On the death of the Earl of Cadogan a 1740.*

⁷ Thomas Parnell (1679-1718).

let, he might well have become a very eminent poet. But a better poet than any of these, excepting Gay, was Matthew Prior.¹ Prior's work is still read; and some of it will be read for ages to come. But Prior differed very much from the writers of Pope's school. What he wrote in heroic measure is of no consequence. What he wrote in violation of the literary customs of his time, is, on the other hand, often delicious. You must try to remember the name of Prior; for he was really the first Englishman who wrote what we call "*society verse*" of a delicate musical kind. I do not know better how to describe the impression that Prior made upon one, than by saying that when you read him you sometimes imagine that you are reading verses by Thomas Moore. Prior had something of the same ear for music, the same skill in handling light verse, the same playful grace in addressing women that we find in Moore nearly a hundred years later. The student can find the best of Prior in any popular edition of selections from his works.

Only one more name will I now mention of the true disciples of Pope,—curiously enough the name of a woman. This woman was Anne, Lady Winchelsea.² Lady Winchelsea wrote, not perhaps better poetry as to form than others of the school, but she wrote very much better poetry as to feeling. She wrote a good deal in the couplet; but she wrote out of her heart, and some of them I think are very beautiful. Pope himself was not ashamed to borrow from her. The best of her compositions is a piece called *A Nocturnal Reverie*³ which reminds one of the work of Thomson much more than of anything strictly belonging to the Classic Age. The famous line of Pope—"die of a rose in a romantic pain"—was suggested by a very similar line in the work of Lady Winchelsea.

But there was a tendency in spite of Pope's influence towards romantic feeling. This tendency must here be mentioned. Its first noteworthy representative in Pope's time, was Edward Young⁴ who began as a follower of Pope and com-

¹ Matthew Prior (1664-1721).

² Anne Finch, Countess of Winchelsea (d. 1720).

³ *A Nocturnal Reverie* 1713.

⁴ Edward Young (1683-1765).

posed a great deal of verse. He was a fellow of Oxford. All that he did while obeying the classic tradition may well be forgotten; but when he turned his back upon Pope's school and took Milton for his model, he produced some wonderful work in sonorous and majestic blank verse,—the *Night Thoughts*.¹ The *Night Thoughts* of Young are very gloomy meditations about death, eternity, and the existence of God:—and they are in their substance further more wearisome, because they are so shaped as to represent imaginary dialogues between the author and some infidels. The arguments are of no value whatever; and a great deal of the thoughts are commonplace. But, nevertheless, the work is of a higher order as blank verse, and some passages of it will probably always live. This was the only fine piece of poetical composition that Young accomplished. It is a land-mark in the history of Queen Anne literature, — as representing a return to blank verse, and to the scholarly method of Milton.

About the same time that Young produced his *Night Thoughts*, in 1744, a young Scotch clergyman was composing an equally dismal poem upon the subject of the grave.² This clergyman was Robert Blair.³ His poem, also in blank verse, contains many beauties—though it is one of the most lugubrious ever witten. A description which he made of a school-boy walking along a lonely road at night in great terror of ghosts, is somewhat famous. The student might do well to remember that one of Blair's phrases has become an English proverb, or at least a household saying. I mean the phrase, "Like angels' visits, few and far between."⁴ Blair and Young appear as part of the new movement in the direction of romantic feeling, — notwithstanding their gloom.

The third and greatest of the poets who broke away from the tyranny of Pope's school in Pope's own day was James Thomson.⁵ Thomson is a greater poet, in the true sense of

¹ *The complaint; or, night-thoughts on life, death and immortality* (anon.) 1742-45.

² *The grave* 1743.

³ Robert Blair (1699-1746).

⁴ Cf. *The Grave* 589. "Its visits, Like those of angels, short and far between."

⁵ James Thomson (1700-1748).

poetry, than Pope, than Dryden, than any poet between the time of Milton and the time of Gray. He is great, not simply because his verse is exquisite, but because of the feeling for natural beauty which he uttered with charming sincerity and grace. Appearing in sections, the first of his compositions dates back as early as 1726—the first part of the brave blank verse poems called *The Seasons*.¹ The last of his work brings us nearly to the close of the half century;—*The Castle of Indolence*,² appearing in 1748. This is written not in blank verse, but in the Spenserian stanza,—showing the return to romantic spirit of Elizabethan time as well as to forms of poetry that have been long neglected. Of the two great poems, the second is the greatest. It has deeply influenced English poetry up to our own time; much of the early part of Tennyson's work—notably such pieces as *The Vision of Sin*, *The Lotos Eaters*—showing Thomson's influence in the strangest manner. Perhaps Tennyson has been most deeply affected by Thomson; but it would be hard to name any great poet of the 19th century whose work does not show some trace of Thomson. One feature particularly to be noticed in *The Castle of Indolence* is the ghostly vagueness which enwraps the subject like some beautiful mist of spring. The poetry *suggests*, makes you think about more than what is said, makes you imagine more than his picture. And this is exactly contrary to the methods of the school of Pope. Classical poetry was, above all things, exact, precise in detail, like a sharp photograph: it left nothing to be fancied, nothing to be imagined. There was its great defect. When all is said, when the whole picture is filled in, you have nothing to think about, nothing to haunt you afterwards. Poetry that does not leave the imagination a little hungry, a little unsatisfied, a little dreaming, never can rise to the first rank. But Thomson was of the first rank when at his best; and he brought into 18th century poetry something that never appeared in English poetry before. After Thomson there is nothing to be found with the same quality as that which

¹ *The seasons* (*Autumn* 1730; *Spring* 1728; *Summer* 1727; *Winter* 1726) 1746.

² *The castle of indolence; an allegorical poem written of Spenser* 1748.

colours *The Castle of Indolence* until we come to the days of Coleridge and of Keats. Wordsworth was very much affected by Thomson in his nature studies; but the later Victorian poets still more so.

Thomson brings us to the close of the half century,—to the end of the Augustan age in poetry, and to the beginning of the new era. Before turning to the age of Johnson, let us now consider the prose of the Augustan era. It is quite as interesting in its way as the poetry.

THE PROSE OF THE CLASSIC AGE

The first half of the 18th century witnessed great changes in the development of English prose; and it may be said that this was indeed the period at which English prose attained its highest perfection. Perhaps some few writers of the 19th century have carried prose farther in a certain direction, in the direction of the coloured prose, in the direction of romantic prose. But so far as simple, severe, naked prose is concerned, the first half of the 18th century was the great prose age: and no 19th century writer has improved upon the severe forms of prose then established. This is the first thing to remember in regard to this time.

Now for a brief survey of the field of prose writing in the time of Pope. Roughly speaking, we may say that the prose writers of this period might be divided by opinion into two schools,—the school of the free thinkers or Deists, and the school of the conservatives, the religious poets.

