

JONATHAN SWIFT: PATRON OF LITERARY WOMEN

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We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under our supervision by Caroline McGown

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PREFACE

Upon initiating a study of Jonathan Swift, one is first impressed by the endless multitude of words which have been assembled about him in the last two hundred years. Some of these words have contained more fancy than fact, many have been contradictory and controversial, but all have agreed that on the broad and exciting canvas of English Literature few figures loom larger or are more fascinating. Though he has been called literature's greatest satirist, the church's greatest heretic, the state's greatest politician, and humanity's greatest cynic, each of these epithets presents only one feature of a personality too great to be fitted into any single category. In calling Swift a "Patron of Literary Women," I mean not to limit his greatness, but to add one more facet, heretofore somewhat neglected, to his many-sided character.

Swift's personal life has called forth more controversial comment, if possible, than have his literary contributions. The questions of his relationship with the women known as Vanessa and Stella have been examined and re-examined until there is little remaining to be learned. His poems about women, which shocked and horrified his contemporaries, affect us in much the same way until we make a thoughtful and thorough examination of them in relation to the man as a whole. Rather

than shout "woman-hater" at him, as many have done, we shall have to reach much the same conclusion that Joseph Manch reached in his Jonathan Swift and Women: Swift hated only the typical shallow woman of his day and sought to point out and remedy her faults. Seeing tragedy in women's unrealized potentialities, he assailed the barriers with a caustic and burning pen. In this study I propose to show that he attacked the unfortunate position of women in his day not only with words but with definite, constructive action.

As must any student of Swift, I acknowledge my debt to J. Elrington Ball, whose Correspondence of Jonathan Swift has been my principal reference, as well as Poems of Jonathan Swift and Journal to Stella, both edited by Harold Williams. Mrs. Mary Barber's Poems on Several Occasions, in the Rare Book Collection at The University of Texas, was essential and invaluable to this study. I take pleasure in expressing appreciation of the courtesies extended me by the staff of the Rare Book Collection and by the committee members who read this thesis: Dr. Constance Beach and Dr. Gladys Maddocks.

Above all, I wish to indicate my enthusiastic appreciation of Dr. Autrey Nell Wiley, whose infinite patience with a humble, unscholarly scholar has made this thesis possible.

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CHAPTER I

THE MILIEU OF LITERARY WOMEN IN SWIFT'S DAY

To understand Jonathan Swift in his rôle of literary patron of women, one must put away any preconceived idea of Swift as a woman-hater. He was not an enemy of womankind but an unceasingly bitter enemy of the faults and weaknesses of the women of his day. When he perceived merit, however, he was generous; and it is to his generous interest in one particular type of woman that I wish to call attention in this thesis.

One must begin with a study of the position of women in Swift's time, their social position, their economic and legal status. Such a study, approached through an examination of women's legal status, for example, calls for a careful consideration of both common law and equity. Common law, arising out of feudal practices and distinct from Roman and ecclesiastical law, is unwritten law based on customs and court decisions. Equity is the application of the dictates of the conscience or the principles of natural justice to the settlement of controversies, a system of jurisprudence serving to supplement and remedy the limitations and the inflexibility of the common law. Many laws created for the protection of women and their property recognized them as an integral part of society and not as merely legal nonentities. Notwithstanding the actual legal facts which indicated that a woman's

position in society was improving, however, with few exceptions the men of the period preferred to consider women as completely subject to and dominated by superior male intelligence. In the age of Queen Anne and King George I the woman of polite society found herself inexorably trapped by custom into being an ornament, a plaything, and a political pawn.

In 1765, twenty years after Swift died, Sir William Blackstone, in his Commentaries on the Laws of England, set forth his interpretation of the condition of the married woman in England with regard to her civil and legal rights: "By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs every thing."¹ Although this interpretation of the law is now held to be a gross exaggeration and distortion of the facts, because of Blackstone's authority and reputation it was an unchallenged statement of women's legal status in the eyes of those who based their decision upon English common law.

Swift, living in a milieu governed by mores later codified by Blackstone, was, therefore, acquainted with a society that was still feudalistic in its view of woman. The husband was his wife's guardian. The young girl and

¹Quoted by Mary Beard, Woman as a Force in History (New York: Macmillan Co., 1946), p. 79.

the widow had rights comparable to man's but the married woman did not. Such mores as these are reflected in Swift's relation with women, as my ensuing study will indicate.

What law might give, the mores might take away. In education, for example, women in Swift's day had certainly not been fitted for the mental activity legally available to them. It was considered extremely unfashionable for a woman to have learning in the usual sense of the word. A young girl went to school, if at all, to learn to be a gentlewoman, and a "liberal education" for her consisted of instruction in music, dancing, handiwork, cooking, and general coquetry.¹ True, the advocates of higher learning for women were becoming increasingly insistent in their cries, but their voices were as yet lost in the clamor of male voices demanding that their women be merely decorative. The general supposition seemed to be that if women were never permitted to venture into the world of ideas, they would stay at home and devote themselves to being good wives. More often, however, they became only empty-headed and foolish.

Authors in the eighteenth century often commented upon this status of women. Among them, for example, Swift, writing to a woman friend of his in 1734, said:

. . . a pernicious heresy prevails here among the men that it is the duty of your sex to be fools in every article except what is merely domestic, and to do the

¹Joseph Manch, Jonathan Swift and Women (University of Buffalo Studies, 1941), Vol. XVI, No. 4, p. 137.

ladies justice, there are very few of them without a good share of that heresy, except upon one article, that they have as little regard for family business as for the improvement of their minds.¹

Lord Lyttleton wrote in 1737 a poem entitled "Advice to a Lady," in which he counseled an elegance of mind as well as dress but limited the exercise of such mentality as the lady might possess:

Nor make to dangerous wit a vain pretence,
But wisely rest content with modest sense;
For wit, like wine, intoxicates the brain,
Too strong for feeble woman to sustain:
Of those who claim it more than half have none;
And half of those who have it are undone.

Seek to be good but aim not to be great:
A woman's noblest station is retreat:
Her fairest virtues fly from public sight,
Domestic worth, that shuns too strong a light.²

Lord Chesterfield in 1748 expressed the attitude of the great majority of his contemporaries toward the women of their day when he said:

. . . Women, then are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle and sometimes wit; but for solid, reasoning good sense, I never in my life knew one that had it, or who reasoned or acted consequentially for four-and-twenty hours together. . . . A man of sense only trifles with them, as he does with a sprightly forward child; but he neither consults them about, or trusts them with, serious matters.³

¹The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville, Mrs. Delany, ed. Lady Llanover (London: Richard Bentley, 1861), I, 502. This work will hereafter be referred to as Llanover, op. cit.

²Quoted by Myra Reynolds, The Learned Lady in England 1650-1760 (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1920), p. 336.

³Letters of Phillip Dormer Stanhope, Fourth Earl of Chesterfield, ed. Bonamy Dobree (New York: Viking Press, 1932), No. 1585, Vol. IV, p. 1209.

Concerning such treatment as this, we look for comments from the women themselves. Mrs. Letitia Pilkington, for example, admitted that often the compliments she received were paid to her "as a woman in whom anything a degree above ignorance appears surprising."¹ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Swift's contemporary, summarized the typical attitude of the men in a contemptuous couplet:

Be plain in dress, and sober in your diet;
In short, my deary, kiss me! and be quiet.²

In a social climate hostile to "bluestockings," the few women of learning who managed to rise above the difficulties imposed by society were looked upon as objects of either curiosity or scorn. A scholarly woman of Dublin was spoken of as "the learned nymph . . . whom curiosity engaged everyone to see,"³ and the words "female poet," often used to describe a poetess, connote something comparable to "bearded lady" today. In the same year in which Swift mentioned "a pernicious heresy" in men's thinking about women Mrs. Mary Barber prefaced her Poems on Several Occasions with the statement, "I am sensible that a woman steps out of her Province when she presumes to write for the Press."⁴

¹Memoirs, ed. Iris Barry (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1928), p. 80.

²Quoted by Reynolds, op. cit., p. 336.

³Pilkington, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴(London, 1734), p. xvii.

The code of their society having long denied women access to masculine occupations, publishing, which was considered an occupation for men despite a few successful female entrances, thus provoked apology from women writing before 1745. For what was women's "Province"? If married, she and her property and her children were under her husband's authority; her conduct was his responsibility. What she created belonged to her family and to the head of her family.

It was therefore, difficult for a woman to make her presence felt beyond the narrow confines of her family circle. In the nobility and the upper classes, she sometimes had an opportunity to carry out a specific project, such as writing. In the working classes, the pressure of economic necessity made her more nearly equal to man but denied her opportunity to achieve self-expression. Leisure, the privilege of the woman of high social position, afforded advantages which some women seized upon. Where leisure was not, pamphleteering in politics afforded occupation and a certain economic freedom for a few women whose pens were as useful as men's pens in political contests. The woman who wrote, however, defied public opinion in Swift's age.

The scorn of society was, however, only one of the perils which beset an aspiring woman writer of Swift's day. Three of the women with whom this study is concerned were thrown into prison at one time or another, either for debt

or for appearing to be on the wrong side of the current political controversy. If they managed to survive at all, it was through prostituting either their persons or their art to the necessity of providing food and clothing for themselves. Notwithstanding these difficulties, in the literary history of the early eighteenth century we may draw up a substantial list of more or less successful literary women.

A few of these literary women moved into the sphere of Jonathan Swift's acquaintance to the extent that he influenced them and they became important to him. Mrs. Mary Delariviere Manley (1663-1724), author of the popular New Atalantis, considered Swift as a friend and co-worker in the Tory cause; and Mrs. Letitia Pilkington (1712-1750), Mrs. Mary Barber (1685-1757), Mrs. Constantia Grierson (1707-1733), and Mrs. Sican (c. 1730) formed an admiring circle about the aging Dean in his last years in Dublin. These women and their relations with Swift invite study because of the role that they played in his career as a literary patron. Joseph Manch's essay on Swift and women, to which I have referred, offers no such analysis of their relationship as I propose to present in the ensuing chapters. For this reason I have set myself the task of describing the literary careers of these women and of ascertaining as clearly as possible the assistance given them by Swift.

Before examining Swift's relationship with them, however, one must consider his attitude toward women as a whole. The impression one receives from reading certain of his poems, such as "The Lady's Dressing Room" and "A Beautiful Nymph Going to Bed," is that Swift was nauseated by the earthly aspects of women to the point of revulsion. To a certain extent this was true. But it was exactly their earthly aspects that revolted him: their superficiality, hypocrisy, and shallowness; their paint, ribbons, and frills. In his mind, and perhaps in his life, there was one ideal woman who possessed natural beauty, innate decency, and a sound and matured mind; and when almost all the women of society seemed to him to fall far short of this ideal, he was moved to vindictive bitterness against them. Here is a frank confession of his disappointment in many of his women friends, found in a letter of his to Mrs. Mary Pendarves: "This hath been my case with several ladies whom I chose for friends; in a week, a month, or a year, hardly one of them failed to give me a boutade," and he defined boutade as a French word, signifying "a sudden jerk from a horse's hinder feet which you did not expect because you thought him for some months a sober animal."¹

It is hard to believe, however, that he hated women as a whole when one looks at the list of his correspondents

¹Llanover, op. cit., I, 504.

over the years and finds there recurring constantly the names of the most famous, the most fashionable, and the most influential women of his time. Lady Betty Germaine, the Duchess of Ormond, the Duchess of Hamilton, and the Duchess of Queensbury were but a few of the fashionable ladies who wrote to him and who received from him letters of conversational familiarity. "From the wives of peers and the daughters of Lord-lieutenants down to Dublin tradeswomen with a taste for rhyming . . . a whole hierarchy of female slaves bowed to his rule, and were admitted into higher and lower degrees of favor."¹

It has been argued that if Swift cared at all for women, it was only because he could dominate them. However, it is hard to imagine Mrs. Masham, for instance, the Queen's favorite, in any attitude of subservience toward an Irish churchman, and the tone of his letters indicates instead a feeling of mutual understanding and good will. If Swift was quick to pounce upon the faults of women with a scathing and sarcastic pen, he was just as quick to recognize in women some of the qualities which he admired. Not disposed to patronize or sentimentalize, he was by preference a teacher. Mrs. Pilkington, in a brief evaluation of his attitude toward women, concluded that the passion of love

¹Leslie Stephen, Swift (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1909), p. 121.

was beneath the dignity of his wisdom: ". . . not that I ever imagined that he was an enemy to the fair sex, for when he found them docile, he took great pleasure to instruct them."¹

If the term "literary patron" is to be applied to Swift in his relations with the women writers to whom I have referred, it must of course first be defined. In the age of Queen Anne, the system of patronage began its decline, but it had flourished for centuries as the only means a writer had of assuring his livelihood. Under this system a writer, by means of extravagant compliments, dedications, and open flattery, obtained the favor of a nobleman whose political views and literary tastes he was ever after obliged to consider and uphold. "Patronage of authors did not mean the patronage of learned divines or historians, but merely the patronage of men who could use their pens in political warfare, or at most, of men who produced the kind of literary work appreciated in good society."² This system resulted in the loss of a great deal of personal independence, and many a writer must have chafed under the restrictions of such a system. It was fashionable to be a patron of the arts, and most of the noblemen of the age contributed financially,

¹Op. cit., p. 74.

