

CHAPTER IX

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

I. AUGUSTAN OR CLASSIC AGE

History of the Period. The Revolution of 1688, which banished the last of the Stuart kings and called William of Orange to the throne, marks the end of the long struggle for political freedom in England. Thereafter the Englishman spent his tremendous energy, which his forbears had largely spent in fighting for freedom, in endless political discussions and in efforts to improve his government. In order to bring about reforms, votes were now necessary; and to get votes the people of England must be approached with ideas, facts, arguments, information. So the newspaper was born,¹ and literature in its widest sense, including the book, the newspaper, and the magazine, became the chief instrument of a nation's progress.

The first half of the eighteenth century is remarkable for the rapid social development in England. Hitherto men had been more or less governed by the narrow, isolated standards of the **Social Development** Middle Ages, and when they differed they fell speedily to blows. Now for the first time they set themselves to the task of learning the art of living together, while still holding different opinions. In a single generation nearly two thousand public coffeehouses, each a center of sociability, sprang up in London alone, and the number of private clubs is quite as astonishing.² This new social life had a marked effect in polishing men's words and manners. The typical Londoner of Queen Anne's day was still rude, and a little vulgar in his tastes; the city was still very filthy, the streets unlighted and infested at night by bands of rowdies and "Mohawks"; but outwardly men sought to refine their manners according to prevailing standards; and to be elegant, to have "good form," was a man's first duty, whether he entered society or wrote literature. One can hardly read a book or poem of the age without feeling this

¹ The first daily newspaper, *The Daily Courant*, appeared in London in 1702.

² See Lecky, *England in the Eighteenth Century*.

superficial elegance. Government still had its opposing Tory and Whig parties, and the Church was divided into Catholics, Anglicans, and Dissenters; but the growing social life offset many antagonisms, producing at least the outward impression of peace and unity. Nearly every writer of the age busied himself with religion as well as with party politics, the scientist Newton as sincerely as the churchman Barrow, the philosophical Locke no less earnestly than the evangelical Wesley; but nearly all tempered their zeal with moderation, and argued from reason and Scripture, or used delicate satire upon their opponents, instead of denouncing them as followers of Satan. There were exceptions, of course; but the general tendency of the age was toward toleration. Man had found himself in the long struggle for personal liberty; now he turned to the task of discovering his neighbor, of finding in Whig and Tory, in Catholic and Protestant, in Anglican and Dissenter, the same general human characteristics that he found in himself. This good work was helped, moreover, by the spread of education and by the growth of the national spirit, following the victories of Marlborough on the Continent. In the midst of heated argument it needed only a word — Gibraltar, Blenheim, Ramillies, Malplaquet — or a poem of victory written in a garret¹ to tell a patriotic people that under their many differences they were all alike Englishmen.

In the latter half of the century the political and social progress is almost bewildering. The modern form of cabinet government responsible to Parliament and the people had been established under George I; and in 1757 the cynical and corrupt practices of Walpole, premier of the first Tory cabinet, were replaced by the more enlightened policies of Pitt. Schools were established; clubs and coffeehouses increased; books and magazines multiplied until the press was the greatest visible power in England; the modern great dailies, the *Chronicle*, *Post*, and *Times*, began their career of public education. Religiously, all the churches of England felt the quickening power of that tremendous spiritual revival known as Methodism, under the preaching of Wesley and Whitefield. Outside her own borders three great men — Clive in India, Wolfe on the Plains of Abraham, Cook in Australia and the islands of the Pacific — were unfurling the banner of St. George over the untold wealth of new lands, and spreading the world-wide empire of the Anglo-Saxons.

¹ Addison's "Campaign" (1704), written to celebrate the battle of Blenheim.

Literary Characteristics. In every preceding age we have noted especially the poetical works, which constitute, according to Matthew Arnold, the glory of English literature. Now for the first time we must chronicle the triumph of English prose. A multitude of practical interests arising from the new social and political conditions demanded expression, not simply in books, but more especially in pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers. Poetry was inadequate for such a task; hence the development of prose, of the "unfettered word," as Dante calls it,—a development which astonishes us by its rapidity and excellence. The graceful elegance of Addison's essays, the terse vigor of Swift's satires, the artistic finish of Fielding's novels, the sonorous eloquence of Gibbon's history and of Burke's orations,—these have no parallel in the poetry of the age. Indeed, poetry itself became prosaic in this respect, that it was used not for creative works of imagination, but for essays, for satire, for criticism,—for exactly the same practical ends as was prose. The poetry of the first half of the century, as typified in the work of Pope, is polished and witty enough, but artificial; it lacks fire, fine feeling, enthusiasm, the glow of the Elizabethan Age and the moral earnestness of Puritanism. In a word, it interests us as a study of life, rather than delights or inspires us by its appeal to the imagination. The variety and excellence of prose works, and the development of a serviceable prose style, which had been begun by Dryden, until it served to express clearly every human interest and emotion,—these are the chief literary glories of the eighteenth century.