The great intellectual movement in France at the corresponding time produced, you know, the wonderful school of the Encyclopædists representing such great names as those of Voltaire and Diderot. It was natural that, in a time when French thought was influencing English drama and English poetry to so great an extent, it should also influence English philosophy. Now England could not produce during the classic age minds of the calibre of Voltaire; but it produced many

brilliant essayists and free thinkers who formed a literary and social coterie and attempted to disseminate their opinions through literature. Some English critics grouped all these together as the Deists; but the word did not have in the 18th century quite so large a meaning as attaches to it to-day. By Deist we understand a man who believes only in God—not necessarily in the doctrines of religion. But some of the Deists of the 18th century were really only very liberal Christians—holding opinions not unlike those to-day professed by most liberal Christian sect as the Unitarians and the Universalists. Others were probably atheists, or something very close to atheists—although it was still dangerous in that period to make too open a confession of atheism. In France the corresponding school of thinkers was one of the most brilliant the world ever saw. But in England the school was rather small; and it contained no giants. It contained only men like Shaftesbury,¹ Bolingbroke,² Tindal³ and Toland,⁴ etc.—none of whom really belonged to the first rank. But the school that opposed them contained some of the most powerful minds of the age, and some of the very greatest names in English literature. In fact conservatism triumphed all along the line; and perhaps in that stage of England's mental and moral evolution, this was for the better, not for the worst. English society was still brutal, cruel; any weakening of the religious bands would have tended to make matters still worse. The Restoration feeling was not yet dead; and the humanism which had characterized previous ages had almost ceased to show itself. Some renovation was necessary; and conservatism brought about such a renovation.

There are only about two names worth remembering in the Deist group;—for to-day nobody reads Bolingbroke. Shaftesbury must be remembered; but not because of his work so much as because of his influence upon Pope. The philosophy of the *Essay on Man* was taught to Pope by Shaftesbury. And it is not altogether surprising that Pope, being a devout Roman

¹ Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713).

² Henry Saint-John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751).

³ Matthew Tindal (1657-1733).

⁴ John Toland (1670-1722).

Catholic, was very shy about acknowledging this obligation. The most curious figure in the Deist group was that of Bernard Mandeville.¹ He was not a bright scholar, like the two noblemen above mentioned; but he deserves mentioning, as his work is often referred to in contemporary literature, and has been made the subject of a poem by Robert Browning. Mandeville (whom his critics called by a pun upon his name "Man-devil") was a Dutch doctor who had settled in London, and who appeared to have had much hard common sense, but little or no feeling of delicacy. He was the first author, writing in English, who denied the evil of vice and the common standard of moral judgment. He did this first in a poem called *The Grumbling Hive*²—representing how a community of bees became ruined by the practice of morality. While the bees had been vicious, they prospered; when they became moral they died of starvation. This way of looking at things reminds us of the doctrines of Nietzsche in our own time. In this shape the poem did not attract much attention; but about 10 years after Mandeville republished it together with a long prose essay, entitling the whole *The Fable of the Bees*.³ In this new edition he seriously attempted to prove that drunkenness and other vices, as well as various kinds of crimes, instead of being injurious to society, are really beneficial to society—in short, that society progresses by the help of vice. The Government prosecuted the book and it was publicly burned by the common executioner. Great was the indignation against Mandeville. But his book set serious minds to thinking; and it is now recognized that although his opinions were rawly and clumsily expressed they contained the germs of some sociological truth that has not been properly considered. With all his faults Mandeville could make men think, and oblige them to modify their opinions upon certain subjects.

Classifiers of English literature have ranked Defoe with the Deists; but I think that this classification could scarcely be well sustained. Defoe himself was a man of no conviction

¹ Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733).

² *The grumbling hive, or knaves turn'd honest* 1705.

³ *The fable of the bees; or private vices publick benefits* 1714 (1723).

—or at least a man who always professed to believe anything which brought money into his pocket. I think that we must consider him separately; and this will be the best place in which to do so, before considering the great conservative writers. Leaving all schools out of the question for the moment, we may say that the greatest prose writers were Defoe, Swift, Addison, Steele and Bishop Berkeley. Of course there were other excellent writers; but these are the greatest names and the names above all others, which should be remembered. Let us then begin with Defoe.

I. DEFOE

Daniel Defoe¹ was the son of a butcher, and was born in London in 1661, but he belongs to the Augustan age, because of the curious fact that he was nearly sixty before he seriously took to authorship. If ever there was an adventurer of literary fame it was Daniel Defoe. He was a kind of Jack-of-all-trades; but we could not say that he was master of none—because in at least two occupations, journalism and authorship, he was really great. The first business which he established was that of a dealer in clothing materials; and he was bankrupted for seventy thousand pounds. Next we hear of him manufacturing tiles; and this business he also failed in because of getting in prison for attacking the Government in some printed utterance. We hear of him also in the pillory. The pillory, in old English towns, was a wooden frame in which a man was placed standing with his head and hands exposed through openings in a cross beam. But, luckily for Defoe, the children and spectators did not pelt him with rotten eggs, according to custom, for he had attacked the Government in the popular cause, and the people were grateful to him. In fact his punishment made him so popular that the Government soon afterwards actually subsidized him—bought him over to its side. He had no scruples of conscience in the matter of “sides”:

¹ Daniel Defoe *or* De Foe (1661-1731).

the side which he would take under all circumstances was, to use an English phrase, "the side on which his bread was buttered." After this we hear of him as a journalist and pamphleteer—in fact he was the first successful newspaper man among Englishmen. Besides writing for the newspaper and writing pamphlets he wrote works upon such various subjects, as banks, schools and education, religion, the army, causes of poverty, methods of improving commerce, marriage, devils, robbers, and of servants. I have not yet come to the subject of his novels. Let it here be sufficient to say that he wrote more books than any other Englishman either of the past or present time. He wrote no less than two hundred and fifty-four distinct works.

But his place in English literature was made for him by his novels; and the strange fact about the matter is that he never wanted to become a great literary man, and never even tried to create fine literature. He only wrote to make money—only wrote to please the public and he never cared "two-pence" for the opinion of great scholars. Under these circumstances it is simply astonishing that a man could make a reputation in English literature and exert a wide influence upon English style. Yet Defoe was able to do both because he possessed some very peculiar faculties of mind, and of observation,—faculties actually rising to the level of genius.