²Leslie Stephen, English Literature and Society in the Eighteenth Century (London: Duckworth and Co., 1910), p. 42.

either in direct support or in subscriptions, to aspiring literary geniuses. Swift, speaking of Lord Halifax, declared that his encouragements of learning "were only good words and dinners,"¹ which makes one suspect that many literary patrons assumed the role only because it was fashionable to do so, gave little if any substantial aid, and had little real understanding of or sympathy for the author.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a patron as "one who lends his influential support to advance the interests of a person, cause, etc." It is in this broader conception of the term that it is possible to contemplate Jonathan Swift, not as the wealthy nobleman with a fawning writer at his feet, but as an established author giving support and approval to earnest young women with literary predilections. In some instances his support amounted to actual financial assistance; in others it was guidance, instruction, and approval. Whatever form it took, it was sincere, effective, and well meant.

In Dublin, in the years after Stella's death, Jonathan Swift found a new circle of friends. The celebrated satirist who in London had been on intimate terms with prime ministers and court society found himself the center of a small group of exceptional women who turned to

¹A. S. Turberville, English Men and Manners in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 180.

him for guidance in their literary efforts. The first mention that Swift made of these women was in a letter to Alexander Pope, written February 6, 1730:

There are three citizens' wives in this town: one of them whose name is Grierson, a Scottish book-seller's wife. . . .

The second is one Mrs. Barber, wife to a woollen draper, who is our chief poetess, and upon the whole has no ill genius. . . .

The last is the bearer hereof and the wife of a surly, rich husband who checks her vein. . . . The bearer's name is Sican.¹

By the fall of 1731, one more member had joined the circle, for at that time Mrs. Pendarves, visiting in Dublin, wrote to her sister: "I have just begun an acquaintance among the wits--Mrs. Grierson, Mrs. Sycon, [sic.] and Mrs. Pilkington; the latter is a bosom friend of Dean Swift's and I hope among them I shall be able to pick up some entertainment for you."²

Various motives have been ascribed to Swift for his association with this rather odd assortment of women. Lord Orrery, never very sympathetic with Swift's relations with women, insisted that it was due to a lack of taste and implied that it was also due to a weakening of the Dean's reason:

From Swift's settlement in Dublin as Dean of St. Patrick's, his choice of companions in general showed him of a very depraved taste. . . . You would

¹The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, ed. F. Elrington Ball (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1910), IV, 120.

²Llanover, op. cit., I, 301.

have smiled to have found in his house a constant seraglio of very virtuous women, who attended him from morning till night, with an obedience, an awe, and an assiduity that are seldom paid to the richest or most powerful lovers.¹

Since Swift was becoming more and more subject to spells of deafness, one of his critics suggests that he tolerated this group of feminine wits "because they had those bat-like treble voices which pierced his barrier of deafness."² Mrs. Pilkington herself said that the Dean had contracted his acquaintance into a very narrow compass because of his deafness, and she believed that for this reason she and Pilkington passed many days with him while their "betters" were excluded.³ She also said, however, that Swift was "a perpetual friend to merit and learning,"⁴ and it is just possible that his motives for this association were, at least to some extent, unselfish.

One might well wonder what the atmosphere of these gatherings was during the long afternoons at the Deanery or at Dr. Patrick Delany's country home, Delville. Mrs. Pendarves, who attended one of these sessions, wrote home:

¹John, earl of Cork and Orrery, Remarks on the Life and Writing of Dr. Jonathan Swift (London: A. Millar, 1752), p. 128.

²R. Wyse Jackson, Swift and His Circle (Dublin: The Talbot Press Ltd., 1945), p. 58.

³Op. cit., p. 54.

⁴Ibid., p. 44.

"Swift is a very odd companion . . . he talks a great deal and does not require many answers; he has infinite spirits, and says abundance of good things in his common way of discourse."¹

Apparently part of their time was devoted to the criticism of the literary efforts of one member or another of the group. On one occasion, the assembly was called for the purpose of criticising and amending Mrs. Barber's verse. Dr. Delany sent out the following invitation:

Mighty Thomas, a solemn senatus I call,
To consult for Sapphira; so come one and all;
Quit books and quit business, your cure and your care,
For a long winding walk and a short bill of fare.
I've mutton for you, sir; and as for the ladies,
As friend Virgil has it: I've aliud Mercedes;
For Letty, one filbert, whereon to regale,
And a peach for pale Constance, to make a full meal;
And for your cruel part, who take pleasure in blood,
I have that of the grape, which is ten times as good.
Flow wit to her honour, flow wine to her health,
High raised be her worth, above titles or wealth.²

This light verse seems to indicate that the group were intimate enough to have their own private jokes, their pet names, and a rather easy familiarity. "Mighty Thomas" was Mrs. Pilkington's husband, nicknamed "Tom Thumb" by Dean Swift because of his short stature. Mrs. Barber was Sapphira, Letitia Pilkington was Letty, and Mrs. Grierson was Constance. There is evidence of good-natured raillery

¹Llanover, op. cit., I, 396.

²The Works of the Reverend Jonathan Swift, D.D., ed. Thomas Sheridan (London: 1803), XI, 266.

at the Dean for his insistence upon having red meat at every meal.

The picture of Jonathan Swift which emerges from these brief glimpses is not that of a sultan or a slave driver, as Lord Orrery would have us believe, but rather of an amiably gruff and gruffly tolerant teacher enjoying a pleasant and probably profitable association. He must have thought with bitterness sometimes of the distance--in miles, years, and situations--between this mode of life in Dublin and the salons of London, but he knew better than to compare Mrs. Pilkington with Mrs. Masham, and he must have found a certain satisfaction in the relaxed atmosphere of the gatherings and in the admiration which all his friends held for him. It is the great satirist, pamphleteer, poet, and Dean in these relationships whom I now attempt to examine as the "perpetual friend of merit and learning"¹ in women during a period in which literary patronage for men was in decline.

Such, in brief, is the background developed from my investigation. Having as an initial curiosity only the question of Swift's relationship to literary women of his day, I early found my first problem to be the identification of these women. By reading F. Elrington Ball's The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, in six volumes, and Swift's

¹Pilkington, op. cit., p.

Journal to Stella, and by taking note of every reference Swift made to any woman in these letters, I compiled a long list of his female acquaintances. From this list it was possible to extract the names of five women to whom were made references which indicated that they had literary or scholarly tendencies: Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Pilkington, Mrs. Barber, Mrs. Grierson, and Mrs. Sican. The next step was to learn the story of these women and then ascertain their position in literary history.

To point out the relative literary fame of these five women, I had to compare the incidence of their names in recognized, authoritative references. The Dictionary of National Biography gives the life history and a brief evaluation of the literary importance of all the women except Mrs. Sican. The same four authoresses were mentioned very briefly in the Cambridge History of English Literature, not in their own rights, but as related to some more important trend or person of the era. Albert C. Baugh's comprehensive Literary History of England mentioned Mrs. Manley four times, Mrs. Pilkington once, and Mrs. Barber, Mrs. Grierson, and Mrs. Sican not at all.

The eighteenth-century sources worthy of attention are chiefly biographical. George Ballard in 1752 included only Mrs. Grierson in his Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain, while in 1773 Theophilus Cibber wrote of Mrs. Grierson, Mrs. Manley, and Mrs. Pilkington in his Lives of

the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland. Published in London in 1755, two volumes entitled Poems by Eminent Ladies included verses by Mrs. Grierson, Mrs. Barber, and Mrs. Pilkington. While Mrs. Manley was the most prolific and most politically important of these women, Mrs. Pilkington has received notice because of the anecdotes about Jonathan Swift included in her Memoirs. Mrs. Barber's poems have been ignored and forgotten since the eighteenth century, and Mrs. Grierson's name lives principally because of her scholarly translations of Terence and Plautus. Mrs. Sican, whose literary tendencies apparently extended only to appreciation and criticism, has no place in literary history outside Swift's circle.

Before attempting to evaluate Swift's relationship to these women, I explored thoroughly the following bibliographical materials to determine whether there had been any similar or overlapping studies of the subject: Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, Publication of the Modern Languages Association, Reader's Guide, International Index to Periodicals, Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (1925-1942), The Year's Work in English Studies (Vol. I, 1920-Vol. XXXI, 1950), Louis Landa's English Literature 1660-1800 - A Bibliography of Modern Studies, and Landa and Tobin's Jonathan Swift, A List of Critical Studies Published from 1895 to 1945. Finding no articles that would invalidate my proposed study, I felt free to proceed with my research, in which I used Harold Williams's editions of the Poems of

Jonathan Swift and Journal to Stella, Williams's Dean Swift's Library, Ball's edition of Swift's Correspondence, Herbert Davis's Stella, and all available biographical and critical works.

I propose to treat in Chapter II the three women of our study in whom Swift was interested in a literary way but to whom his assistance and support were minimal: Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Grierson, and Mrs. Sican. Mrs. Pilkington and Mrs. Barber each deserves a chapter of her own, for it is in his relationship with these two women that Swift may be recognized as a true literary patron.

CHAPTER II

ACQUAINTANCE RATHER THAN PATRONAGE

Widely separated by time and circumstances, Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Grierson, and Mrs. Sican may be brought together by the common bond of having attracted Swift's notice of their literary talents and of having been befriended by him in a small way. In point of time, Mrs. Manley came first. It was principally during his years in London, from 1710 to 1713, that Swift's interest in Mrs. Manley flourished. He found her to be a woman of the world whom he could approach on terms of literary equality and a woman whose Tory sympathies were as fervent as his own. According her little respect as a woman but considerable approbation as a writer, he employed her to write political pamphlets for him and praised her skill in this type of literary work. Mrs. Grierson's literary proclivities expressed themselves in a quite different form. It was her scholarly translations of the Classics, her poetry, and her general erudition which evoked generous but impersonal praise from Swift. Contemporary with Mrs. Grierson, Mrs. Sican, although she made no literary contribution to the world, was considered by Swift a good listener and a qualified judge of poetry.

Mrs. Manley, of high birth but brought low by circumstances, sought to elevate herself in the eyes of the world

world by means of her clever and observing pen. Mrs. Grierson, of humble birth in an Irish provincial town, by means of true intellectual genius made for herself a name in the scholarly world. Mrs. Sican, wife of a wealthy Irish merchant, sought escape from the business world by making for herself a place in Swift's circle as listener and critic. These three women stand as a part of a powerful testimony that Swift had respect for and interest in women who were striving to rise above custom and improve and educate their minds.

Mrs. Mary Manley

Mary Delariviere Manley was the daughter of Sir Roger Manley, an ardent and zealous loyalist who was financially ruined at the time of the Civil War in England and was never acknowledged at the Restoration, though he occupied a minor post as governor of the island of Guernsey off the coast of England. Born in 1672, either at sea or on the island of Guernsey, she was named Mary Delariviere after the wife of her father's superior officer. Childhood impressions left their lasting imprint upon her: the early death of her mother, her education, the house in which she spent her child-hood, her father's direction, and her reading. In infancy, after the death of her mother, she was sent to live with an elderly aunt. The education that she received was such as was considered proper for a young girl of her position, and in that training she early showed signs of genius. The

house in which she grew up was an old one filled with pictures and books of knighthood, chivalry, and romance. Ideas drawn from her reading lived in her dreams and may have contributed to her eventual disgrace.

Sir Roger Manley had educated his brother's son John and entrusted him with the care of Mary and her sister after their father's death. This cousin, twenty years her senior, seen through the veils of medieval romance, seemed to Mary a knightly protector, and she fell in love with him. Far from being a gallant suitor, however, the man was a fraud and a rascal. He married Mary, took her to London, where he kept her locked in their rooms, and, when he found she was pregnant, confessed to her that he had another wife living in another part of the city. His marriage to Mary, he said, was false, performed by a friend pretending to be a clergyman. Aghast at this revelation, Mrs. Manley could think of no other course to pursue than to remain with her cousin. She knew that her reputation was ruined; but since she had no means of making a living and was expecting a child, she stayed on as John Manley's part-time wife for three years.

At the end of that time, being unable to endure longer shame and virtual imprisonment, she left her pseudo-husband and set out to make her way in London. She had had a great deal of time to read while she was locked up in a London boarding-house. Her delusions about knighthood and

chivalry had fled, and she emerged into the London scene with a sense of literary judgment unusual to her age and sex. She wrote a play, The Lost Lover, which was acted with moderate success in Drury Lane in 1696, and which thereupon attracted the attention of the Duchess of Cleveland, mistress to King Charles II. The Duchess centered her fickle affections upon Mrs. Manley for about six months, and during this brief period Mrs. Manley became the toast of London. She was so fashionable that when the Duchess tired of her and began to spread evil stories about her, the royal mistress's gossip had little effect upon the popularity of Mrs. Manley's drawing room.¹ Later, in 1696, Mrs. Manley wrote a second play, The Royal Mischief, which met with more success than her first. It was at this point in her career when, "surrounded by young blades full of flattery, her vertue sic nodded."² Successful as a playwright, and the talk of the town, she continued her literary career in London, where she lived for several years under the protection first of Sir Thomas Skipworth and later of a Mr. Tilley.