In the literature of the preceding age we noted two marked tendencies,—the tendency to realism in subject-matter, and the tendency to polish and refinement of expression. Both these tendencies were continued in the Augustan Age, and are seen clearly in the poetry of Pope, who brought the couplet to perfection, and in the prose of

An Age of
Prose

Addison. A third tendency is shown in the prevalence of satire, resulting from the unfortunate union of politics with literature. We have already noted the power of the press in this age, and the perpetual strife of political parties. Nearly every writer of the first half of the century was used and rewarded by Whigs or Tories for satirizing their enemies and for advancing their special political interests. Pope was a marked exception, but he nevertheless followed the prose writers in using satire too largely in his poetry. Now satire—that is, a literary work which searches out the faults of men or institutions in order to hold them up to ridicule—is at best a destructive kind of criticism. A satirist is like a laborer who clears away the ruins and rubbish of an old house before the architect and builders begin on a new and beautiful structure. The work may sometimes be necessary, but it rarely arouses our enthusiasm. While the satires of Pope, Swift, and Addison are doubtless the best in our language, we hardly place them with our great literature, which is always constructive in spirit; and we have the feeling that all these men were capable of better things than they ever wrote.

The Classic Age. The period we are studying is known to us by various names. It is often called the Age of Queen Anne; but, unlike Elizabeth, this "meekly stupid" queen had practically no influence upon our literature. The name Classic Age is more often heard; but in using it we should remember clearly these three different ways in which the word "classic" is applied to literature: (1) the term "classic" refers, in general, to writers of the highest rank in any nation. As used in our literature, it was first applied to the works of the great Greek and Roman writers, like Homer and Virgil; and any English book which followed the simple and noble method of these writers was said to have a classic style. Later the term was enlarged to cover the great literary works of other ancient nations; so that the Bible and the Avestas, as well as the Iliad and the Æneid, are called classics.

(2) Every national literature has at least one period in which an unusual number of great writers are producing books, and this is called the classic period of a nation's literature. Thus the reign of Augustus is the classic or golden age of Rome; the generation of Dante is the classic age of Italian literature; the age of Louis XIV is the French classic age; and the age of Queen Anne is often called the classic age of England. (3) The word "classic" acquired an entirely different meaning in the period we are studying; and we shall better understand this by reference to the preceding ages. The Elizabethan writers were led by patriotism, by enthusiasm, and, in general, by romantic emotions. They wrote in a natural style, without regard to rules; and though they exaggerated and used too many words, their works are delightful because of their vigor and freshness and fine feeling. In the following age patriotism had largely disappeared from politics and enthusiasm from literature. Poets no longer wrote naturally, but artificially, with strange and fantastic verse forms to give effect, since fine feeling was wanting. And this is the general character of the poetry of the Puritan Age.¹ Gradually our writers rebelled against the exaggerations of both the natural and the fantastic style. They demanded that poetry should follow exact rules; and in this they were influenced by French writers, especially by Boileau and Rapin, who insisted on precise methods of writing poetry, and who professed to have discovered their rules in the classics of Horace and Aristotle. In our study of the Elizabethan drama we noted the good influence of the classic movement in insisting upon that beauty of form and definiteness of expression which characterize the dramas of Greece and Rome; and in the work of Dryden and his followers we see a revival of classicism in the effort to make English literature conform to rules

¹ Great writers in every age, men like Shakespeare and Milton, make their own style. They are therefore not included in this summary. Among the minor writers also there are exceptions to the rule; and fine feeling is often manifest in the poetry of Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, and Herrick.