First of all, Defoe had an enormous capacity for observing, grouping, and memorizing details—details about anything and everything under the sun. This power, remember, does not necessarily mean the power of thinking in relation,—that is to say, thinking about incidents or facts in their relation to general laws, in their relation to the whole of which they are parts. This is the capacity of the philosopher; and Defoe was not a philosopher. He was only a man able to find extraordinary interest in small things and to remember everything that he saw. And the small things included such diverse matters as woven textures, leather dressing, tile making, fashions of all kinds, customs of all classes, formulas of every description belonging to conventional usage, military regulations, clerical

habits, prison laws, the language and manners of the criminal classes—in short, all that could relate to living and working in a great city like London. For more than forty years, as a journalist he had been collecting knowledge of this sort, and when he began to write stories it was not at all necessary for him to go outside of his room in order to study his facts. He had the facts already;— he was a walking encyclopædia of facts. There is only one thing to notice here in the way of deficiency. He studied only the facts of his own time and place. About the facts of preceding centuries he had not concerned himself in the least—so that when he began to write novels, of which the scenes professed to be laid in the 16th or 17th century, the customs and the scenery described were invariably of the 18th century. Thus Defoe made a great number of strange anachronisms.

The second faculty that Defoe possessed was a particular faculty of constructive imagination. He was able to invent any number of extraordinary situations with the greatest ease, and to make his characters act in those situations so naturally that it was almost impossible for people living in Defoe's own time to suspect that Defoe's stories were not absolute truth. He knew his power and took advantage of it—making himself “the greatest liar that ever lived,” as some of his critics have called him. He wrote a history of a plague in London which was long believed to be true history, but which is now known to be pure romance. He wrote novel after novel of life and manners, never acknowledging that his books were works of imagination, but invariably declaring them to be personal memoirs—records obtained from real diaries or notebooks kept by other persons. When he wrote *Robinson Crusoe* nobody imagined the book to be a story: they thought it was true history. Even Dr. Johnson thought so; and Dr. Johnson was not easily deceived.

Now the power to make fiction so dramatic that it appears to be truth is power of a very high order. But a great deal depends upon how the power is used, and upon the composition of the mind that uses it. If Defoe had been as sincere a man

as Shakespeare and had possessed a sense of beauty and a knowledge of proportion like Shakespeare, he might have created magnificent dramas. But in spite of his great ability in certain lines, Defoe had no sense of beauty and no sense of truth, in the higher meaning of the phrase. Furthermore, instead of attempting pure literature he never even thought of attempting anything better than a picaresque novel. All his romances are picaresque stories. He was the greatest and the last of English picaresque writers; and in this limited field he achieved successes of a literary kind without knowing it and even without caring about it.

In explaining the history of the picaresque romances, you will remember that I told you such romances have for their subject the lives of adventurers, thieves, prostitutes, or bad characters of society. That is the distinctive character of the picaresque romance;—that is what inspired the name given to it. And you will remember another peculiarity in these romances imitated from the Spanish writers, — namely, that they are, always or nearly always, written in the first person. Now Defoe's novels, with one exception (*Robinson Crusoe*), fulfill these conditions. They are written in the first person and professed to be veritable personal history. *Roxana*¹ is a French adventureress who, partly by wanton arts, partly by cleverness, partly by cunning, makes her way through the world with the help of many lovers. All her adventures are recounted as if she had written them down herself in a diary. She represents the higher type of immoral women. *Moll Flanders*² represents the lower type,—the unfortunate country girl, driven by her own folly to become a public woman. She is not only a courtesan; she is also, at times, a thief; and at last she gets into prison, on leaving which she is banished from the country. But at last she reforms, and eventually becomes a model wife.

¹ *The fortunate mistress; or, a history of the life and vast variety of fortunes of Mademoiselle de Belean, afterwards call'd the Countess de Wintelsheim, in Germany. Being the person known by the name of the Lady Roxana, in the time of King Charles II* 1724.

² *The fortunes and misfortunes of the famous Moll Flanders, etc. Who was born in Newgate . . . twelve year a thief, eight year a transported felon in Virginia . . . written from her own memorandums* 1722.

These are two typical novels of the series. But there are many others. Some describe the lives of pickpockets, highwaymen, pirates. In fact, Defoe's characters are a very bad company. There is, however, no doubt about the interest of the books. In every one of them you really think that you are listening to the recital of somebody's adventures; the verisimilitude of the incidents is frequently amazing.

The exception, above referred to, is *Robinson Crusoe*.¹ I need not remind you that this book is not a picaresque romance: it is one of the masterpieces of English prose literature. There was, you know, a Scotch sailor, called Alexander Selkirk,² who had been left alone upon the desolate little island of Juan Fernandez in the South Pacific, where he lived for a number of years without seeing a human face. His story was published in Defoe's own time and Defoe thought to himself, "What a splendid novel that man's adventure would make!" Then, when he was 57 or 58 years old, he sat down to write the novel. Crusoe had been the name of one of his school-boy friends; and because it sounded both curious and well, he gave it to the hero of his fancy. The book succeeded astonishingly well, and was soon translated into many languages. I need scarcely tell you that every English boy who can read at all reads this book at the present time and that the editions of it are almost beyond enumeration. It is not true in one sense; but in another sense we may very well acknowledge that it is wonderfully true.

The merit of the book can be best explained by reminding you of something that Emerson said about the value of a man in this world. Emerson declared that the best man is the man, who, if thrown all by himself, naked and unarmed, into some uncivilized and uninhabited country, would there be able by patient effort to reproduce his own civilization. Now this requirement is fulfilled by Robinson Crusoe. Shipwrecked upon a desolate coast, he finds ways and means there of building

¹ *The life and strange surprising adventures of Robinson Crusoe, of York, mariner . . . written by himself* 1719. *The farther adventures of Robinson Crusoe: being the second and last part of his life, etc.* 1719. *Serious reflections during the life . . . of Robinson Crusoe* 1720.

² Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721).

himself a house, cultivating the soil, domesticating wild creatures, eventually even defending himself against savages. The interest of the book is in the struggle of a single man against nature,—his strong and successful battle with the elements for the right to live. Although the narrative is purely imaginary, no part of it is impossible; and it has all the charm of perfect reality. As a picture of character it is true; as a painting of effort and courage it is true. And because of so much truth in it, it will probably live as long as the English language.

It was the success of this book, published when Defoe was 60 years of age (it took him about 3 years to write the 3 parts), that tempted its author to write other stories only for the purpose of making money. But in the other stories he never again rose above the level of the picaresque. The books have indeed certain qualities of literary merit; but it is only by *Robinson Crusoe* that Defoe remains immortal.