In 1705 Mrs. Manley published the Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians, which she said was a translation from an original manuscript in the Vatican. It was,

¹Theophilus Cibber, The Lives of the Poets of Great Britain and Ireland (London: R. Griffiths, 1773), IV, 6.

²Ibid., p. 7.

however, a thinly disguised compilation of scandalous gossip, the chief interest of which, to us, lies in the literary principles set forth in its introduction. There Mrs. Manley repudiated the characteristic features of the heroic romance--idealized characters, marvelous adventures and remote settings, essay-like conversations, and poetic justice.¹ Character, action, and dialogue, she argued, should be closer to real life, and a writer should have a thorough knowledge of human emotions and passions. "Thus Mrs. Manley announced a point of view which was . . . to dominate the theory and invigorate the practise of prose fiction throughout the century."²

Mary Manley capitalized on her knowledge of human emotions, as well as her acquaintance with important persons on the political scene, in hundreds of pages of gossipy memoirs. A list of the titles of her prose fiction will serve to point out her literary productivity:

- 1705: The Secret History of Queen Zarah and the Zarazians; being a Looking Glass for _____ in the Kingdom of Albignon. Faithfully translated from the Italian copy now lodged in the Vatican at Rome, and never before printed in any Language (1749, fifth edition).
- 1707: The Lady's Pacquet of Letters. Taken from her by a French Privateer in her Passage to Holland. Suppos'd to be Written by Several Men of Quality.

¹Benjamin Boyce, Prefaces to Fiction (Los Angeles: The Augustan Reprint Society, 1952), p. iii.

²Ibid., p. iv.

Brought over from St. Malo's by an English officer at the Last Exchange of Prisoners (Added to Mme. d'Aulnoy's Memoirs of the Court of England, 1707 edition. In 1708 appeared the Remaining Part of the Unknown Lady's Pacquet of Letters, appended to Mme. d'Aulnoy's The History of the Earl of Warwick. The two parts were pirated under the title Court Intrigue, 1711).

- 1709: Secret Memoirs and Manners of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes. From the New Atalantis, an island in the Mediterranean. Written originally in Italian.
(The New Atalantis comprises the two parts of the Secret Memoirs, both in 1709, and the two parts of Memoirs of Europe, written by Eginardus, Secretary and Favorite to Charlemagne, in 1710. In 1720 the four parts appeared with the title Secret Memoirs.)
- 1714: The Adventures of Rivella, or the History of the Author of the Atalantis. With Secret Memoirs and Characters of Several Considerable Persons her Contemporaries. Deliver's in a Conversation to the young Chevalier D'Aumont in a Somerset House Garden, by Sir Charles Lovemore. Done into English from the French. (In 1717 as Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Manley. In 1725 as Mrs. Manley's History of Her Own Life and Times.)
- 1720: The Power of Love, in Seven Novels. Viz., The Fair Hypocrite; the Physician's Stratagem; The Wife's Resentment; The Husband's Resentment; The Happy Fugitives; the Perjur'd Beauty.¹

While Mrs. Manley's fame as an authoress was rising, her reputation as a woman was falling to such a low estate that by 1708 she felt it wise to retire from the city. It was while living in the country that she wrote Secret Memoirs of Several Persons of Quality of Both Sexes (1709), written

¹Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature, II, 584-590.

from the New Atalantis. This work in two volumes containing stories of sufficient verity to be exceedingly embarrassing to several persons of political importance, caused the printer and the publisher to be seized and locked up in Marshalsea. Mrs. Manley came forward and acknowledged the authorship of the New Atalantis and achieved thereby the release of the other two involved. She took the entire blame upon herself and remained in prison until a change of government put out of power those whom she had attacked. An incident related by Sheridan gives us a glimpse of Mrs. Manley on trial:

. . . Lord Sunderland, then secretary of state, being curious to know from where she got information of several particulars which were supposed above her own intelligence; she replied, with great humility, "that she had no design in writing, farther than her own amusement and diversion in the country, without intending particular reflections and characters; and did assure them that nobody was concerned with her." When this was not believed, and the contrary urged against her by several circumstances, she said, "Then it must be by inspiration; because, knowing her own innocence, she could account for it no other way."¹

Was Mrs. Manley's "inspiration" an early instance of what Henry James described in the career of an English novelist, a woman of genius in our time?

I remember an English novelist . . . telling me that she was much condemned for the impression she had managed to give in one of her tales of the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth. She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being, she had been congratulated on her

¹Op. cit., IV, 288.

peculiar opportunities. These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase, passed an open door where, in the household of a pasteur, some of the young Protestants were seated at the table round a finished meal.¹

Perhaps this same sort of experience was Mrs. Manley's inspiration--a lively imagination supported by practised and skillful observation.

Although not called a "publicity stunt" at the time, the imprisonment of everyone connected with the New Atlantis must have whetted the public's appetite to such a degree that it proved financially beneficial to publisher, printer, and Mrs. Manley alike. There were six editions of the New Atalantis printed, the sixth having a key at the end to identify the characters portrayed therein. The public received it well.

Paul B. Anderson, Mrs. Manley's principal biographer and critic, said of her: "Delariviere Manley, the most vigorous and most representative creature of her species, had to follow an extraordinary variety of occupations, turning her woman's talents to any pursuit which promised her profit, diversion, or publicity."² Certainly in 1709 and the years following, she was busy. In July, 1709, she began the Female Tatler and, in the person of Mrs. Crackenthorpe, "created an

¹"The Art of Fiction," Criticism, the Foundation of Modern Literary Judgment, ed. Mark Shorer, Josephine Miles, Gordon McKenzie (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1948), p. 48.

²"Mistress Delariviere Manley's Biography," Modern Philology, XXXIII (1936), 267.

impudent, larger-than-life version of herself, in whose person she could ridicule with safety the daily affairs of anyone in England who stepped into the circle of her omniscience."¹

In 1710 she published two more volumes of political gossip under the title, Memoirs of Europe, and it was at this time that Swift made his first reference to her in a letter to Joseph Addison, dated August 22, 1710:

I read your character in Mrs. Manley's noble Memoirs of Europe. It seems to me as if she had about two thousand epithets and fine words packed up in a bag; and that she pulled them out by handfuls and strewed them on paper, where about once in 500 times they happen to be right.²

In December of the same year, Swift was still uncompromising in his remarks about her work. Writing to Stella in criticism of the spelling in a recent letter to him, the Dean said, "Rediculous, madam; I suppose you mean ridiculous: let me have no more of that; 'til the author of the Atlantis's spelling."³ This would suggest that by December, 1710, he had seen manuscripts by Mrs. Manley.

In 1711, he referred to her again but without calling her name. Having become the mistress of his friend, John

¹Ibid., p. 273. For the theory which denies Mrs. Manley's authorship of the Female Tatler, see Walter Graham, "Thomas Baker, Mrs. Manley, and the Female Tatler," Modern Philology, XXXIV (1937), 267-272.

²Ball, op. cit., I, 190.

³Journal to Stella, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: University Press, 1948), I, 123.

Barber, the printer, Mrs. Manley was at Barber's house when Swift called from time to time. Writing to Stella, in January, 1711, he said, "I dined with people that you never heard of, nor is it worth your while to know: an authoress and a printer."¹ During the ensuing year, however, his attitude toward Mrs. Manley underwent an alteration, for, as Anderson says, "Winning Swift's amused but real respect for her talents, Mrs. Manley became his understrapper in writing slyly effective Tory political pamphlets."² In April, 1711, Swift referred to this literary association:

. . . yesterday was sent me A Narrative printed, with all the circumstances of Mr. Harley's stabbing. I had not time to do it myself; so I sent my hints to the author of the Atalantis, and she has cooked it into a six-penny pamphlet, in her own style, only the first page is left as I was beginning it.³

In July, 1711, Swift wrote:

. . . I met Mrs. Manley at Lord Peterborough's who was soliciting him to get some pension or reward for her service in the cause, by writing her Atalantis, and prosecution, etc. upon it. I seconded her and hope they will do something for the poor woman.⁴

By October, he had begun to express approval of her work. Writing to Stella, he said, "I got a set of Examiners, and five pamphlets, which I have either written or contributed to, except the best, which is the Vindication of The Duke of

¹Ibid., p. 154.

²"Mistress Delariviere Manley's Biography," op. cit., p. 273.

³Journal to Stella, I, 244.

⁴Ibid., p. 306.

Marlborough, and is entirely of the author of the Atalantis."¹

A month later, he mentioned the Examiners and the pamphlets again:

I have sent to Leigh the set of Examiners; the first 13 were written by several hands . . . the next three and thirty were all by one hand . . . and the last six were written by a woman. Then there is an account of Guiscard by the same woman, but the facts sent by Presto. Then . . . Vindication of the Duke of Marlborough, entirely by the same woman. Comment on Hare's Sermon, by the same woman, only hints sent to the Printer from Presto to give her.²

The following is a list of Mrs. Manley's political works:

- 1709, 1710: The Female Tatler (115 numbers.)
- 1710--1714: The Examiner (268 numbers. William King, Swift, Mrs. Manley, and others.)
- * 1711: A True Narrative of What pass'd at the Examination of the Marquis de Guiscard.
- 1711: A Vindication of the Duke of Marlborough.
- * 1711: A Learned Comment on Dr. Hare's Excellent Sermon.
- * 1711: A True Relation of the Several Facts and Circumstances of the Intended Riot and Tumult on Queen Elizabeth's Birthday.
- 1714: A Modest Inquiry into the Reasons of the Joy Expressed by a Certain Set of People Upon Spreading the Report of Her Majesty's Death.

The three starred items are those which Swift employed Mrs. Manley to write, giving her hints and suggestions for their

¹Ibid., p. 390.

²Journal to Stella, I, 402.

composition. Most of the time, however, he did not even see her in person, but sent the hints to the printer to be given to her.

In regard to the editorship of the Examiner Harold Williams, editor of Swift's poems and numerous other volumes, states that "In 1711 Mrs. Manley succeeded Swift as editor of the Examiner."¹ It is doubtful, however, that her editorship extended beyond the six numbers referred to by Swift in the letter of November, 1711, for Albert Baugh, in his Literary History of England, says that after the first volume of the Examiners, which ended in July, 1711, and which must have been the one Swift mentioned, William Oldisworth became editor.² If Mrs. Manley edited only six numbers of the Examiner, she is still unique in Examiner history, being the only woman, so far as I can ascertain, to hold that position.

A poem entitled "Corinna, A Ballad," addressed to Mrs. Manley, expressed the attitude of Swift and his associates toward her. Concerning it, Swift said, in January, 1712, "I was in the city today and dined with my printer, and gave him a ballad made by several hands, I know not whom. I believe lord treasurer had a finger in it. I

¹The Poems of Jonathan Swift, ed. Harold Williams (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), I, 149.

²Albert C. Baugh, A Literary History of England (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948), p. 861.

added three stanzas. I suppose Dr. Arbuthnot had the greatest share."¹ Here is the text:

Corinna

This Day, (the Year I dare not tell,)
 Apollo play'd the Midwife's Part,
 Into the World Corinna fell,
 And he endow'd her with his Art.

But Cupid with a Satyr comes;
 Both softly to the Cradle creep:
 Both stroke her Hands, and rub her Gums,
 While the poor Child lay fast asleep.

Then Cupid thus: This little Maid
 Of Love shall always speak and write;
 And I pronounce, (the Satyr said)
 The World shall feel her scratch and bite.

Her Talent she display'd betimes;
 For in twice twelve revolving Moons,
 She seem'd to laugh and squawl in Rhimes,
 And all her Gestures were Lampoons.

At six Years old, the subtle Jade
 Stole to the Pantry-Door, and found
 The Butler with my Lady's Maid;
 And you may swear the Tale went round.

She made a Song, how little Miss
 Was kiss'd and slobber'd by a Lad:
 And how, when Master, went to p- -,
 Miss came, and peep'd at all he had.

At twelve, a Wit and a Coquette;
 Marries for Love, half Whore, half Wife;
 Cuckolds, elopes, and runs in Debt;
 Turns Auth'ress, and is Curll's for Life.

Her Common-Place-Book all gallant is,
 Of Scandal now a Cornucopia;
 She pours it out in an Atlantis
 Or Memoirs of the New Utopia.²

¹Journal to Stella, I, 390.

²The Poems of Jonathan Swift, I, 149.

Harold Williams finds the sentiment expressed in this poem completely incompatible with what he feels to be Swift's attitude toward Mrs. Manley.¹ He ignores the fact that Swift claimed authorship of only three of the eight stanzas and that we have no evidence of which three stanzas Swift wrote. I draw from the poem a clear picture of the typical male attitude toward such a woman as Mrs. Manley. It seems to me that while Swift appreciated her literary and political talents, he treated her with an insulting familiarity which he must have felt suited her position as Barber's mistress. She was to him simply a fellow writer and as such was expected to hold her own against the coarse witticisms of her companions.