established by the great writers of other nations. At first the results were excellent, especially in prose; but as the creative vigor of the Elizabethans was lacking in this age, writing by rule soon developed a kind of elegant formalism, which suggests the elaborate social code of the time. Just as a gentleman might not act naturally, but must follow exact rules in doffing his hat, or addressing a lady, or entering a room, or wearing a wig, or offering his snuffbox to a friend, so our writers lost individuality and became formal and artificial. The general tendency of literature was to look at life critically, to emphasize intellect rather than imagination, the form rather than the content of a sentence. Writers strove to repress all emotion and enthusiasm, and to use only precise and elegant methods of expression. This is what is often meant by the "classicism" of the ages of Pope and Johnson. It refers to the critical, intellectual spirit of many writers, to the fine polish of their heroic couplets or the elegance of their prose, and not to any resemblance which their work bears to true classic literature. In a word, the classic movement had become pseudo-classic, i.e. a false or sham classicism; and the latter term is now often used to designate a considerable part of eighteenth-century literature.¹ To avoid this critical difficulty we have adopted the term Augustan Age, a name chosen by the writers themselves, who saw in Pope, Addison, Swift, Johnson, and Burke the modern parallels to Horace, Virgil, Cicero, and all that brilliant company who made Roman literature famous in the days of Augustus.

¹ We have endeavored here simply to show the meaning of terms in general use in our literature; but it must be remembered that it is impossible to classify or to give a descriptive name to the writers of any period or century. While "classic" or "pseudo-classic" may apply to a part of eighteenth-century literature, every age has both its romantic and its classic movements. In this period the revolt against classicism is shown in the revival of romantic poetry under Gray, Collins, Burns, and Thomson, and in the beginning of the English novel under Defoe, Richardson, and Fielding. These poets and novelists, who have little or no connection with classicism, belong chronologically to the period we are studying. They are reserved for special treatment in the sections following.

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

Pope is in many respects a unique figure. In the first place, he was for a generation "the poet" of a great nation. To be sure, poetry was limited in the early eighteenth century; there were few lyrics, little or no love poetry, no epics, no dramas or songs of nature worth considering; but in the narrow field of satiric and didactic verse Pope was the undisputed master. His influence completely dominated the poetry of his age, and many foreign writers, as well as the majority of English poets, looked to him as their model. Second, he was a remarkably clear and adequate reflection of the spirit of the age in which he lived. There is hardly an ideal, a belief, a doubt, a fashion, a whim of Queen Anne's time, that is not neatly expressed in his poetry. Third, he was the only important writer of that age who gave his whole life to letters. Swift was a clergyman and politician; Addison was secretary of state; other writers depended on patrons or politics or pensions for fame and a livelihood; but Pope was independent, and had no profession but literature. And fourth, by the sheer force of his ambition he won his place, and held it, in spite of religious prejudice, and in the face of physical and temperamental obstacles that would have discouraged a stronger man. For Pope was deformed and sickly, dwarfish in soul and body. He knew little of the world of nature or of the world of the human heart. He was lacking, apparently, in noble feeling, and instinctively chose a lie when the truth had manifestly more advantages. Yet this jealous, peevish, waspish little man became the most famous poet of his age and the acknowledged leader of English literature. We record the fact with wonder and admiration; but we do not attempt to explain it.

Life. Pope was born in London in 1688, the year of the Revolution. His parents were both Catholics, who presently removed from London and settled in Binfield, near Windsor, where the poet's

childhood was passed. Partly because of an unfortunate prejudice against Catholics in the public schools, partly because of his own weakness and deformity, Pope received very little school education, but browsed for himself among English books and picked up a smattering of the classics. Very early he began to write poetry, and records the fact with his usual vanity:

As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.

Being debarred by his religion from many desirable employments, he resolved to make literature his life work; and in this he resembled Dryden, who, he tells us, was his only master, though much of his work seems to depend on Boileau, the French poet and critic.¹ When only sixteen years old he had written his "Pastorals"; a few years later appeared his "Essay on Criticism," which made him famous. With the publication of the *Rape of the Lock*, in 1712, Pope's name was known and honored all over England, and this dwarf of twenty-four years, by the sheer force of his own ambition, had jumped to the foremost place in English letters. It was soon after this that Voltaire called him "the best poet of England and, at present, of all the world," — which is about as near the truth as Voltaire generally gets in his numerous universal judgments. For the next twelve years Pope was busy with poetry, especially with his translations of Homer; and his work was so successful financially that he bought a villa at Twickenham, on the Thames, and remained happily independent of wealthy patrons for a livelihood.