But it is not only by the authorship of the delightful romance that Defoe takes a place in the history of English prose. The style of the man gives to his work a very high importance. It is a style quite unlike anything which preceded it, except perhaps the work of Richard Head, author of *The English Rogue*; but Defoe is a very much finer writer than Head. The character of his work is simplicity and clearness beyond anything we should have expected from the early 18th century. In an age when form was considered everything,—an age when classic models were everywhere being studied,—Defoe attempted nothing in the way of classic form, and nothing in the way of ornament. There is not the least bit of decoration in the whole of his work. It is pure naked English—smooth, easy, almost colloquial; yet never vulgar. He loves short, crisp, plain sentences; and—notwithstanding that many of his romances abound in quaint idioms—I should say that there are few English authors more to be recommended to the Japanese students in regard to prose style,—or, if you like, prose methods. The work of Addison and of Steele, usually considered model prose, is not nearly so good for you to study. The more delicate art of Addison and his friend will probably

escape you, unless you have made a close study of Latin classics. The English of *The Spectator* seems to be common English at first reading; but it is not. It is very uncommon English, and a real appreciation of it is even beyond the power of the common critic. But in Defoe's prose, there is nothing artificial at all; it is *really* common English. In this regard there is only one other writer of the classic age who actually surpassed Defoe—that is Jonathan Swift.

II. JONATHAN SWIFT

Swift¹ is often spoken of as an Irishman, simply because of his having been born in Ireland; but no man ever was more English, whether by parentage or by character. His faults and his virtues were essentially English—but English upon a colossal and extraordinary scale. It is no exaggeration to say that he was the greatest literary figure of the whole 18th century,—greater than Johnson.

At all events remember that he was the dominant force of the classic age—the real literary king,—the master even of Pope, who bowed down before him and wrote almost as Swift suggested that he should write. When you come to study the literary history of this period in detail, you will be amused to find that everybody whom Pope satirized, or nearly everybody, was a man whom Swift disliked. Pope, as I told you, was able to make the public afraid of him; but even he was afraid of Swift; and when Swift wished, Pope was only a tool in his hand. However, the two men probably liked each other sincerely.

It is impossible to understand Swift's work and Swift's influence without knowing the character of this talented and very terrible person. He was born of genteel but poor parents, and his education was not accomplished without very much pecuniary difficulties. He studied at Trinity College, Dublin. And the difficulties attending his education were much aggra-

¹ Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's (1667-1745).

vated by his extraordinary self-will, obstinacy, and pride. He would not study according to the rules. There is a famous story about his refusal to study logic. His tutors furnished him with all the books of note upon logic; but he simply opened them one by one, sneered, and shut them again with a bang. Nevertheless he presented himself at the examination of the logic classes and answered all the questions put to him with perfect accuracy. However, he did not argue according to the rules;—he did not use syllogisms. The examiner, greatly astonished and vexed, asked him, “How can you expect to argue properly without studying the rules of logic?” “But you can see for yourself,” answered Swift, “that I do argue very well without studying rules of logic.” The examiners allowed him to graduate, but only by what is called “special favour” — and Swift was not grateful. On the contrary he declared that he had been grossly insulted by the use of that term “Special Favour.” This university incident suggested the character of the future man.

When he left the university, his prospects were not at all favourable. He was poor. He could scarcely hope to obtain a good position without influential friends: and he was not of a friendly disposition. Imagine a very tall, rough, powerful man, with the rudest of manners, and the most unpleasant pair of angry blue eyes possible to behold. To ask ordinary people to interest themselves in this savage-looking young person would have been hopeless—even to see him was extremely disagreeable. But happily, or unhappily for him, he had a relative of great position,—Sir William Temple,¹ the same person whose name is celebrated among the essayists of the later 17th century. Sir William Temple was then somewhat old: he took Swift into his house as a student—reader and secretary. This was anything but a pleasant position. You know that the position of a student, who accepts service in a family for the sake of prosecuting his studies, is not always a pleasant one. But in Japan, as a rule, the student in service is considerately treated. He is allowed certain privileges, and he occupies a position

¹ Sir William Temple (1628-1699).

higher than that of a real servant. In England such a situation is not the same. No matter how amiable or clever or genteel you may happen to be, if you take any kind of service in a family of rank, you are made to feel the humbleness of your position at every moment of the day. In fact the treatment of "inferiors," as the English say, is a moral cruelty. But Swift, the proudest man and the most intelligent man and the most powerful man of his time, had to bear this moral cruelty for a long series of years. He was, although a relative, obliged to eat with the lower servants, and to submit to their ill will from time to time: he was not spoken to by the family except when it was considered absolutely necessary. Such treatment can only be borne either by a man of extraordinarily weak or extraordinarily strong will. In Swift's case it was strength of will: for he had a supreme conception of moral duty, and, for his mother's sake, he thought it his duty to bear all this. But the habit of repressing his anger—an anger incomparably greater than the anger of ordinary men—certainly helped to poison his mind, to embitter his feelings. Sir William Temple, a gouty old man, was irritable and had his humours. There were days when he would pass by Swift without looking at him or returning his salutation. And Swift would then wonder how he had displeased him, what was wrong, what was going to become of the little salary of 20 pounds a year that could help his mother. All this he never forgot; and in after life it still had such an effect upon him that even if he saw the greatest nobleman in England look coldly at him he would walk up to the nobleman and insist upon having from him an apologetic explanation of the look. He often did that. At one time he told the King's minister that he must never dare to show a cold face to him—adding, "I would not submit to it even from the King himself!" And he was able to make the ministers and the dukes very angry by apologizing to him. It was while he was in the service of Sir William Temple that he first made a reputation with the *Tale of a Tub*.¹ The *Tale*

¹ *A tale of a tub, written for the universal improvement of mankind . . . To which is added, An account of a battel between the ancient and modern books in St. James's library 1704.*

of a Tub is indeed a work of genius; but its title does not suggest to the ordinary reader the subject of the book. Whalers and other shipmen say that, when a whale is angry and rushes at the ship, you can save the ship by throwing a big tub to the whale; for the whale breaks the tub, and then goes away satisfied. In Swift's book the free thinking party represents the whale; the book itself the tub thrown to him in order to occupy his attention, and so keep him innocently employed. The story of the book is a parable—under which are represented, in various guises, the Church of England, the Church of Rome, and the Puritan element. Each is pictured as a man, with particular habits, tendencies and dress. The Church of Rome and the Nonconformists are terribly satirized; and the Church of England is supposed to be justified. But Swift's touch in writing is remarkably like that of a lion, or a tiger,—he could not lay his hand upon a delicate subject without smashing it. So by the time that you have finished reading the *Tale of a Tub*, you discover that the Church of England looks just as ridiculous as any other Church—in fact you feel that there is something to laugh at in any religion or dogma. Now Swift's studies had been directed with a view to ecclesiastical preferment: he was to take orders—to become a clergyman. Therefore in his own interest it would have been much better for him not to have written the *Tale of a Tub*. The Church and the Government never forgave him for it; and he was never allowed to obtain even a good curacy—although he had certainly ability to make himself the greatest of archbishops.