At the end of January, 1711, Swift reported that Mrs. Manley was very ill and that Barber was afraid she could not live long. Although her serious illness passed, Swift was moved at the time to praise her: "I am heartily sorry for her; she has very generous principles for one of her sort; and a great deal of invention: she is about 40, very homely and fat."² The compliments Swift paid her character and ability seem to outweigh by far his disparagement of her physical attributes. Summarizing all that Swift said of her, Mr. Harold Williams says, "His references to her are not many; but, whether in the Journal or in his Correspondence, are kindly."³

¹Ibid.

²Journal to Stella, I, 474.

³Poems of Jonathan Swift, I, 149.

Despite the fact that in 1714 Mary Manley was living in Finchley in great poverty, and John Barber sent word that she was deathly ill,¹ she survived for ten more years to support herself, although meagerly, by her writings. After Swift returned to Dublin, he did not mention Mrs. Manley again in his letters or other works. She was part of the London life that he had forsworn; and although he maintained contact with many of his London friends, Mrs. Manley does not appear to be among them.

The relationship between Jonathan Swift and Mrs. Manley has little about it to suggest a literary patron and his protégée. By the time his association with her began, she was well launched in her literary career, propelled by an avidly curious public. While Swift gave her assignments for political pamphlets, three in number, it does not seem to me that he did so as a patron teaching her or furthering her career, but as one writer hiring another competent writer to do a tedious chore. The hints that he mentioned giving her I interpret as suggestions for subject matter, political inferences, perhaps, and not hints on good writing. If he paid her for her work on these pamphlets or if she received payment for the published pamphlets which she had written, possibly Swift might be considered generous in providing for her such revenue. Her importance to us lies in

¹Ball, op. cit., II, 177.

the fact that twenty years before Swift met his Dublin circle of authoresses, he had been acquainted with a literary woman whose talents and spirit he admired and whose solicitation for a pension he seconded in July, 1711.¹ It may have been this early association that opened his mind and heart to the struggling young poetesses of Dublin.

Mrs. Grierson

Of two of the women of Swift's Dublin circle, Mrs. Grierson and Mrs. Sican, our knowledge is slight and incomplete. The most remarkable of the entire circle, and undoubtedly the most scholarly, was Mrs. Constantia Grierson. Only the most basic facts of her life are known, but these, with the scattered comments on her by some of her contemporaries, furnish a tantalizing picture of a woman who, in a few brief years, attained surprising heights of learning.

Constantia was born in the city of Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1707. Letitia Pilkington said that her parents were "poor illiterate country-people,"² but E. Owens Blackburne called them "respectable."³ Perhaps both statements are true. At the age of eighteen Constantia arrived in Dublin and found her way to Dr. Van Lewen, Mrs. Pilkington's father, seeking

¹Journal to Stella, I, 306.

²Op. cit., p. 38.

³Illustrious Irishwomen (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1877), II, 22.

from him instruction in the art of midwifery. He accepted her as a pupil and gave her a "general invitation to his table."¹ Thereafter she and Letitia became close friends. Two of the few extant poems by Mrs. Grierson are addressed to Mrs. Pilkington, imploring her to return from the country where she was visiting.² While in Dublin Constantia met George Grierson, a printer, who gave her access to his library and soon married her. Three years after she arrived in Dublin, her husband published an edition of Tacitus, translated by Mrs. Grierson, and dedicated to Lord Carteret, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Lord Carteret was so much impressed with the beauty and scholarship of this work that he appointed George Grierson King's printer in Ireland. "Constantia Grierson was so much service to her husband in his business. He had the monopoly of Bible printing in Ireland, and his wife's rare Classical attainments were of much value to him."³

Mrs. Grierson had at least two sons, one of whom, George Abraham Grierson, became a friend of Dr. Johnson. That the other one died at an early age we learn from a poem by Mrs. Barber entitled, "Occasioned by Seeing Some Verses written by Mrs. Constantia Grierson, upon the Death

¹Pilkington, op. cit., p. 38.

²Ibid., pp. 39, 40.

³Ibid., p. xxxix.

of her Son."¹ Mrs. Grierson's verses here referred to are not among the few poems of hers that have survived in Mary Barber's Poems on Special Occasions, Mrs. Pilkington's Memoirs, and Poems by Eminent Ladies.

One of the poems by Mrs. Grierson in Mary Barber's book is entitled "Upon my Son's speaking Latin in School to less Advantage than English: Written as from a School-fellow. By Mrs. Grierson." Although we would expect this poem to be about Mrs. Grierson's son, the text of the poem proves it to be written about Mrs. Barber's son, Constantine.

Thus twice detected, Con. thy Pride give o'er,
And hope to triumph in our School no more.
Tho' you speak English Verse with graceful Ease;
Tho' ev'ry Motion, Air, and Accent, please;
Tho' ev'ry Speech a crowded Audience draws;
And ev'ry Line be echo'd with Applause;
Yet now thy undeceiv'd Companions see,
The Muse, thy Mother, only speaks in thee.

We knew long since, your Verse, so much admir'd,
By her superior Genius was inspired;
And by your Latin Speech, this Day, you've shown,
Your graceful Action too was hers alone.
In learned Languages had she been skill'd
Still with your Praises had our School been fill'd.

Yet, Youth, repine no at impartial Fate:
Nor mourn those Ills, that must attend the Great.
For had she been with meaner Talents born;
Did no uncommon Gifts her Mind adorn;
Had she been moulded like the stupid Race,
Whom Culture can't exalt, nor Science grace;
Phoebus had then not study'd to controul
The future Grandeur of her soaring Soul.
But, when he saw each Muse, with endless Pains,
Forming the curious Texture of her Brains;

¹Blackburne, op. cit., p. 38.

When he beheld them anxious to inspire
 A double Portion of celestial Fire;
 Grown jealous for the Honour of the Dead,
 He thus, in Anger, to the Virgins said:
 "In vain you strive, with such unweary'd Care,
 "To grace the Breast of this accomplish'd Fair:
 "In vain you labour to adorn her Mind
 "With tuneful Numbers, and with Sense refin'd;
 "With ev'ry Elegance of Thought and Phrase;
 "With Virgil's Purity and Ovid's Ease;
 "Tho' she with them in all their Graces vie;
 "Yet I'll their universal Tongue deny.
 "For if, like them, she could unfold her Mind
 "In Language understood by all mankind;
 "Their matchless Fame, thro' many Ages won,
 "(Her Sex might boast) would be in one outdone."¹

The reference in the first line to "Con.", the extravagant praises bestowed upon the boy's mother, and the implication that his mother was not versed in Latin, prove that Mrs. Grierson was not writing of herself and her own son.

Evidence such as the preceeding poem suggests that Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Grierson were very close friends. In Mrs. Barber's book of her own poems she includes several by Mrs. Grierson, with an introduction filled with unqualified praise. The first is entitled "To Mrs. Mary Barber, under the Name of Sapphira, Occasioned by the Encouragement She met with in England, to Publish her Poems by Subscription."² It is not unlikely that Mrs. Barber's son, Constantine Barber, who was to become a noted physician, was named for Constantia Grierson, although there is no documentary evidence to support this supposition.

¹Barber, op. cit., pp. 87-9.

²Ibid., p. xxxix.

Dr. Delaney, in his poem inviting his "senatus" to convene,¹ referred to Mrs. Grierson as "pale Constance," and it is possible that she was not well for some time preceding her death in 1733 after "a lingering, painful illness."²

She was, like Letitia Pilkington, an exceptional child. An account of her early childhood, derived from notes by Henry Brooke and published in Brookiana, gives the following picture:

Her father observed that his daughter, while yet a child, was very fond of books, and notwithstanding his circumstances were narrow, he was determined to furnish her with all those that he thought were suited to her years; but he soon found to his great joy, that her capacity was not to be measured by her years, it flew before them; and that her genius and inclination would triumph over every difficulty, even without the aid of a master. In almost too short a time to be mentioned, she was allowed by competent judges to be a perfect mistress of the Greek and Roman tongues. . . . all her attainments may be said to have been dictated by nature, aided by laudable curiosity and industry.³

Mrs. Pilkington, reflecting on the fact that Constantia had no formal schooling, said that "her learning appeared like the gift poured out on the Apostles, of speaking all languages without the pains of study; or like the intuitive knowledge of angels."⁴ Mrs. Grierson herself said that she had received some instruction from the minister of the parish "when she

¹Supra., p. 14.

²Blackburne, op. cit., p. 27.

³Reynolds, op. cit., p. 224.

⁴Op. cit., p. 38.

could spare time from her needlework, to which she was closely kept by her mother."¹

Both Mrs. Pilkington, who was never generous with encomiums, and Mrs. Barber speak of Constantia Grierson with the highest words of praise. "She wrote elegantly both in verse and prose," said Letitia, "and some of the most delightful hours I ever passed were in the conversation of this female philosopher."² And yet, lest one might conceive of her as a stuffy intellectual, Mrs. Pilkington hastens to add, ". . . yet could her heavenly muse descend from its sublime height to the easy epistolary style, and suit itself to my then gay disposition."³

Mrs. Barber's picture of her describes a woman who combined learning with many other enviable virtues:

As her learning and abilities raised her above her own sex, so they left her no room to envy any; on the contrary, her delight was to see others excell: she was always ready to advise and direct those who applied to her; and was herself willing to be advised.⁴

She was not only happy in a fine imagination, a great memory, an excellent understanding, and an exact judgment, but had all these crowned by virtue and piety; she was too learned to be vain, too wise to be conceited, too knowing and too clear-sighted to

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Barber, op. cit., p. xxvii.

be irreligious. . . . she set a perfect pattern of conjugal love and duty.¹

Mrs. Grierson's accomplishments would have been remarkable had they been only mediocre. The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature credits her with an edition of Virgil, published in 1724, the year she came to Dublin. At the age of twenty or twenty-one she brought out an edition of Terence and three years later the edition of Tacitus, which Dr. Harwood, a learned bibliographer, praises in the following terms:

This is one of the best edited books ever delivered to the world. Mrs. Grierson was a lady possessed of singular erudition, and had an elegance of taste and solidity of judgment, which justly rendered her one of the most wonderful as well as amiable of her sex.²

In 1734 Mrs. Barber referred to Mrs. Grierson's Abridgment of the History of England as unpublished. In 1877 Blackburne said, "She wrote an Abridgment of the History of England, which he (her husband) printed, but which did not much enhance her literary reputation."³ The Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature contains no reference to this work. Nor does it mention the edition of "Sallust," on which she was engaged at the time of her death. "A copy

¹Ibid., p. xxviii.

²Adam Clarke, A Bibliographical Dictionary, VI, 142. Quoted by Reynolds, op. cit., p. 224.

³Op. cit., p. 22.

of it with her annotations came into the possession of Lord George Germain and at the sale of his books was purchased sometime before 1797 by John Wilkes, who valued it highly."¹

Besides these classical and historical works, Mrs. Grierson probably wrote a great deal of verse. Mrs. Pilkington said that "of her various and beautiful writings, except one poem of hers in Mrs. Barber's Works, I have never seen any published."² Mrs. Pilkington must not have perused Mrs. Barber's book very thoroughly, for there are six poems by Mrs. Grierson there. Blackburne said that Mrs. Grierson burned most of her poems before her death.³ Before she was married, she addressed her intended husband in a poem, "The Art of Printing,"⁴ which was published in Dublin in a single sheet in 1764, many years after her death. This is the only surviving poem of Mrs. Grierson's other than those included in the books of Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Pilkington. It is an interesting example of the occasional verse of the period, and as the least personal of Mrs. Grierson's nine extant poems, perhaps it deserves to be quoted here:

Hail mystic art, which men like angels taught
To speak to eyes, and paint embody'd thought!
The deaf and dumb, blest still, reliev'd by thee,
We make one sense perform the task of three.

¹DNB, VIII, 663.

²Op. cit., p. 38.

³Op. cit., p. 22.

⁴Ibid., p. 24.

We see, we hear, we touch the head and heart,
 And take or give what each but yields a part;
 With the hard laws of distance we dispense,
 And without sound, apart commune in sense;
 View, though confin'd, nay, rule this earthly ball,
 And travel o'er the wide extended All.
 Dead letters thus with living notions fraught
 Prove to the soul the telescope of thought.
 To mortal life immortal honor give;
 And bid all deeds and titles last and live.
 In scanty life--Eternity we taste,
 View the first ages, and inform the last;
 Arts, history, laws, we purchase with a look,
 And keep, like fate, all nature in a book.¹

There is some confusion regarding this poem. In a volume published in 1804 by C. H. Wilson, entitled Brookiana, a collection of works by and about Henry Brooke, the statement is made, "Mr. Brooke has celebrated the learning, piety, and virtue of Mrs. Grierson, in a poem which he wrote on the Art of Printing." I consider this statement to be an error, since the poem is obviously written in praise of the phenomenon of printing, not in praise of Mrs. Grierson's virtues. Myra Reynolds, however, in The Learned Lady in England, quotes the statement from Brookiana and accepts it.²

One can only be filled with awe at the accomplishments of the young Mrs. Grierson, aided by no formal schooling, busy learning the art of midwifery in order to support herself, accepting the responsibilities of wife and mother, and yet finding time for so many literary achievements.