Led by his success, Pope returned to London and for a time endeavored to live the gay and dissolute life which was supposed to be suitable for a literary genius; but he was utterly unfitted for it, mentally and physically, and soon retired to Twickenham. There he gave himself up to poetry, manufactured a little garden more artificial than his verses, and cultivated his friendship with Martha Blount, with whom for many years he spent a good part of each day, and who remained faithful to him to the end of his life. At Twickenham he wrote his *Moral Epistles* (poetical satires modeled after

¹ Pope's satires, for instance, are strongly suggested in Boileau; his *Rape of the Lock* is much like the mock-heroic *Le Lutrin*; and the "Essay on Criticism," which made him famous, is an English edition and improvement of *L'Art Poétique*. The last was, in turn, a combination of the *Ars Poetica* of Horace and of many well-known rules of the classicists.

Horace) and revenged himself upon all his critics in the bitter abuse of the *Dunciad*. He died in 1744 and was buried at Twickenham, his religion preventing him from the honor, which was certainly his due, of a resting place in Westminster Abbey.

Works of Pope. For convenience we may separate Pope's work into three groups, corresponding to the early, middle, and later period of his life. In the first he wrote his "Pastorals," "Windsor Forest," "Messiah," "Essay on Criticism," "Eloise to Abelard," and the *Rape of the Lock*; in the second, his translations of Homer; in the third the *Dunciad* and the *Epistles*, the latter containing the famous "Essay on Man" and the "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," which is in truth his "Apologia," and in which alone we see Pope's life from his own view point.

The "Essay on Criticism" sums up the art of poetry as taught first by Horace, then by Boileau and the eighteenth-century classicists. Though written in heroic couplets, we hardly consider this as a poem but rather as a storehouse of critical maxims. "For fools rush in where angels fear to tread"; "To err is human, to forgive divine"; "A little learning is a dangerous thing," — these lines, and many more like them from the same source, have found their way into our common speech, and are used, without thinking of the author, whenever we need an apt quotation.

The *Rape of the Lock* is a masterpiece of its kind, and comes nearer to being a "creation" than anything else that Pope has written. The occasion of the famous poem was trivial enough. A fop at the court of Queen Anne, one Lord Petre, snipped a lock of hair from the abundant curls of a pretty maid of honor named Arabella Fermor. The young lady resented it, and the two families were plunged into a quarrel which was the talk of London. Pope, being appealed to, seized the occasion to construct, not a ballad, as the Cavaliers would have done, nor an epigram, as French poets love to do, but a long poem in which all the mannerisms

of society are pictured in minutest detail and satirized with the most delicate wit. The first edition, consisting of two cantos, was published in 1712; and it is amazing now to read of the trivial character of London court life at the time when English soldiers were battling for a great continent in the French and Indian wars. Its instant success caused Pope to lengthen the poem by three more cantos; and in order to make a more perfect burlesque of an epic poem, he introduces gnomes, sprites, sylphs, and salamanders,¹ instead of the gods of the great epics, with which his readers were familiar. The poem is modeled after two foreign satires: Boileau's *Le Lutrin* (reading desk), a satire on the French clergy, who raised a huge quarrel over the location of a lectern; and *La Secchia Rapita* (stolen bucket), a famous Italian satire on the petty causes of the endless Italian wars. Pope, however, went far ahead of his masters in style and in delicacy of handling a mock-heroic theme, and during his lifetime the *Rape of the Lock* was considered as the greatest poem of its kind in all literature. The poem is still well worth reading; for as an expression of the artificial life of the age — of its cards, parties, toilettes, lapdogs, tea-drinking, snuff-taking, and idle vanities — it is as perfect in its way as *Tamburlaine*, which reflects the boundless ambition of the Elizabethans.

The fame of Pope's *Iliad*, which was financially the most successful of his books, was due to the fact that he interpreted Homer in the elegant, artificial language of his own age. Not only do his words follow literary fashions, but even the Homeric characters lose their strength and become fashionable men of the court. So the criticism of the scholar Bentley was most appropriate when he said, "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer." Pope translated the entire *Iliad* and half of the *Odyssey*; and

¹ These are the four kinds of spirits inhabiting the four elements, according to the Rosicrucians, — a fantastic sect of spiritualists of that age. In the dedication of the poem Pope says he took the idea from a French book called *Le Comte de Gabalis*.

the latter work was finished by two Cambridge scholars, Elijah Fenton and William Broome, who imitated the mechanical couplets so perfectly that it is difficult to distinguish their work from that of the greatest poet of the age. A single selection is given to show how, in the nobler passages, even Pope may faintly suggest the elemental grandeur of Homer:

The troops exulting sat in order round,
And beaming fires illumined all the ground.
As when the moon, refulgent lamp of night,
O'er Heaven's clear azure spreads her sacred light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep serene,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the solemn scene;
Around her throne the vivid planets roll,
And stars unnumbered gild the glowing pole,
O'er the dark trees a yellower verdure shed,
And tip with silver every mountain's head.