For he was not in any way an irreligious man, he hated fanaticism, he hated religious cant; but he believed in the essential truth of religion, and knew how to defend them against unbelievers better than any man of the country. When he wrote in defence of Christianity the Deists were silenced;—they were frightened into silence, because Swift did not condescend to take them seriously: he attacked them with mockery only—and no man could endure the mockery of Swift, the most terrible ever known. Nor was this mockery ever really used in a bad cause. Swift was actuated throughout his life as a

writer, by moral sentiment,—moral sentiment deeper than any religion. Even his later attacks upon human nature itself only represent his sincere horror of folly and vice. He himself never had a weakness—no vice, certainly no folly; and perhaps he was therefore less able to make an allowance for the weaknesses of ordinary men.

Not to go into too many particulars I shall refer to the rest of Swift's career more briefly. Becoming distinguished as a wonderful writer, opportunities were soon open to him, of which he was not slow to take advantage. Men began to understand what a tremendous force such a man might become in politics;—a political newspaper was put into his hand, and the result made him a great influence in society. The highest persons were happy to court his favour. He could now well forgive the past; for he was able to make the ministers and the dukes sue for his smile. He at once rallied to his side all that was valuable in the world of literature;—Pope served his interests; Addison and Steele for some time obeyed his rule, and when one of them broke it, he had reason to be sorry. In a very few years the poor clumsy student had become the most influential person in England. Every ambassador did their utmost to obtain his goodwill—no wonder! A single word from him might destroy the diplomacy of ten years. There was first shown that, under this formidable and repellent personality, was hidden a very kind heart. Remembering how he had suffered in his youth he tried to help every young man of talent who seemed deserving. And he did not wait for them to come to him for help,—he sought them out, wrote to them, brought them up to London, obtained positions for them, made the fortunes and reputations of not a few. He never made mistakes of a serious sort in judging characters: the thoughts and the feelings of other men were open to him as the text of a book. This the Government knew, and when Swift would bring a young man into the presence of some high official with the simple observation, "Here! I want you to find a place for this young man at once,—a good place!" the official knew that the person recommended would be found worthy of the

position asked for. Besides it was very dangerous to refuse Swift anything, no matter how polite the refusal. And he used all his power for others—not for himself. Indeed he could not have used it for himself in the same way, people were too much afraid of him. He could make a man a bishop, he could make him an ambassador, and he could make him a minister,—he could do almost anything. But for himself he could not get a high place. I think that you can understand why.

And all this time he was not simply writing political articles, or arranging political movements,—he was also pouring forth pamphlets that have now become part of classic English literature—wonderful pamphlets, all satirical; attacking abuses, folly, corruptions, social evils of every sort,—terribly, mercilessly, and often even personally. I believe that I spoke of Pope's satire upon Lord Wharton. It is an awful thing—that satire of Pope; but it is nothing at all, compared with the frightful prose pages written by Swift about the same individual. However, Swift properly understood the real office of satire; he considered that except in extraordinary cases it should be general rather than personal; and he seldom attacked individuals. That he could do so was, however, so well recognized that nobody dared to anger him beyond a certain point.

At last, when a change in politics threw him out of his position as a Government champion, and he had to content himself with a very humble position in the country, he turned his attention to something else besides public interests. He had satirized men, society in its corrupt phases, vices and weaknesses of particular kinds as they never had been satirized before. Now he took for his subject, not one class or country, but all humanity, and produced one of the most awful books that ever was written—*Gulliver's Travels*.¹ You know something about that book,—because in an expurgated edition, part of it has been made into a boy's book; and I suppose that you must have read part of it when you were still young in English

¹ *Travels into several remote nations of the world, in four parts, by Lemuel Gulliver* 1726.

studies. The full text is not so familiar; and I may therefore make some remarks about it. You know that a book, very much of the same kind, as to mere story, was written in Japanese by a clever Japanese author long ago.¹ But although the resemblance in idea between the Japanese work and the work of Swift is very great, the tone and meaning of the English author is entirely different from those of his Oriental brother. Both saw human nature in its weak and comical aspects; but both did not judge it in the same way. Swift takes you first to the country of the little men, the Lilliputians, and makes you see and think like the little men, only in order that you may observe the faults of human nature upon another scale. The scale is a small one. You have to look at people as if they were ants or worms, or contemptible little insects. A god might look down upon men and see them in just the same way. Next you are taken to a country where everything is enormous,—where a man of ordinary size becomes no larger than a flea to the eyes of those about him. This is the country of the Brobdingnagians. Here you perceive all that is disgusting in men upon an enormous scale. The effect is that of putting a diseased body under the microscope. Under Swift's microscope, the skin of the fairest woman becomes rough, horrible and unclean. Boys read these two voyages of Gulliver without understanding the irony of many passages, and the bitter cruelty of the whole thing. Voyages with which they are less well acquainted are the voyage to the Country of Horses and the voyage to the Country of Huldbrugs, who never die. It is in the story of the Horse Country that Swift has most violently expressed his contempt for human nature. The narrative is an attempt to prove that men are much inferior, morally as well as physically, to beasts and that a horse is in every way a nobler creature than a man. The remainder of the *Travels* represents satires upon particulars rather than upon general forms of human weakness. The great force of the book will be found in the first three narratives. No matter what may be

¹ *Usc-shikkari Gantori-cho* (or *Assured Collector of False Geese*) by Namakeno-Bakahito (or *Idle Fool*).

said for the great genius of this work we cannot deny that it is a monument of misanthropy. A man who could think of the human race as Swift's book shows that he must have thought of it, could scarcely have regarded life as worth living. Undoubtedly Swift at last came to hate his own self quite as much as, or even more than, he hated the worst of mankind; and only a great sense of moral duty could have kept him alive. He detested the world; he detested his fellow men; but he never detested what he thought to be moral and a human duty. Otherwise it would be difficult to understand why he did not kill himself.

But all this was not because of disappointment, or personal unhappiness, or resentment, or any ignoble passion. It was because Swift had been afflicted from his earliest youth with a strange and terrible disease,—a disease that constantly caused him intense pain, and that probably rendered him physically different from other men. His great mind was still unclouded, but he knew that this disease must end in madness—knew that he was gradually becoming insane. It was certainly owing to this disorder that he, without intending to be cruel, treated two women in so cruel a manner that both died. He had been married to one of them, he never lived with her as a husband, and his knowledge of what was due to feminine weakness could not help him to be tender or just. His words, his coldness, tortured them and destroyed them—because they loved him. He was perfectly aware that he had caused these deaths,—perfectly aware that he could not have helped it; but his remorse for that which he could not help almost tore him into pieces. And it was in the hour of such black remorse that he wrote the worst pages of *Gulliver's Travels*.