¹Ibid.

²P. 223.

While it is certain that Mrs. Grierson was a part of Swift's literary circle in Dublin, there is slight evidence that he in any way acted as a patron to her, possibly for the reason that she had no need of one. A woman who was married to a printer had little use for assistance in procuring subscriptions for proposed publications, and it is possible that she had as little need of the Dean's instruction, being very nearly as learned as he. At least, he recognized her genius, for in a letter to Pope in 1730, he said:

There are three citizen's wives in this town; one of them whose name is Grierson, a Scotch book-seller's wife. She is a very good Latin and Greek scholar, and has lately published a fine edition of Tacitus, with a Latin Dedication to the Lord Lieutenant; and she writes carmina Anglicana non contemnenda.¹

In another letter to Pope later in the same year, he spoke of her as "both a scholar and a poet."²

Writing to Lord Bathurst in October of 1730, Swift mentioned both Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Grierson, and said that these two women would enrich the Miscellany which was being considered for publication.³ Apparently the matter ended with that suggestion, however, for there is no record of its having reached fulfillment.

¹Ball, op. cit., IV, 120, 121.

²Ibid., p. 149.

³Ibid., p. 170.

In October, 1733, in another letter to Pope, Swift said, " . . . in this kingdom, and in a few days past, two persons of great merit, whom I loved very well, have died in the prime of their years, but a little above thirty."¹ One of these might well have been Mrs. Grierson, who died in 1733. Her age, however, was twenty-seven.

Although it is likely that Dean Swift had seen most of Mrs. Grierson's works, only one volume of hers appeared in the catalogue which was drawn up before the auction of Swift's library after his death. This was the first volume of her Tacitus, which had been published in three volumes. Of the third there is no record. The second volume was listed under the heading, "Books Wanting", in the list of Swift's books drawn up in 1742 and known now as the Abbotsford Manuscript.² Apparently volume two had been misplaced or lent out and never returned. Although Swift had several editions of Virgil and at least five editions of Terence in his library,³ Mrs. Grierson's translations were not among them. Swift's patronage or approval of Mrs. Grierson did not extend, apparently, to the purchasing of her books.

It is easy to imagine that Mrs. Grierson was a joy to Swift, combining as she did all the virtues which to him

¹Ibid., p. 380.

²Harold Williams, Dean Swift's Library (Cambridge: University Press, 1932), p. 17.

³Ibid., p. 43.

marked the ideal woman, and he must have been grateful for the unexpected appearance of this gifted "citizen's wife" in his Dublin exile.

Mrs. Sican

The least poetical and most prosperous of the Dublin circle was Mrs. Sican, of whom we know almost nothing. It was her proposed trip to London in February 1730 which prompted Swift to write to his friend Pope about his Dublin poetesses:

The last is the bearer hereof, and the wife of a surly, rich husband, who checks her vein; . . . The bearer's name is Sican. She has a very good taste of poetry, has read much, and, as I hear, has writ one or two things with applause which I never saw, except about six lines she sent me unknown, with a piece of sturgeon, some years ago on my birthday. . . . I give her the passport to have the honor and happiness of seeing you, because she has already seen the ostrich, which is the only rarity at present in this town, and her ambition is to boast of having been well received by you upon her return; and I do not see how you can well refuse to gratify her, for if a Christian will be an ostrich in a kingdom, he must suffer himself to be seen, and what is worse, without money.¹

Mrs. Sican was disappointed in her ambition to see Pope, though Pope graciously had planned to meet her because of Swift's recommendation. In April Swift received a letter from Pope containing the following passage.

I have received two or three letters of one kind or another from you, and answered them either jointly or separately as I could. I also saw a letter of one Mrs. Sican, but missed the sight of the lady by

¹Ball, op. cit., IV, 121.

an accident. She came from London one night, sent yours to my house about seven, it raining very hard. I sent word I would be home all the next day at her service. The next morning it raining still, I sent my servant by nine to ask what hour I should send a chariot for her, and she was gone two hours before back to London. So she has seen no greater monster yet than the ostrich.¹

If Mrs. Sican was only a good listener and critic, she must have filled an important position at the literary gatherings. To keep abreast of Mrs. Grierson's learning, Mrs. Pilkington's witticism, Mrs. Barber's idealism, and Dean Swift's "infinite spirits," must have required no little capacity for understanding and appreciation. She fed the ears of her guests, according to Swift, who addressed a familiarly complimentary poem to her under the title "On Psyche":

At two Afternoon, for our Psyche inquire:
Her Tea-Kettle's on, and her Smock at the fire;
So loitering, so active, so busy, so idle;
Which has she most need of, a Spur or a Bridle?
Thus a Greyhound outruns the whole Pack in a Race,
Yet would rather be hang'd than he'd leave a warm place.
She gives you such plenty, it puts you in Pain;
But ever with Prudence takes Care of the Main.
To please you she knows how to chuse a nice Bit,
For her Taste is almost as refined as her Wit.
To oblige a good friend she will trace every Market,
It would do your Heart good to see how she will cark it.
Yet beware of her Arts, for it plainly appears
She saves Half her Victuals by feeding your Ears.²

It would seem that Mrs. Sican's contribution to the Dublin circle, as the most affluent member, was not only the provision of tasteful and savory refreshments for the gatherings,

¹Ibid., p. 140.

²The Poems of Jonathan Swift, II, 580.

but also the prudent addition of refined wit to the flow of conversation.

Mrs. Sican remained on friendly terms with the Dean long after the literary group had disbanded. With Mrs. Pilkington in disgrace, Mrs. Grierson dead, and Mrs. Barber at Bath, there was only Mrs. Sican with whom Swift could continue his friendship. That she remained in his favor and was a constant visitor at the Deanery is evident in this letter which she wrote to the Dean in November, 1735, while Swift was at Sheridan's country home.

Rev. Sir,

A gentleman who has just arrived from Paris brought me a letter from my son, who presents his duty to you, and desires me to send you the enclosed. I am sure I was glad of any occasion to write to you, in hopes of the pleasure of hearing you were well, and arrived safe at the land of Canaan. The hurt you received in your shin, I was afraid would prevent your going out of town. I beg to know how it is now. . . . Lady Acheson came to town yesterday. She desired me to present her best respects to you, and tell you she is something better. Lord Orrery is fretting himself that he did not come to town in time enough to enjoy the happiness of your conversation. . . . I hope you will like the country about a month, and then order Mrs. Whiteway and me to bring a coach and six and set you safe at home, for this is no riding weather.¹

Many signs of friendship are in this chatty, easy epistolary discourse. Here, for example, was Mrs. Sican's son John, then twenty-three years of age, a scholar and graduate in arts of Dublin University, whom Swift recommended to Robert

¹Ball, op. cit., V, 265, 266.

Arbuthnot in Paris. In 1743 he received a degree in medicine and became well known in the scholarly world before he was shot to death in Naples in 1753.¹ Here is Orrery, destined to be Swift's first biographer. And here is Mrs. Whiteway, his housekeeper, to whom Swift wrote a few days after receiving Mrs. Sican's letter, asking her to mention to Mrs. Sican that he had received her letter and would answer promptly, but of his prompt reply there is no record.² As late as 1739 Swift referred (in a letter to Rev. James King,) to Mrs. Sican in a manner which showed her to be still a close friend.³ With this reference, however, the known history of the relationship between the Dean and Mrs. Sican ends.

One can ascribe to Swift no acts of patronage to Mrs. Sican, except possibly his recommendation of her son to friends abroad. But to a woman of her literary tastes and interests, bound to a "surly, rich husband," unsympathetic with her inclinations, her association with the celebrated Dean must have been the focal point of her existence. If she ever actually wrote any verses, the world has no more evidence of it than had Swift, and her only claim to immortality is in the references Swift made to her and her place

¹Ibid., p. 267.

²Ibid., p. 286.

³Ibid., VI, 195.

in the literary circle which gathered about the Dean in Dublin. She was his aid in improving the milieu of the literary woman of Dublin.

These three women--Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Grierson, and Mrs. Sican--offered little opportunity for Swift to act as their patron, but they played their part in his career as a literary patron by winning his respect and preparing him for his very definite patronage of Mrs. Barber and Mrs. Pilkington.

CHAPTER III

MRS. BARBER

Of the early life of Mrs. Mary Barber, Swift's favorite protegee, almost nothing is known. She was probably born in Ireland, sometime near the year 1685. When she first appeared on the Dublin literary scene, in 1724, she was nearly forty years of age, was married to a wool draper or tailor, and was interested in poetic composition. Where she came from, how she developed her poetic talent, who her early associates were, no one seems to know. Her first recorded act was a poetic one in the cause of charity, which resulted in great ultimate benefit to her. She wrote a poem entitled "The Widow Gordon's Petition," invoking sympathy on behalf of an officer's widow left penniless with a blind child, and sent it anonymously to Tickell, secretary to the Lords Justices of Ireland, with the request that he call Lord Carteret's attention to it. Lady Carteret became interested in the case described in the poem, succored the Widow Gordon, and sought out Mrs. Barber. It was through a poem that Mrs. Barber met Lady Carteret, and it was through Lady Carteret that Mrs. Barber met Jonathan Swift.¹

Mrs. Barber had four children whom she brought up, in spite of poverty and her numerous absences from them, to

¹DNB, I, 1068.

be well-mannered and well-educated children.¹ One son, Rupert, was an engraver and miniature-painter. Another, Constantine, was a physician who became president of the College of Physicians in Dublin. Her Husband, Johathan, was an Englishman, an almost mythical figure. That he was dishonest, unscrupulous, or stupid, we suspect from the fact that when Lady Betty Germaine coaxed the Duke of Dorset into ordering liveries from Barber the woolen draper, he was charged a far greater price than anyone else.² Since Mrs. Barber was almost always in financial distress and seemed to be solely responsible for the care of her children, it seems likely that her husband either suffered poor health or lacked the sense of responsibility and ambition necessary to the maintaining of a family.

Swift's first mention of Mary Barber occurred in March, 1728, in a letter to John Gay. It called attention to her "A True Tale," which was written ostensibly for the instruction of her children, but which was actually calculated to recommend her to Swift's circle.³ In 1728 Swift said he had never seen Mrs. Barber, but he seemed to be sufficiently acquainted with her to suggest to her some changes in her poem. With what success he offered this

¹Llanover, op. cit., I, 372.

²DNB, I, 1068.

³Ball, op. cit., IV, 22.

advice may be judged from his own words: "I hope Dr. Delany has shown you the tale, writ by Mrs. Barber. . . . There is something in it hard upon Mr. Congreve, which I sent to her, for I never saw her, to change to Dryden, but she absolutely refused."¹

Two years later he referred to her several times. In February, 1730, in his letter to Pope concerning the three "citizens' wives" of Dublin, he said, "She is our chief poetess, and upon the whole has no ill genius."² By this time she was a member of the circle that gathered about Swift and Dr. Delany, engaging in literary exercises and criticism. In May, 1730, he mentioned the fact that she was going to London soon.³ And September of that year his friends in London were writing him acknowledgments of having met her there.

From the summer of 1730 until the publication of her book, Poems on Several Occasions, in 1734, Swift wrote numerous letters of recommendation on her behalf, soliciting subscriptions from his wealthy and influential English friends.⁴ His importunity in her interest was invariably well-received, as was Mrs. Barber herself when preceded by

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 120.

³Ibid., p. 149.

⁴See Appendix.

Swift's introduction. Pope said, "Whatever service I can render her by speaking well, etc., I will. Whatever friends I can get to subscribe to her, I will. . . ."¹ Lady Elizabeth Germaine, in several letters to Swift, reiterated her willingness to serve Mrs. Barber.² Lady Worsley said, "If I had it as much in my power as in my inclination to serve Mrs. Barber, she should not have been kept thus long attending."³

In the summer of 1731 an incident occurred which was as unfortunate as it was confusing, and which threatened but failed to sever the relationship between Swift and Mrs. Barber. There was published in England in June a pamphlet entitled "Three Letters to the Queen on the Distress of Ireland." One of these letters, above the forged signature of Jonathan Swift, contained the following passage:

Mrs. Barber, the best female poet of this or perhaps any age, is now in your majesty's capital; known to Lady Hertford, Lady Torrington, Lady Walpole, etc.; a woman whose genius is honored by every man of genius in this kingdom and either honored or envied by every man of genius in England.⁴

Another of the letters, unsigned, contained a violent attack on Mrs. Clayton, later to become Lady Sundon. Although both Swift and Mrs. Barber were blamed and censured for these

¹Ball, op. cit., IV, 209.

²Ibid., pp. 188, 200, 232, 262.

³Ibid., p. 333.