The "Essay" is the best known and the most quoted of all Pope's works. Except in form it is not poetry, and when one considers it as an essay and reduces it to plain prose, it is found to consist of numerous literary ornaments without any very solid structure of thought to rest upon. The purpose of the essay is, in Pope's words, to "vindicate the ways of God to Man"; and as there are no unanswered problems in Pope's philosophy, the vindication is perfectly accomplished in four poetical epistles, concerning man's relations to the universe, to himself, to society, and to happiness. The final result is summed up in a few well-known lines:

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is, is right.

Like the "Essay on Criticism," the poem abounds in quotable lines, such as the following, which make the entire work well worth reading:

Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.

The same ambition can destroy or save,
And makes a patriot as it makes a knave.

Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part, there all the honor lies.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.

Behold the child, by Nature's kindly law,
Pleased with a rattle, tickled with a straw:
Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite:
Scarfs, garters, gold, amuse his riper stage,
And beads and prayer books are the toys of age:
Pleased with this bauble still, as that before;
Till tired he sleeps, and Life's poor play is o'er.¹

The Dunciad (i.e. the "Iliad of the Dunces") began originally as a controversy concerning Shakespeare, but turned out to be a coarse and revengeful satire upon all the literary men of the age who had aroused Pope's anger by their criticism or lack of appreciation of his genius. Though brilliantly written and immensely popular at one time, its present effect on the reader is to arouse a sense of pity that a man of such acknowledged power and position should abuse both by devoting his talents to personal spite and petty quarrels. Among the rest of his numerous works the reader will find Pope's estimate of himself best set forth in his "Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot," and it will be well to close our study of this strange mixture of vanity and greatness with "The Universal Prayer," which shows at least that Pope had considered, and judged himself, and that all further judgment is consequently superfluous.

¹ Compare this with Shakespeare's "All the world's a stage," in *As You Like It*, II, 7.

JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

In each of Marlowe's tragedies we have the picture of a man dominated by a single passion, the lust of power for its own sake. In each we see that a powerful man without self-control is like a dangerous instrument in the hands of a child; and the tragedy ends in the destruction of the man by the ungoverned power which he possesses. The life of Swift is just such a living tragedy. He had the power of gaining



JONATHAN SWIFT

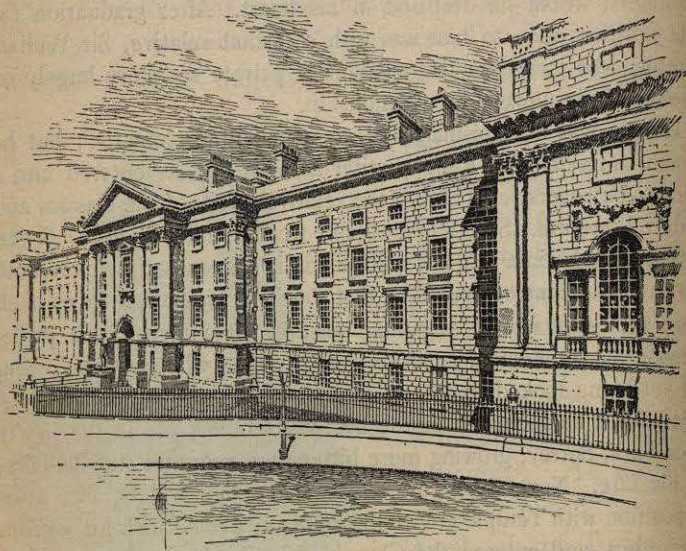
wealth, like the hero of the *Jew of Malta*; yet he used it scornfully, and in sad irony left what remained to him of a large property to found a hospital for lunatics. By hard work he won enormous literary power, and used it to satirize our common humanity. He wrested political power from the hands of the Tories, and used it to insult the very men who had helped him, and who held his fate in their hands. By his dominant personality he exercised a curious power over women, and used it brutally to make them feel their inferiority. Being loved supremely by two good women, he brought sorrow and death to both, and endless misery to himself. So his power brought always tragedy in its wake. It is only when we remember his life of struggle and disappointment and bitterness that we can appreciate the personal quality in his satire, and perhaps find some sympathy for this greatest genius of all the Augustan writers.