Finally he went mad, as he had himself long before predicted, and, after suffering what is too painful even to write of here, died in utter misery. Before his death he had made a small fortune, in spite of all disadvantages; and this money he bequeathed to the building of a madhouse. A lunatic asylum in the city of Dublin is still called "Dr. Swift's Madhouse."

Such was the career of this great and most unhappy man.

Let us now consider the qualities of his extraordinary work — the reason of his immense influence upon all 18th century literature and even upon some literature of the 19th century.

Paradoxically as the mere statement may seem, it is an absolute fact that the time to fight is never when one is angry. When it is necessary, absolutely necessary, to fight, the swordsman must keep perfectly cool,—must not allow himself to be angry in the least. In all countries this rule is well known to swordsmen. The best general is the man whose head remains cold as a block of ice in the moment of the greatest danger. And among those terrible fighters, the Scandinavian sea-kings, it was the custom to sing while fighting. The English have inherited something of this Northern character,—the power of keeping cool, and getting cooler, while the fight proceeds. Another English characteristic was perhaps inherited from the same Northern blood — watchful cunning. You find this all through English schoolboys. The rule is, when you dislike or suspect a person, to approach him smilingly, to be as agreeable as possible, and to wait until the stranger shows a weakness of some sort, either of words or acts. Then you immediately attack him on that weak point—with sarcasm or something of that sort, and crush or frighten him as quickly as possible. Anybody who goes to an English school learns this. He is taught within a very few days to be extremely careful how he speaks, acts, dresses; for there are a hundred eyes watching for the least defect or eccentricity. Unless you remember these things I do not think that you could understand the character of Swift. Swift had these English characteristics enormously developed—a power of coolness in attack, and a power of cunning in observing opportunities, and a power of cruel patience in waiting for them, that never have been exceeded.

When you read his books you find all this in his style, and it astonishes and alarms the reader. Here is a man who, using the simplest and briefest language, speaking almost like an innocent boy, always smiling a cold smile, is tearing to pieces a character, a reputation, or a political party, with such ease

as a cat tears a mouse. The simple things said are so astonishingly cruel that you wonder how the art of saying them was ever discovered; and no extraordinary word needs to be used. Whether the enemy be a great scholar or an ignorant quack, the treatment is precisely the same. It is the same in the case of a minister as in the case of an almanac maker. In fact, Swift always wrote with a tact to make every possible reader understand him, whether educated or uneducated. He saw faults and follies in their largest possible relations; but he never tried to make the reader see them as a philosopher or a sociologist sees them. He understood too well the weaknesses of the ordinary reader. He would say to himself: "The ordinary reader is a fool, and I cannot make him understand how wicked this person is if I tell him the whole truth. So I shall tell him only so much of the truth as his small head can comprehend." That was where the terrible public power of Swift lay. When he ridiculed a man, even the little boys in the street understood every word said and felt themselves obliged to mock with the mocker.

But the astonishing thing is the perfect plainness of the style—the blunt Anglo-Saxon strength of it—the use of monosyllabic words to express what other men require classical words even to suggest—and the perpetual dignity of the whole expression. This simplicity is the most deceptive of all things; it is that apparent simplicity of the Northmen of old days, which duped and discomfited even princely diplomats. Nothing but the consciousness of immense strength, and the most extraordinary capacity of quiet restraint can explain it. The style profoundly influenced all English literature of prose for a hundred years; and its influence even now continues. Swift taught his countrymen that the English language was capable of doing more than they have ever believed it possible to do without having recourse to the artifice of classical and neo-Latin expression. His great position was about this: "There is nothing stronger than plain English in the hands of the intelligent man. For attack, you do not want anything more than common language supplies; all that is necessary is to

know how to put telling the truth in the best possible way.” It is therefore a great education in English to read Swift’s prose; and if you do not like those parts of it relating to the topics of Swift’s own time, you can easily make such a selection from among other essays and stories as will enable you to be amused and benefited at the same time. In simple prose, severe prose, easy prose, Swift is still—even to-day—without a superior in English literature. Hobbes, of whom I spoke before, comes nearest to him in some respects; but Hobbes was much weaker in attack; and moreover the language in the time of Hobbes was not so fully modernized as the language of Swift’s day. The English of Hobbes seems a little quaint compared with the English of Swift—seems fully a hundred years older, though it is not. Most of what Swift wrote might have been written yesterday, so far as the pure English goes; but nothing like that can be written again except by a mind of the same type.

III. IV. ADDISON AND STEELE

Next to Swift as writers of famous prose were Addison and Steele. I am not going to say much about their personal history, — because you have all read something about them. What the student needs to know is their exact relation to the 18th century literary development. You have read that they were friends from boyhood — having been first at school together, and afterwards at Oxford University, where they often met to discuss literary things although happening to attend different colleges. Both were by blood and temper thoroughly gentlemen and both were excellent representatives of the best moral feeling of their time. Addison¹ was a little cold— which fact probably helped to make him more successful in life than Steele, who was impulsive and very affectionate.

Steele² was for a time in the army. After he left the army

¹ Joseph Addison (1672-1719).

² Sir Richard Steele (1672-1729)

he began to write plays for the stage—producing four comedies one after another. Only one of these, a comedy called *The Funeral*¹ was favourably received by the public. The others were, in theatrical language, “damned” — and, curiously enough, “damned for their piety.” Piety at the beginning of the literary period in question meant anything good and moral as well as anything religious; and people had become so much accustomed to the bad plays, the immoral plays of the Restoration theatre that they were ready to condemn anything that seemed to them to show church influence. Steele saw that he could not hope to succeed as a writer of a comic play; and he did not have any capacity for tragedy, or thought that he did not. But it occurred to him that he might force his best opinions into men’s minds by the medium of something like a newspaper. In this latter enterprise he was soon joined by his old student friend Addison and the two began together those series of little newspapers which afterwards became so famous, under the titles of *The Spectator*,² *The Guardian*,³ etc., etc. Bound volumes of these little newspapers soon became greatly in demand even in Steele’s lifetime. They are now a part of English classic literature.

But why? For the simple reason that the best element of English society then really wished for a moral tonic of some kind in the shape of literature. There was plenty of literature, of course, but much of it, like the great prose of Swift and the great verse of Pope, was cruel—inhuman. On the other hand there was plenty of drama, but it was the drama of the Restoration. There was, indeed, the work of Defoe, but nobody could call Defoe’s romances moral in any sense of the word. Lastly there were books of sermons of the great preachers. But society does not want too much religious literature, in any age; and in the early 18th century, it wanted very badly some good reading which should be moral without being religious, and didactic without ceasing to be amusing.

That was exactly what Steele and Addison undertook to

¹ *The funeral, or grief a-la-mode, a comedy* 1701.

² *The Spectator* 1711-14.