⁴Sheridan, op. cit., XVIII, 109.

letters, both denied their authorship. Writing to Pope a few weeks later in denial of the responsibility for the letters, Swift said he would not be likely to have "so much zeal for one almost a stranger." "I never was," said Swift, "at Mrs. Barber's house in my life, except once that I chanced to pass by her shop, was desired to walk in, and went no farther, nor stayed three minutes."¹ In July, he wrote the Countess of Suffolk, denying writing the letters to the Queen.² In September the Countess replied, saying that Swift was still "under suspicion of having a violent passion for Mrs. Barber."³ Having the final word of the exchange, Swift said:

Mrs. Barber was recommended to me by Dr. Delany, who is now in London. . . . She seems to be a woman of piety and a poetical genius; and though I have never visited her in my life, yet I was disposed to do her good offices on the Doctor's account, and her own good character.⁴

Mrs. Barber apparently wrote Mrs. Clayton an apology and met with a rebuff. In February, Dr. Delany took up Mrs. Barber's cause, writing in her behalf to Mrs. Clayton:

I now beseech your protection for one who hath laboured more years than Duck hath lived, in a course of upright, obliging, well-guided, and unwearied, though unsuccessful industry: in an exemplary education of a numerous issue, in one continued

¹Ball, op. cit., IV, 242.

²Ibid., p. 246.

³Ibid., p. 264.

⁴Ibid., p. 266.

series of good advice and good offices of every kind, to the whole world round her, who never turned away her face from any poor man in misery, and was always ready in the very letter of the command, if it were possible, to draw out her very soul to the hungry; this woman on the verge of fifty, with an hereditary gout, cough, asthma, with a load of four children, excellently educated, perfectly well-disposed, and utterly unprovided for, sues for your protection, and is refused.

She hath wrote, it is said, two letters to the Queen, one in abuse of you. . . and another in praise of herself, in the name of Dr. Swift; by the last, she bath to my knowledge, entirely lost his friendship.¹

These words of intercession by Dr. Delany were touching and over-dramatized, and inaccurate in at least the last detail. Mrs. Barber did not at all lose the Dean's friendship. He continued to befriend, protect, and patronize her for at least seven more years.

After a sojourn of two years in England, Mary Barber decided to transplant her family to England.² She was delayed in her endeavor by a siege of one of her chronic illnesses, and it was spring, 1733, before she was able to make the crossing from Ireland to England. She had prevailed upon her husband to liquidate his Dublin assets and accompany her to London. Always eager to do his utmost for Mrs. Barber, Swift wrote to the Lord Mayor of London, John Barber, desiring of him that he use his influence in procuring employment for Mrs. Barber's husband.³ The Lord Mayor

¹Llanover, op. cit., I, 321.

²Ibid., p. 282.

³Ball, op. cit., IV, 268.

wrote in reply that he doubted that he could do much for Barber in the way of employment. He seemed apprehensive over the Barbers' arrival in his town:

Now that Mrs. Barber and her family design to settle here, and she has done me the honor in most places to call me cousin, I hope it will not be expected I should have the care of them. I have very ill health, and any additional care that way would hurt me very much; but for doing her and her family any good offices, I shall never be wanting.¹

Writing to the Lord Mayor to reassure him about the Barbers, Swift said, "I have not known a more bashful, modest person than Mrs. Barber, nor one who is less likely to play her friends, patrons, or protectors for any favour, or is more thankful for the smallest."² The Lord Mayor did not entirely escape, however, the responsibility of his "cousins," the Barbers. One of the poems in Mary Barber's book is entitled "To the Right Honorable John Barber, Esq., Lord Mayor of London, on committing one of my sons to his care."³ It is possible also that Barber did find it in his power to procure employment for another Barber, for another of her poems is entitled "To Robert Barber, Esq., Deputy to the Treasurer's Remembrancer in the Court of Exchequer, on his attending, whilst his Son repeated Gay's Fable of the Hare."⁴

¹Ibid., p. 387.

²Ibid., V, 9.

³Poems on Several Occasions, p. 225.

⁴Ibid., p. 267.

If this was, indeed, one of Mrs. Barber's family, we can only smile at poor, harried John Barber, scraping the bottom of the political preferment barrel and coming up with the position of remembrancer's deputy, whose duties must have been to remind the remembrancer to remind the Lord of the Exchequer to pay the bills.

Swift continued writing his London friends on Mrs. Barber's behalf. Sir Andrew Fountain, with whom Swift had not communicated since Queen Anne's death, was the recipient of a request: "The subscription is one guinea, and if you do not get her a hundred subscribers at least, I shall think myself disappointed. . . . I shall write to my new Lord Pembroke . . . in a more threatening style."¹ By the end of 1733, London had been thoroughly solicited in regard to Mrs. Barber's book. Swift wrote to a Mrs. Conduitt, asking that her husband contribute to the enterprise. She answered, ". . . the town has been so long invited to the subscription that most people have already refused or accepted, and Mr. Conduitt has long since done the latter."²

In January, 1734, Mrs. Barber found herself incarcerated in Marshalsea over the publication of a poem by Swift which she had brought over to London with her the previous spring and delivered to Pilkington for publication. The

¹Ball, op. cit., V, 21.

²Ibid., p. 47.

poem, "An Epistle to a Lady," had just been published, was considered treasonable, and led to the imprisonment of all those suspected of any connection with its appearance. Through the indiscretion of either Pilkington or Gilliver, the printer, the authorship of the poem was made public, and Mrs. Barber's part in the matter was discovered. Although she was released from prison the same day she entered it, investigations and inquiries continued for some time. In March, the Duchess of Queensbury, writing to Swift, said, "Mrs. Barber has met with a good deal of trouble; I have not seen her, I fancy, for that reason, but we shall leave our guineas for her with Mr. Pope or my brother."¹ As late in the year as May, Mrs. Mary Pendarves remarked, "Mrs. Barber has not yet finished the troublesome affair that the Pilkingtons' ingratitude involved her in."²

Finally, in June, 1734, Poems on Several Occasions was published. That its successful publication was due in large measure to Swift's support, one can hardly doubt. Lord Carteret confirmed this conclusion by saying that he himself would continue to serve Mrs. Barber by recommending her, but that Swift had "done that so effectively that nothing further needed to be said to anyone to whom Swift had already spoken on her behalf."³

¹Ibid., p. 58.

²Llanover, op. cit., I, 473.

³Ball, op. cit., V, 68.

Mrs. Barber's Canvass for Subscribers is appropriately included here as "An example of the means by which at that time a 'bashful' authoress obtained circulation of her works."¹

To the Earl of Oxford

Sir Clement Cottrell told me your Lordship did me the honour to enquire for me, and as I am soon to leave London I am told I ought before I go to pay my duty to Lord Oxford's family, which I should be proud to do, but that I dread being thought troublesome, yet I cannot avoid acquainting your Lordship that the Duchess of St. Albans, to whom I had the honour to be recommended by Miss Kelly, asked me if I had any other letters. I said I had to Lady Oxford. Her Grace then desired to know if that family interested themselves for me. I was in some confusion what to say, and only answered that I had been received there with great goodness. The Duchess took some of my receipts, and assured me I might depend upon their using their interest for me, and as I am to send a list of those who have subscribed I presume to acquaint your Lordship that the Dean has desired Lord and Lady Oxford, Lady Margaret, and Mr. Harley and his son may be told of his request, I should be honoured with their names. The Goodness with which your Lordship condescended to say I might expect the favour of your family gave me hopes that I should have been honoured with their protection, which would have greatly supported my spirits that are often ready to sink under the affair I am engaged in. I flattered myself from your known humanity and love of arts that a woman, a stranger, far from her friends, and her country, who was recommended by one of the greatest geniuses in the world, who has so just an esteem for your Lordship, could not have failed of your patronage, which as I should think it the highest honour should be ever gratefully acknowledged by, my Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient and humble servant,
Mary Barber

In preparing her book for publication, Mrs. Barber had consulted with Swift concerning the proposed dedication

¹Ibid., p. 443.

of the volume, Lord Orrery had shown her such generosity and so many favors that she feared anything she might say about him in dedicating the book to him would be construed as mere flattery. So Swift wrote to Lord Orrery in her behalf, assuring him that "all those who are acquainted with her will impute her encomiums to a sincere, but overflowing spirit of thankfulness, as well as the humble opinion she hath of herself."¹

Mrs. Barber's Poems on Several Occasions, 1734, was well received by the reading public, to whom she addressed the following apologetic and justificatory introduction:

I am sensible that a Woman Steps out of her Province whenever she Presumes to write for the press, and therefore think it necessary to inform my Readers, that my Verses were written with a very different View from any of those which other Attempters in Poetry have proposed to themselves: My aim being Chiefly to form the Minds of my Children, I imagined that Precepts convey'd in Verse would be easier remembered.²

The poems contained therein were avowedly poems with a purpose. Looking over the titles one finds a larger number of poems written to this or that important personage than to children. By indirect methods, often through praise of great people, she may have thought to instruct the young. Among the men and women she addressed in verse are the

¹Ibid., p. 27.

²p. xvii.

Countess of Dysert, Dr. Richard Helsham, the Lady Dowager Torrington, Lady Brownlow, the Duchess of Shrewsbury, Duke of Chandos, Lady Elizabeth Germaine, Lord Carteret, Dr. Mead, Lady Barbara Worth, and the Duke of Buckingham. In addition to her own poems, Mrs. Barber included in her book verses by Mrs. Constantia Grierson, William Ward, and Constantine Barber. Serving as preface or introduction to her volume is the letter that Swift had written to Lord Orrery, recommending and praising her.

One poem by Mrs. Barber will serve as an example of her poetic style. It is typical of the occasional nature of her verse, being a poem written to her close friend, Mrs. Grierson, upon the death of Mrs. Grierson's son:

This mourning Mother can with Ease explore
 The Arts of Latium, and the Grecian Store:
 Was early learn'd, nay more, was early wise;
 And knew, the Pride of Science to despise;
 Left Men to take assuming Airs from thence,
 And seem'd unconscious of superior Sense.
 Yet ah! how vain to guard the Soul, we see,
 Are the best Precepts of Philosophy!
 See Nature triumph o'er the boasted Art,
 Ev'n in a Solon's, and Constantia's Heart.
 See how she mourns her Son's untimely Doom,
 And pours her Woes o'er the relentless Tomb.
 Soften, kind Heav'n, her seeming rigid Fate,
 With frequent visions of his blissful State
 Oft let the Guardian Angel of her son
 Tell her in faithful Dreams, his Task is done;
 Shew, how he kindly led her lovely Boy
 To realms of Peace, and never-fading Joy.

Then, for a while, reverse his happy Fate;
 Shew him still here, still in this wretched State;
 Shew the false world, seducing him from truth;
 And paint the slipp'ry, dang'rous Paths of Youth;
 Shew him, in riper Years, beset with Snares,

Wearied with struggling thro' unnumber'd Cares.
 Convey him thence to Life's remotest Stage,
 To feel the dire Calamities of Age;
 Opprest with Sorrows, with Distempers torn,
 Or rack'd with Guilt, much harder to be born.
 Raise the Distress, and let her darling Care,
 Distracted in the Horrors of Despair,
 The dreadful Scene of Judgment op'ning see,
 And, trembling, plunge into Eternity

Then ask her, Wou'd she call him down from Bliss,
 To hazard such a dismal Doom as this?
 That she may learn to be resign'd from thence,
 And bless the Guardian Hand, that snatch'd him hence.¹

Swift's critical comment on Mrs. Barber's poetry,
 contained in the letter to Orrery, indicated his enthusiasm
 for her verse:

I have read most of her poems, and believe . . .
 that they generally contain something new and useful,
 tending to the reproof of some vice or folly, or recom-
 mending some virtue. She never writes on a subject with
 general unconnected topics, but always with a scheme and
 method driving to some particular end; wherein many writ-
 ters in verse, and of some distinction, are so often
 known to fail. In short, she seemeth to have a true poet-
 ical genius, better cultivated than could well be expected,
 either from her sex, or the scene she has acted in, as the
 wife of a citizen. . . . Poetry hath only been her favor-
 ite amusement; for which she hath one qualification, that
 I wish all good poets possessed a share of, I mean that
 she is ready to take advice and submit to have her verses
 corrected by those who are generally allowed to be the
 best judges.²

The first poem by Mrs. Grierson echoes Swift's encomiums:

To Mrs. Mary Barber, under the Name of Sapphira:
 Occasion'd by the encouragement she met with in England,
 to publish her poems by subscription.

Long has the Warrior's and the Lover's Fire,
 Employ'd the Poet and ingross'd the Lyre;
 And justly too the World might long approve

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²Ball, op. cit., V, 28.

The Praise of Heroes and of Virtuous Love;
 Had Tyrants not usurp'd the Hero's Name,
 Nor low Desires debas'd the Lover's Flame;
 If on those Themes, all Triflers had not writ,
 Guiltless of Sense, or Elegance, or Wit.

Far different Themes We in thy Verses view;
 Themes, in themselves, alike sublime, and new:
 Thy tuneful Labours all conspire to show
 The highest Bliss the Mind can taste below;
 To ease those Wants, with which the Wretched pine;
 And imitate Beneficence divine:
 A Theme, alas! forgot by Bards too long;
 And, but for thee, almost unknown to Song.

Such wise reflections in thy Lays are shown,
 As Flaccus' Muse, in all her Pride, might own;
 So Elegant, and so refin'd, thy praise,
 As greatest Minds, at once, might mend and please:
 No florid Toys, in pompous Numbers drest;
 But justest Thoughts, in purest Stile, exprest:
 Whene'er thy Must designs the Heart to move,
 The melting reader must, with Tears, approve;
 Or When, more gay, her spritely Satire bites,
 'Tis not to wound, but to instruct, she writes.