Life. Swift was born in Dublin, of English parents, in 1667. His father died before he was born; his mother was poor, and Swift, though proud as Lucifer, was compelled to accept aid from relatives, who gave it grudgingly. At the Kilkenny school, and especially at Dublin University, he detested the curriculum, reading only what appealed to his own nature; but, since a degree was necessary to his success, he was compelled to accept it as a favor from the examiners, whom he despised in his heart. After graduation the only position open to him was with a distant relative, Sir William Temple, who gave him the position of private secretary largely on account of the unwelcome relationship.

Temple was a statesman and an excellent diplomatist; but he thought himself to be a great writer as well, and he entered into a literary controversy concerning the relative merits of the classics and modern literature. Swift's first notable work, *The Battle of the Books*, written at this time but not published, is a keen satire upon both parties in the controversy. The first touch of bitterness shows itself here; for Swift was in a galling position for a man of his pride, knowing his intellectual superiority to the man who employed him, and yet being looked upon as a servant and eating at the servants' table. Thus he spent ten of the best years of his life in the pretty Moor Park, Surrey, growing more bitter each year and steadily cursing his fate. Nevertheless he read and studied widely, and, after his position with Temple grew unbearable, quarreled with his patron, took orders, and entered the Church of England. Some years later we find him settled in the little church of Laracor, Ireland,—a country which he disliked intensely, but whither he went because no other "living" was open to him.

In Ireland, faithful to his church duties, Swift labored to better the condition of the unhappy people around him. Never before had the poor of his parishes been so well cared for; but Swift chafed under his yoke, growing more and more irritated as he saw small men advanced to large positions, while he remained unnoticed in a little country church,—largely because he was too proud and too blunt with those who might have advanced him. While at Laracor he finished his *Tale of a Tub*, a satire on the various churches of the day, which was published in London with the *Battle of the Books* in 1704. The work brought him into notice as the most powerful satirist of the age, and he soon gave up his church to enter the strife of party politics. The cheap pamphlet was then the most

powerful political weapon known; and as Swift had no equal at pamphlet writing, he soon became a veritable dictator. For several years, especially from 1710 to 1713, Swift was one of the most important figures in London. The Whigs feared the lash of his satire; the Tories feared to lose his support. He was courted, flattered, cajoled on every side; but the use he made of his new power is sad to contemplate. An unbearable arrogance took possession of him.



TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

Lords, statesmen, even ladies were compelled to sue for his favor and to apologize for every fancied slight to his egoism. It is at this time that he writes in his *Journal to Stella*:

Mr. Secretary told me the Duke of Buckingham had been talking much about me and desired my acquaintance. I answered it could not be, for he had not yet made sufficient advances; then Shrewsbury said he thought the Duke was not used to make advances. I said I could not help that, for I always expected advances in proportion to men's quality, and more from a Duke than any other man.

Writing to the Duchess of Queensberry he says:

I am glad you know your duty; for it has been a known and established rule above twenty years in England that the first advances have been constantly made me by all ladies who aspire to my acquaintance, and the greater their quality the greater were their advances.

When the Tories went out of power Swift's position became uncertain. He expected and had probably been promised a bishopric in England, with a seat among the peers of the realm; but the Tories offered him instead the place of dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. It was galling to a man of his proud spirit; but after his merciless satire on religion, in *The Tale of a Tub*, any ecclesiastical position in England was rendered impossible. Dublin was the best he could get, and he accepted it bitterly, once more cursing the fate which he had brought upon himself.

With his return to Ireland begins the last act in the tragedy of his life. His best known literary work, *Gulliver's Travels*, was done here; but the bitterness of life grew slowly to insanity, and a frightful personal sorrow, of which he never spoke, reached its climax in the death of Esther Johnson, a beautiful young woman, who had loved Swift ever since the two had met in Temple's household, and to whom he had written his *Journal to Stella*. During the last years of his life a brain disease, of which he had shown frequent symptoms, fastened its terrible hold upon Swift, and he became by turns an idiot and a madman. He died in 1745, and when his will was opened it was found that he had left all his property to found St. Patrick's Asylum for lunatics and incurables. It stands to-day as the most suggestive monument of his peculiar genius.