³ *The Guardian* 1713.

supply. These two young gentlemen said to the public: "Satire has been all the fashion recently, and but a short time ago immorality in literature was a fashion. What we now want to do is to make morality fashionable in a new way—to make it genteel, to make it a part of intellectual life, to make it beautiful at the same time." And Addison and Steele actually did this very thing. They made morality fashionable in England. And the fashion which they set has not yet passed away.

But this morality which Addison and Steele occupied their whole lives in teaching was not a religious morality. Addison was, indeed, himself a profoundly and sincerely religious man: he even wrote many religious hymns, some of which are still everywhere known by heart. But the two friends did not busy themselves with religious teachings:—their whole system was simply a system of *social* morality; and this new code of social morality was only intended to show people how to be gentlemen and ladies in the modern sense of both words. In the age of chivalry, you know there was a social code; but it was a code of an aristocracy only; and that aristocracy would not have dreamed of extending its courtesies to the middle classes, while as to the working classes, they were considered only as so much cattle. In the Elizabethan age, when the industrial classes had begun to assume a position of great importance, the moral conditions were vastly improved; but still there remained one code of conduct for the higher classes, and another for the lower classes. The great Puritan movement and the period of the Commonwealth brought about a new idea of conduct for all men, irrespective of class; but this idea, although universal, was founded upon religious views of an extreme kind; and the Restoration swept it away,—or at least stamped it as vulgar, and so made it unfashionable. And the Restoration aristocracy set up a standard of fashionable immorality—including everything which to-day we would call ungentlemanly and brutal. In the beginning of the 18th century, society had not yet recovered from the shock of the Restoration;—the savage satires of Pope in poetry and of Swift in prose really re-

flect something of the Restoration ferocity. The nation longed for some reform, some new spirit in social life. Then Addison and his friend proposed to fulfil this desire. They proceeded to give the English people such instruction as would enable every man or woman, of moderate culture, to act like a gentleman or a lady. The beginning of the English idea of what constitutes a gentleman and a lady is to be found in the writings of these two men. And for more than a hundred years the English people have been closely following the teaching of Addison and Steele. Indeed, I may say that the modern English middle class idea of conduct is still the code of Addison.

Perhaps you will ask what this idea is. I believe that the best definition ever given of a gentleman is that of the man capable of kindness in small things. I need not tell you that this is not the aristocratic idea, which is infinitely more exacting as well as more unnatural. The capacity of kindness in small things is, on the other hand, rather natural than otherwise; and the ideas taught by Addison were ideas which everybody could understand, and could feel the truth and value of without any need of elaborate explanation. What explanation, for example, is necessary to assure the reader that by endeavouring to be kind and tolerant and graceful upon all occasions men can make society agreeable? And Addison taught them in very simple ways how to be kind, how to be tolerant, how to make one's presence always welcome, how to restrain all appearances of resentment, and how to tolerate and overlook all those little disagreeable things in life which cannot be helped. He did not approve of satire, of invective, of passionate language of any sort: he considered all this vulgar, and as tending only to increase the unhappiness of life, and to aggravate the very evils so attacked. He was certainly right in this regard, and it is noteworthy that he never offended against his own code of social morality. When he was bitterly attacked in print, he never replied to the attacks, and never showed any resentment against his enemies.

Without going too much into details I may say that the ideal gentleman to be found in Addison's pages is Addison him-

self. Unconsciously he drew his own portrait, created his own image for us, in all this teaching. The image is pleasant, correct, kindly, graceful, just—yet I do not know whether you would like it. Whether one likes or dislikes this type of character must depend a good deal not only upon one's own character, but upon the social experience which one has passed through. It is altogether an English character. With all its good qualities it is very cold,—distantly sympathetic only, at the best of times,—disinclined to strong expression of any sort,—disinclined to strong opinion,—distrustful of emotion,—never rude or harsh; yet inclined to smile at things which it disapproves in a way that very much resembles a sneer—not a cruel sneer, but a pitying, superior sort of sneer. Addison was not a snob; but he was very formal, very cold, and by no means sympathetic in the best sense. He taught especially two things,—reserve in regard to strong emotion, and kindness in the active shape rather than in the negative shape. To-day we cannot think very highly of his best ideals, because we have got beyond them. But what he taught in the early part of the 18th century was an immense advance upon anything which had been taught to the public before.

I have spoken in the last two paragraphs especially of Addison. The influence of Steele certainly helped the work of social reform, but only in a small way. The work of Steele where it can be distinguished from that of Addison suffered very much by comparison. Steele took very little pains with his style; and some of it is not above criticism. The whole merit and durable value of the publications respectively entitled *The Spectator*, *The Tatler*,¹ and *The Guardian* was given by the fine tone of Addison's contributions. And here we may consider his style.

The style of Addison is not by any means so natural and easy a thing as many people imagine. There is an appearance of natural ease; but it is only that kind of apparent ease which a gentleman acquires in society by long and careful practice.

¹ *The Tatler*. By Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq. (i.e. Sir R. Steele, J. Addison, and others) 1709-11.

No man took greater pains to polish his sentences, and to obtain a purely literary effect. And I must say that it was quite wrong to praise this style as a model of pure and simple English. I know that Johnson declared it the most perfect of all styles; but you must always beware of any style praised by Dr. Johnson, whose conservative prejudices in favour of classical methods coloured almost every criticism that he made. Addison's style is a fine style, but it is fine only as a classical style, in the very sense that Dr. Johnson understood the term.

There is, therefore, something a little artificial in it, quite visible to the man of letters. Addison was noted at Oxford as a classical scholar—a fine master of Latin verse. All his capacities and inclinations were in the direction of a severely classical style,—a style full of large Latin words and rhythmical sonorities. But he knew perfectly well that such a style would not “take” with the people, and he wanted to talk to the people, to the middle class. He needed therefore a style, which could not once obtain the approval of the scholarly class, by virtue of its correctness, and could be understood equally well by the middle class and even by persons of little culture, by virtue of its simplicity. So the proper way to consider Addison's style is that it was a modification of classical method intended for popular taste. For this end he proved very successful. But I certainly should not call it a great original style in the sense that the style of Swift or the style of Bishop Berkeley might be so called.

However, the main interest of Addison and of Steele to the student of literature must always be the part which they took in the development of moral sentiment in literature. All literature, or nearly all, that appeared in the subsequent prose of the 18th century was coloured by their influence. And the influence was very good. After the satires of the early 18th century, what is left to turn to is the prose sketches of English life, which make us smile in a kindly way at human eccentricities, instead of laughing at them in the way that Swift or Pope would have us do. Such characters as the old country knight Sir Roger or the amiable Will Honeycomb make us

smile at times, indeed ; but we are happy when we smile, and we like these queer old-fashioned folk even while they amuse us.