Cou'd * * * sic , or * * * , from the Tomb,
 Which shades their Ashes till the final Doom,
 The dire Effects of vitious sic Writings view,
 How wou'd they mourn to think what might ensue!
 Blush at their Works, for no one End design'd
 But to embellish Vice, and taint the Mind!
 No more their dear-bought Fame wou'd raise their Pride;
 But Terrors wait on Talents misapplied.

Not so Sapphira: her unsullied Strain
 Shall never give her Soul one conscious Pain;
 To latest Times shall melt the Harden'd Breast,
 And raise her Joys, by making others blest.

These Works, which Modesty conceal'd in Night,
 Your candor, gen'rous Britons, brings to Light;
 Born, by your Arms, for Liberty's Defence;
 Born, by your Taste, the Arbiters of Sense:
 Long may your Taste, and long your Empire stand,
 To Honour, Wit, and Worth, from every Land.

Oh! cou'd my conscious Muse but fully trace
 The silent Virtues which Sapphira grace;
 How much her Heart, from Low Desires refin'd;
 How much her Works, the Transcript of her Mind;

Her tender Care, and Grief for the Distrest;
 Her Joy unfeign'd to see true Merit blest;
 Her Soul so form'd for every social Care;
 A friend so gen'rous, ardent, and sincere;
 How would you triumph in yourselves to find
 Your Favours shewn to so complete a Mind;
 To find her Breast with every Grace inspir'd
 When first You only for her Lays admir'd.
 Thus the great Father of the Hebrew State,
 Who watch'd for weary'd Strangers at his Gate;
 The Good He thought conferr'd on Men unknown,
 He found no more exalted beings shown.¹

The unqualified enthusiasm which Swift and Mrs. Grierson seemed to feel for Mrs. Barber's poetic talent was not shared, however, by all her readers. Mrs. Pilkington spoke for the ladies who found the poems rather dull when she said:

Mrs. Barber . . . was at this time writing a volume of poems, some of which I fancy might at this day be seen in the cheese-monger's, Chandler's, pastry-cook's, and second-hand book-seller's shops: However, dull as they were, they certainly would have been much worse, but that Dr. Delany frequently held what he called a *Senatus Consultum*, to correct these indigested materials.²

At almost the same time that Letitia Pilkington penned these words, Mrs. Barber was graciously arranging to have Mrs. Pilkington's poems brought to the attention of the Duke and Duchess of Dorset.³ This coincidence serves well to point out the difference in character of the two women.

Both Swift and Mrs. Pilkington referred to the fact that Mrs. Barber's verses were submitted to others for

¹Poems on Several Occasions, pp. xlv-xlviii.

²Memoirs, p. 373.

³Ball, op. cit., IV, 188.

correction and revision. Mrs. Pilkington would have liked to have implied that were it not for her own part in the literary council, Mrs. Barber's poems would have been even less acceptable. It is much easier, however, to credit Swift with any improvement that might have come to Mrs. Barber's poems from expert correction.

To establish the exact nature of the relationship between Swift and Mrs. Barber is difficult. While he protested in 1731 that he was barely acquainted with her personally, he was busily writing letters of introduction for her and soliciting subscriptions for her proposed book. Almost certainly their association ripened into friendship during the ensuing years. Once, on his birthday, Mrs. Barber sent him her son as a birthday present.

Kings could not send a nobler¹ gift,
A meaner were unworthy Swift.¹

One cannot but imagine that such a gift would not only surprise but appall anyone, particularly a childless man, such as Jonathan Swift was. Evidently he accepted the gift in the spirit in which it was given, for he kept the boy for some time.² For Mrs. Barber to presume to send such a present and for Swift to accept it is an indication that their relationship was one of friendship, understanding, and

¹Poems on Several Occasions, p. 71.

²DNB, I, 1068.

mutual esteem. The picture of Swift with a little boy in his household is a unique and interesting one.

By January, 1735, Mrs. Barber was at Bath, where she planned to open a shop selling Irish linens and to let lodgings.¹ Swift was continually concerned about her health and her financial status. His friend, Mrs. Pendarves, being also at Bath, he wrote her concerning Mrs. Barber, "Her sickness hath made her more expensive than her prudence or nature inclined her; I think she hath every kind virtue, and only one defect, which is too much bashfulness."² Mrs. Pendarves seemed to share Swift's high opinion of the poetess, for she wrote him a year later, "Bath is full of people. . . . My solace is Mrs. Barber, whose spirit and good countenance cheers me whenever I see or hear her."³

In 1735 and 1736, while Mrs. Barber was at Bath, the second and third editions of her Poems on Several Occasions appeared but did little to improve her financial state. Fearing for her health and security, in the summer of 1736, Swift wrote Mrs. Barber, advising her to return to Ireland. She delayed answering until November, writing finally that she was well settled in Bath, her son Constantine was thinking of settling there, and she felt that she would have more

¹Ball, op. cit., V, 389.

²Llanover, op. cit., I, 552.

³Ball, op. cit., V, 297.

success providing a living for herself there.

. . . so I humbly beseech you to pardon me, nor think me ungrateful or in the least insensible of the infinite obligations I lie under to you, which, Heaven knows, are never out of my mind.

How shall I express the sense I have of your goodness, in writing me to return to Ireland, and generously offering to contribute to support me there?¹

Rather than accept this plan, Mrs. Barber proposed an alternative. Many people in England, she said, had suggested to her that she ask Swift for his Treatise on Polite Conversation and a few of his original poems, assuring her that she would get many subscriptions if she had these works. Mrs. Barber considered this an excellent idea, if the Dean would agree to it. "Everybody would gladly subscribe for anything Dr. Swift wrote," she believed, "and indeed, sir, . . . it would be the making of me."²

Swift agreed to this plan, but it was not until July, 1737, that Lord Orrery wrote that Mrs. Barber had received Polite Conversations.³ It was spring, 1738, before Mrs. Barber's English edition appeared. That Swift did not intend Mrs. Barber to have exclusive rights to the piece and that he had arranged with a printer to publish an Irish edition simultaneous to the English one, are made apparent in a letter to George Faulkner in March, 1738:

¹Ibid., p. 388.

²Ibid., p. 390.

³Ibid., VI, 39.

Sir

Some of my friends wonder very much at your delaying to publish that treatise of Polite Conversations, etc., when you so often desired that I should hasten to correct the several copies you sent me, which, as ill as I have been, and am still, I dispatched as fast as I got them. I expect you will finish it immediately and send it to me. I hope you have observed all the corrections. I hear you have not above four or five pages remaining. I find people think you are too negligent, and, if you delay longer, what you fear may come to pass, that the English edition may come over before you have your own ready.¹

There is no clue to the whereabouts of her husband or to what circumstances, other than illness, reduced Mrs. Barber to such financial straits that she was compelled to ask Swift, reluctantly, for this one last favor.

Here, so far as extant records indicate, the doors of the past close on the relationship of Swift and his favorite poetess. We know that she remained in his memory, for she was mentioned in his will: "Item: I bequeath to Mrs. Mary Barber, the medal of queen Ann and prince George, which she formerly gave me."² And more important than this bequest is the fact that, in his whimsical list of people whom he considered to be ungrateful, grateful, indifferent, and doubtful, he listed Mrs. Barber as 'grateful.'³

In 1754, three years before her death, at the sale of one hundred and fifty pictures owned by Dr. Mead, who

¹Ibid., p. 67.

²Sheridan, op. cit., II, 242.

³Ibid., XXII, 183.

attended her in her many illnesses, the picture of "Mrs. Barber the poetess, in Water Colours," brought only one pound, nine shillings, the next lowest price paid for any picture.¹

The following year, Poems to Eminent Ladies (1755) was published. In this volume we may have a second source of information concerning Mrs. Barber's later years, for in their bibliography of Mrs. Pilkington's works, appended to their account of Letitia Pilkington, Walter and Clare Jerrold list Poems of Eminent Ladies as containing some of Mrs. Pilkington's poems.² They also say that the volume was edited by Mrs. Barber. I have been unable to find any evidence to either substantiate or repudiate this attribution. Poems of Eminent Ladies, for whom no editor is given in any bibliographical reference to which I have access, was published in 1755, and Mrs. Barber would have been seventy years old at that time. If she did indeed edit this volume of poems two years before her death, proof of her hand in it remains to be found.

Virtually ignored by literary historians, Mrs. Barber receives notice, if at all, only because of her relationship with Swift and the role she played in the publication of his works.

¹Ralph James, "The Sale of Dr. Mead's Pictures in 1754," Notes and Queries, 5th series, Vol. II, p. 107.

²Five Queer Women (New York: Brentano's Ltd., 1929), p. 356.

In his relations with Mrs. Barber Swift fulfilled in every aspect, with generosity and unselfishness, the duties of a literary patron, without imposing any of the obligations often associated with patronage. He praised her and her poetry in numerous letters and undoubtedly in as many conversations. He solicited, at the cost of considerable effort and occasionally at the cost of pride, subscription after subscription for her proposed volume of verse. He allowed her to include in her book his letter to Lord Orrery. While his praises of Mrs. Barber and her poetry must have helped readers to form their critical opinion of her work, the simple fact that her book contained Swift's letter increased its value and interest. He maintained his concern for her after she retired to Bath, offering her actual financial support when her circumstances seemed to warrant it. He gave her Polite Conversations as a source of revenue. Extending his assistance to her whole family, he tried to procure employment for her husband through the Lord Mayor of London and took one of her sons into his own home briefly. Probably most important of all, since he was a member of the "Senatus Consultum" which criticized and edited her poems, it must have been his experienced advice and suggestion from which she derived the most benefit. Although he subscribed to ten copies of her book,¹ there is no evidence of his having a copy among his

¹Ball, op. cit., V, 9.

collection of books either in 1742, when his books were listed, or after his death at the auction of his library.¹

Whether it was the "humble opinion she had of herself," her willingness to take advice and correction, the small flatteries of the Dean in which she indulged, or her true "poetical genius," which endeared her to Swift, it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was the meeting of all these traits in one character that so pleased him. Jonathan Swift as literary patron is most clearly and perfectly seen in his relationship with Mary Barber.

¹Williams, Dean Swift's Library.

CHAPTER IV

MRS. PILKINGTON

Mrs. Letitia Pilkington achieved notoriety in Dublin by the publication of her Memoirs of Mrs. Letitia Pilkington in 1748, but what lasting fame she has is due to the fact that she included in her memoirs the most intimate personal glimpses that we have of Jonathan Swift during his years as Dean of St. Patrick's. The story of her life is the story of an exceptional woman whose adventures in a world hostile to exceptional women are full of tragedy and courage. One must always feel that in any kind of autobiography the writer's judgment is likely to be slightly prejudiced, and it is obvious that Mrs. Pilkington's evaluation of her actions often differed from the opinion of the world.

Letitia was born in 1712 to Dr. and Mrs. Van Lewen in Dublin. Dr. Van Lewen, the son of a Dutch physician, "had no other fortune to boast of than a liberal education and a very amiable person and understanding."¹ His wife was of an old family in Ireland, who had intermarried with the nobility. Through her mother, Letitia could claim kinship with persons of title in Ireland.² While she spoke of her

¹Pilkington, op. cit., p. 30.

²Ibid.

father with the greatest kindness and respect, she had nothing but hard words for her mother and attributed much of her final misery to maternal mishandling during her early years.

Mrs. Pilkington spoke of having had a great love of learning from her earliest infancy. Because her eyes had been weakened by a siege of small-pox she was not permitted to learn to read. She learned anyway, however, by stealth and by the aid of a phenomenal memory. An episode that she related from her early childhood is significant:

I was at that time about five years of age; and my mother being one day abroad, I had happily laid hold on Alexander's Feast, and found something in it so charming that I read it aloud--but how like a condemned criminal did I look when my father, softly opening his study door, took me in the very fact! I dropped my book, and burst into tears . . . But my sorrow was soon dispelled when he bade me not be frightened, but read to him, which, to his great surprise, I did very distinctly and without hurting the beauty of the numbers. Instead of the whipping of which I stood in dread, he took me up in his arms, and kissed me, giving me a whole shilling as reward, and told me: 'He would give me another as soon as I got a poem by heart,' which he put into my hand, and it proved to be Mr. Pope's sacred Eclogue; which task I performed before my mother returned home.¹

That Letitia, at the age of five, should have found "Alexander's Feast" "charming" and, presumably, intelligible, indicates a sensitivity and intelligence far beyond that of the average primer-reading first-grader of today. According to her own statement, she also memorized Pope's Eclogue in a matter of a few hours:

¹Ibid., p. 32.

MESSIAH

A

Sacred Eclogue
in imitation of Virgil's *Pollio*.