The Works of Swift. From Swift's life one can readily foresee the kind of literature he will produce. Taken together his works are a monstrous satire on humanity; and the spirit of that satire is shown clearly in a little incident of his first days in London. There was in the city at that time a certain astrologer named Partridge, who duped the public by calculating nativities from the stars, and by selling a yearly almanac predicting future events. Swift, who hated all shams, wrote, with a great show of learning, his famous *Bickerstaff Almanac*, containing "Predictions for the Year 1708, as Determined by the Unerring Stars." As Swift rarely signed his name to any literary work, letting it stand or fall on its own merits, his burlesque appeared over the pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, a name afterwards made famous by Steele in *The Tatler*. Among the predictions was the following:

My first prediction is but a trifle; yet I will mention it to show how ignorant those sottish pretenders to astrology are in their own concerns: it relates to Partridge the almanack maker; I have consulted the star of his nativity by my own rules, and find he will infallibly die upon the 29th of March next, about eleven at night, of a raging fever; therefore I advise him to consider of it, and settle his affairs in time.

On March 30, the day after the prediction was to be fulfilled, there appeared in the newspapers a letter from a revenue officer giving the details of Partridge's death, with the doings of the bailiff and the coffin maker; and on the following morning appeared an elaborate "Elegy of Mr. Partridge." When poor Partridge, who suddenly found himself without customers, published a denial of the burial, Swift answered with an elaborate "Vindication of Isaac Bickerstaff," in which he proved by astrological rules that Partridge was dead, and that the man now in his place was an impostor trying to cheat the heirs out of their inheritance.

This ferocious joke is suggestive of all Swift's satires. Against any case of hypocrisy or injustice he sets up a remedy of precisely the same kind, only more atrocious, and defends his plan with such seriousness that the satire overwhelms the reader with a sense of monstrous falsity. Thus his solemn "Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity may be attended with Some Inconveniencies" is such a frightful satire upon the abuses of Christianity by its professed followers that it is impossible for us to say whether Swift intended to point out needed reforms, or to satisfy his conscience,¹ or to perpetrate a joke on the Church, as he had done on poor Partridge. So also with his "Modest Proposal," concerning the children of Ireland, which sets up the proposition that poor Irish farmers ought to raise children as dainties, to be eaten, like roast pigs, on the tables of prosperous Englishmen. In this most characteristic work

¹ It is only fair to point out that Swift wrote this and two other pamphlets on religion at a time when he knew that they would damage, if not destroy, his own prospects of political advancement.

it is impossible to find Swift or his motive. The injustice under which Ireland suffered, her perversity in raising large families to certain poverty, and the indifference of English politicians to her suffering and protests are all mercilessly portrayed; but why? That is still the unanswered problem of Swift's life and writings.

Swift's two greatest satires are his *Tale of a Tub* and *Gulliver's Travels*. The *Tale* began as a grim exposure of the alleged weaknesses of three principal forms of religious belief, Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist, as opposed to the Anglican; but it ended in a satire upon all science and philosophy.

Swift explains his whimsical title by the custom of mariners in throwing out a tub to a whale, in order to occupy the monster's attention and divert it from an attack upon the ship, — which only proves how little Swift knew of whales or sailors. But let that pass. His book is a tub thrown out to the enemies of Church and State to keep them occupied from further attacks or criticism; and the substance of the argument is that all churches, and indeed all religion and science and statesmanship, are arrant hypocrisy. The best known part of the book is the allegory of the old man who died and left a coat (which is Christian Truth) to each of his three sons, Peter, Martin, and Jack, with minute directions for its care and use. These three names stand for Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists; and the way in which the sons evade their father's will and change the fashion of their garment is part of the bitter satire upon all religious sects. Though it professes to defend the Anglican Church, that institution fares perhaps worse than the others; for nothing is left to her but a thin cloak of custom under which to hide her alleged hypocrisy.

In *Gulliver's Travels* the satire grows more unbearable. Strangely enough, this book, upon which Swift's literary fame generally rests, was not written from any literary motive, but rather as an outlet for the author's own bitterness against fate and human society. It is still read with pleasure, as *Robinson Crusoe* is read, for the interesting adventures of the hero; and fortunately those who read it generally overlook its degrading influence and motive.