V. BISHOP BERKELEY

Last, and greatest of the prose-writers of the Augustan age, in certain special directions, was George Berkeley.¹ In many ways Berkeley was perhaps the most fortunate man of the time, as Swift was the most unfortunate. He was remarkably handsome, wonderful, gentle and charming in his address, so kind that he never had a real enemy, and with no superior as a scholar. Berkeley was an Irishman, strangely enough ; and in a time when the English prejudice against Irishmen was uncommonly strong, he was able to make English society adore him. It was Swift especially who made his fortune. Swift introduced him everywhere into London society and to the terrible old poetical dictator Pope, who was so pleased with the new acquaintance as to declare that God had given to Berkeley "every virtue under heaven." Another stranger thing is that Swift not only obtained for Berkeley the richest clerical living in Ireland, but seems to have been instrumental in causing money to be left him. It was the woman who loved Swift, known to us in literature as "Vanessa," who left to Berkeley one-half of her very considerable fortune—although, Berkeley says, she had never seen him. But she must have heard Swift praise him. Swift considered him the best man in the world. And there must have been something very delightful in his character, considering how he was worshipped for his personal quality in so jealous and so malicious a time. I need not go into the particulars of his romantic life, further than to say that it included a voluntary exile to North America where he lived, immersed in philosophical studies, for four years. It is said that he was one of the first great benefactors of the University of Yale. All his life was smooth and pleasant as a sound of music.

¹ George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, (1685-1753).

The work of the man is important for two different reasons,—both of which must be here dwelt upon. He was the greatest of all English metaphysicians; and he was the most melodious and lucid of writers. He had the clearness of Swift—without his force, it is true, but with qualities of a delicate kind that almost balanced the loss. His whole life was passed in theological discussion, he himself being the attacking party; but in all his pages you will find nothing unkind, nothing cruel—a delicate irony at times, but an irony only which mocks an error, not the person who makes it. Nevertheless it is not likely that Berkeley will be seriously studied for style alone by students of literature, because of the serious character of his writing. I shall not dwell upon its merits further than to say that, whereas the style of Addison had been chiefly founded upon a close study of Latin classics, the style of Berkeley was created by a loving knowledge of the Greek classics, and especially of Plato. No other Englishman has perhaps been quite so successful in writing an English which really preserves the grace and perfect beauty of Greek prose.

The works of Berkeley are entitled *A New Theory of Vision*,¹ *Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*,² and *Alciphron*.³ There is also a curious volume by him entitled *Siris*,⁴—dealing with the medicinal qualities of tar-water, but containing also many beautiful fragments of metaphysical speculation. The *New Theory of Vision* is a study of the fallacies which the sense of sight betrays us into making:—the philosopher arguing that nothing is more really deceptive than the evidence of the eyes. The *Dialogues* represent the flower of Berkeley's production: it is in these dialogues that he boldly claims the non-existence of matter. The book *Alciphron* is a series of attacks upon deism and materialism, written with great beauty and often with irresistible logic.

It is not possible to pass by Berkeley without attempting to put clearly before you his philosophical position. You are

¹ *An essay towards a new theory of vision* 1709.

² *Three dialogues between Hylas and Philonous* 1713.

³ *Alciphron, or the minute philosopher* 1732.

⁴ *Siris* 1744.

aware, no doubt, how much his theories have been sneered at; and you may remember that line of Byron:—

When Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter—
It was no matter what he said.

However, Byron was utterly wrong, like most of Berkeley's critics. What Bishop Berkeley said has affected all English thought, and most of English philosophers down to the time of Herbert Spencer,—who was the first one able to point out the false positions which Berkeley had taken.

In the briefest possible language, Berkeley's views have been thus summed up in our own day by Professor Huxley:—

Matter and motion are known to us only as forms of consciousness;—their being is to be conceived or known;—and the existence of a state of consciousness, apart from a thinking mind, is a contradiction in terms.

Huxley stated that this position is absolutely irrefragable, and any real thinker must confess the same thing—that is, if you grant the speaker his assumption that a thinking mind is something which can be known. No Western metaphysician has gone further than this; but Berkeley did not perceive that the same argument used against the reality of matter might also be used against the reality of mind. The Oriental thinker, deeper than the European, bravely faced this fact; and the greatest Oriental religion has for thousands of years taught that the Self is not real. But this was not known in Berkeley's day. Berkeley only said to the materialists of his time: “You say that everything in the universe can be resolved by a science into Matter and Motion. That is true—quite true; but pray tell me what is matter and what is motion? You know matter only as a something hard or soft, heavy or light, having colour, form, some sort of particular appearance to your senses. Motion you know of only as resistance. But I say that this hardness or softness or weight or lightness or form or resistance all exist only in your mind. Outside of your mind you cannot even conceive of their existence, not at least by any

logical operation of the brain. And I deny that they have any other existence. Matter and motion are only in the mind; and I say that the whole universe and all that appears to us, is only a manifestation of God to the soul. Nothing but God and the soul exists; all the rest is phenomenal." But suppose the materialist had said to Bishop Berkeley: "And I answer that if your argument be true as to matter and motion then your idea of God and your idea of the soul cannot possibly have any existence corresponding to them outside of imagination. God and soul are both dreams—mere mental fancies. There is no God and there is no soul." I do not know what Berkeley would have been able to reply to such a position. Really Locke's position was stronger from the modern point of view;—and you must remember that Locke was Berkeley's teacher. Locke said that we cannot know anything either as to the substance of matter or as to the substance of mind. Every great modern thinker, not influenced by theology, will agree with him. The only one who has, however, found a position a little beyond Locke's is Spencer—in his chapter upon Transcendental Realism. But Berkeley, as a profound Christian and a dignitary of the Church, could not have taken so agnostic a position as that of Locke. He did admirably show the fallacy of the senses; he did prove that the existence of matter cannot be proved,—and on those two standpoints he will always be admired. Otherwise he is very much open to scientific attack.

DRAMA

There is very little to be said about the drama of the first part of the 18th century and I shall only mention the names of Addison and Steele—and these only as indexes of dramatic tendency. Already I have told you how Steele tried to write pure, decent, amusing comedy: and how most of his plays were condemned by the public because they were thought to be too moral. Remember that what Steele could not accomplish in the classic age Goldsmith and Sheridan succeeded in

accomplishing during the next half of the century. But theirs was the last really fine comedy of English production. Addison, intensely classical, went back to the Senecan drama with his play of *Cato*;¹ and Senecan drama never could succeed really with an English audience. Moreover, Addison did not have the passionate strength the great tragedies require; and his attempts at classic tragedy exerted no influence whatever in the literary sense.

Now we must turn to the second part of the 18th century—perhaps the very most important fifty years in the whole of English literature.

¹ *Cato* 1712,