Ye Nymphs of Sloyma! begin the song;
 To heavenly themes sublimer strains belong.
 The mossy fountains and the sylvan shades,
 The dreams of Pindus and th' Aonian maids,
 Delight no more--O thou my voice inspire
 Who touch'd Isaiah's hallow'd lips with fire!
 Rapt into future times, the Bard begun:
 A Virgin shall conceive, a Virgin bear a Son!
 From Jesse's root behold a branch arise,
 Whose sacred flower with fragrance fills the skies:
 Th' Aethereal spirit o'er its leaves shall move,
 And on its top descends the mystic Dove.
 Ye Heavens! from high the dewy nectar pour,
 And in soft silence shed the kindly shower!
 The sick and weak the healing plant shall aid,
 From storms a shelter, and from heat a shade.
 All crimes shall cease, and ancient frauds shall fail;
 Returning Justice lift aloft her scale;
 Peace O'er the world her loving wand extend,
 And white-rob'd innocence from heaven descend.
 Swift fly the years, and rise th' expected morn!
 Oh spring to light, auspicious Babe, be born!
 See, Nature hastes her earliest wreaths to bring,
 With all the incense of the breathing spring:
 See lofty Lebanon his head advance,
 See nodding forests on the mountains dance:
 See spicy clouds from lowly Saron rise,
 And Carmel's flowery top perfumes the skies!
 Hard! a glad voice the lonely desert hears;
 Prepare the way! a God, a God appears.
 A God, a God! the vocal hills reply,
 The rocks proclaim th' approaching Deity.
 Lo, earth receives him from the bending skies!
 Sink down, ye mountains; and ye vallies, rise;
 With heads declin'd, ye cedars, homage pay;
 Be smooth, ye rocks; ye rapid floods, give way!
 The Savior comes! by ancient bards foretold:
 Hear him, ye deaf; and all ye blind behold!
 He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
 And on the sightless eye-ball pour the day:
 'Tis he th' obstructed paths of sound shall clear,
 And bid new music charm th' unfolding ear:
 The dumb shall sing, the lame his crutch forego,

And leap exulting like the bounding roe.
 No sign, no murmur, the wide world shall hear,
 From every face he wipes off every tear.
 In adamant shains shall Death be bound,
 And Hell's grim tyrant feel th' eternal wound.
 As the good shepherd tends his fleecy care,
 Seeks freshest pasture, and the purest air;
 Explores the lost, the wandering sheep directs,
 By day o'ersees them and by night protects;
 The tender lambs he raises in his arms,
 Feed from his hand and in his bosom warms;
 Thus shall mankind his guardian care engage,
 The promis'd father of the future age.
 No more shall nation against nation rise,
 Nor ardent warriors meet with hateful eyes,
 Nor fields with gleaming steel be cover'd o'er,
 The brazen trumpets kindle rage no more;
 But useless lances into scythes shall bend,
 And the broad falchion in a plow-share end.
 Then palaces shall rise; the joyful Son
 Shall finish what his short-liv'd Sire begun;
 Their vines a shadow to their race shall yield,
 And the same hand that sow'd shall reap the field.
 The swain in barren deserts with surprise
 Sees lillies spring, and sudden verdure rise;
 And starts, amidst the thirsty wilds to hear
 New falls of water murmuring in his ear.
 On rifted rocks, the dragon's late abodes,
 The green reed trembles, and the bulrush nods.
 Waste sandy valleys, once perplex'd with thorn,
 The spicy fir and shapely box adorn:
 To leafless shrubs the flowery palms succeed, and
 And odorous myrtle to the noisome weed.
 The lambs with wolves shall graze the verdant mead,
 And boys in flowery bands the tiger lead:
 The steer and lion at one crib shall meet,
 And harmless serpents lick the pilgrim's feet.
 The smiling infant in his hand shall take
 The crested basilisk and speckled snake,
 Pleas'd, the green lustre of the scales survey,
 And with their forked tongue shall innocently play.
 Rise, crown'd with light, imperial Salem, rise!
 Exalt thy towery head, and lift thy eyes!
 See a long race thy spacious courts adorn;
 See future sons, and daughters yet unborn,
 In crowding ranks on every side arise,
 Demanding life, impatient for the skies!
 See barbarous nations at thy gates attend,
 Walk in thy light, and in thy temple bend;

See thy bright altars throng'd with prostrate kings,
 And heap'd with products of Sabaen springs!
 For thee Idume's spicy forests blow,
 And seeds of gold in Ophir's mountains glow.
 See heaven its sparkling portals wide display,
 And break upon thee in a flood of day!
 No more the rising Sun shall gild the morn,
 Nor evening Cynthia fill her silver horn;
 But lost, dissolv'd in thy superior rays,
 One tide of glory, one unclouded blaze
 O'erflow thy courts: the Light himself shall shine
 Reveal'd, and God's eternal day be thine!
 The seas shall waste, the skies in smoke decay,
 Rocks fall to dust, and mountains melt away;
 But fix'd his word, his saving power remains;
 Thy realm for ever lasts, thy own Messiah reigns.¹

The length and intricacy of the poem, plus the numerous allusions which must have been meaningless to a five-year-old, prove her memory to have been phenomenal, photographic, and hard to contemplate as attainable in nature.

Reading Dryden's great ode, "Alexander's Feast" and memorizing Pope's "Eclogue" were obviously impressive accomplishments for a five-year-old child. In fact, both her parents were so much pleased with her attainments that they not only gave her permission to read and study as much as she wished in the future but provided for her the best books. Her first love was poetry, the poetry of Swift's cousin Dryden and his friend Pope, and she moved quickly from reading and memorizing poetry to writing it. She sums up her early childhood with the naively boastful statement:

My performance had the good fortune to be looked on as extraordinary for my years; and the greatest and wisest men in the kingdom did not disdain to hear the prattle of the little muse, as they called me, even in my childish days.¹

At an early age, Letitia had suitors. She admitted that she was not beautiful but was "well-dressed, sprightly, and remarkably well-tempered."² Apparently the young men of Dublin found her charming. She resisted their advances and proposals, however, and preferred the company of persons of her own sex. While visiting two sisters of whom she was very fond, she was introduced to Matthew Pilkington, a young clergyman and a reader of the parish church. "He had," she said, "a good face, and many agreeable accomplishments, such as a tolerable taste in music and a poetical turn."³ He was also, we conclude from her Memoirs, the most unstable of young men, besides being of a decidedly lower social standing than were the Van Lewens. He immediately began to pursue Letitia with an enthusiasm, verging on hysteria, that should have warned her of his character. Dr. Van Lewen was criticized by his friends for letting him, a penniless churchman, attend his daughter. The doctor immediately forbade the young man to come to the house again; whereupon Matthew fainted and, upon regaining consciousness, declared that he

¹Pilkington, op. cit., p. 32.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 33.

might as well be dead. A few weeks later, upon hearing that his beloved was to be sent out of town for a year, he pretended to inflict upon himself a deadly wound, which turned out to be only a scratch but which so much impressed the family that they suddenly decided that it would be proper for Letitia to marry him. Over her objections, the marriage took place almost immediately.

Mrs. Grierson had been a friend of Letitia's for several years; and she introduced Letitia and Matthew Pilkington, shortly after their marriage, to Dr. Thomas Delany, one of the leading churchmen of the city. Dr. Delany, feeling sorry for the young couple, invited them to his country home. Their friendship grew, and the Doctor even went so far as to recommend Matthew Pilkington to his friend, Dr. Swift, hoping that something might be done to secure a better position for the young clergyman. Apparently, Pilkington became a member of Swift's little literary circle quite some time before his wife gained admittance. Letitia confessed that her one desire was to meet Dr. Swift and that she soon contrived to do so. When Dr. Delany, Pilkington, and Mrs. Grierson were going one day to the Dean's to celebrate his birthday, Mrs. Pilkington gave Dr. Delany the following verse to be presented to the Dean:

To the Rev. Dr. Swift on his Birthday

While I the God-like men of old
In admiration wrapt behold!
Rever'd antiquity explore,

And turn the long-liv'd volumes o'er,
 Where Cato, Plutarch, Flaccus shine
 In every excellence divine;
 I grieve that our degen'rate days
 Produce no mighty souls like these;
 Patriot, philosopher, and bard
 Are names unknown and seldom heard.
 Spare your reflection, Phoebus cries,
 Tis as ungrateful as unwise;
 Can you complain this sacred day
 That virtues or that arts decay?
 Behold in Swift reviv'd appears
 The virtues of unnumber'd years;
 Behold in him with new delight
 The patriot, bard, and sage unite;
 And know, Ierne in that name
 Shall rival Greece and Rome in fame.¹

Upon hearing these lines, Swift said that he would see Mrs. Pilkington whenever she pleased. In this response, did he yield to flattery or was he manifesting interest in a young, aspiring, literary woman? Orrery says "he was open to adulation, and could not, or would not distinguish between low flattery and just applause."² Whatever the reason may have been, in a few days the Dean sent word to Dr. Delany that he would like to dine with him, and wished Mr. and Mrs. Pilkington to be there. Swift, Delany, and Pilkington were walking in the garden when Mrs. Pilkington, having come with another woman, arrived. When he had been introduced to her, the Dean exclaimed, "What! this poor little child married! God help her, she is early engaged

¹Ibid., p. 49.

²Orrery, op. cit., p. 8.

in trouble."¹ With this rather startling beginning, Swift and Letitia Pilkington became friends.

Probably one reason for the Dean's liking the little poetess was that she never seemed to be startled at even his most outrageous remarks, and usually had an apt retort for them. She quickly learned the tricks of Swift's conversation:

. . . as I found the Dean always prefaced a compliment with an affront I never afterwards was startled at the latter (as too many have been, not entering into his peculiarly ironical strain), but was modestly contented with the former, which was more than I deserved, and which the surprise rendered doubly pleasing.²

Swift treated Mrs. Pilkington as though she were a rather pleasant child, showing her his trinkets, asking her riddles, and testing her understanding. On her first visit to the Deanery he took her by the hand and led her into his study, where he showed her an empty drawer and explained that there was all the money he got while he was in the Ministry. Then he showed her another drawer full of medals, told her she could have her choice, and laughed when she took the one which felt the heaviest.³

On one occasion Swift sent for Mrs. Pilkington early in the morning and told her that he had found employment for her. Taking down from the shelf a beautifully bound copy of

¹Pilkington, op. cit., p. 50.

²Ibid., p. 53.

³Ibid., p. 50.

Horace's Epistles, he cut the pages out and threw them into the fire, saying that at last they were where they belonged. He declared that such a cover deserved something valuable inside it, and, showing Mrs. Pilkington two drawers filled with letters, desired her to paste them in the book, saying, "I intended to do it myself, but that I thought it might be a pretty amusement for a child, so I sent for you."¹ Mrs. Pilkington agreed to accept the task if she could have the privilege of reading the letters as she pasted them in. Swift told her that she might, if she were sure she could read. They passed a pleasant morning reading and discussing letters and matters that arose from reading them.

In 1742, a commission was appointed to look after Swift's affairs because of his mental incompetence. At this time there was drawn up a list of books in his library and study. One item is listed as "A Volume of Miscellaneous letters, 90 in Number, pasted in an old book by ye Dean himself."² If this was not the actual book which Letitia Pilkington helped the Dean assemble, it must have been a very similar one.

Swift had written a poem on his own death; and when Mrs. Pilkington was at his house, he showed it to her and told her she could take it home if she would promise not to

¹Ibid., p. 60.

²Harold Williams, Dean Swift's Library, p. 27.

copy it or to show it to anyone. She kept her promise but memorized the poem and on several occasions quoted it to friends. Subsequently, the Dean called her to come to him and accused her of breaking her promise. He said that a parody on the poem had appeared, published in London, and that since Mrs. Pilkington was the only one that had seen the poem she must have sent a copy of it to someone. She denied this but admitted that she had memorized it and quoted it to some friends. When Swift would not believe that she could have memorized the poem, she asked him to test her on her memory of Shakespeare, to read any line from any of Shakespeare's plays, and she would go on with the passage. He selected an odd line from Macbeth, and, as promised, she completed the whole speech. After he had tested her with several other passages, the Dean took from the shelf a copy of Hudibras and asked her to examine him in the same way. She found him equally able in the art of memory. As a matter of fact, the whole episode was simply one of Swift's inexplicable whims, for Mrs. Pilkington found shortly thereafter that the Dean had composed the parody himself and had sent it to Pilkington to be given to the printer.¹

In the fall of 1731, Mrs. Pilkington was expecting a child. Swift had promised to be the child's godfather if it were a boy. The child was a boy, but he died after five

¹Ibid., p. 88.

short days of life. Swift took the opportunity to send his friend four guineas wrapped up in paper and hidden in a loaf. With it, he wrote:

Madam,

I send you a piece of plum-cake, which I did intend should be spent at your christening; if you have any objection to the plums, or do not like to eat them, you may return them . . .¹

To this, Mrs. Pilkington replied:

Sir,

I have heard that ostriches could digest iron, but you gave me a harder task, when you bid me eat gold, but suppose I should, like the pure streams of Tagus, flow potable gold, the interpretation of which is that I mean to drink your health this minute in a glass of sack, and am, with the upmost respect. . .²

We have considerable evidence of the fact that Swift, having found Letitia a worthy protegee, corrected, scolded, and praised her, all of which disciplines, presumably, are of benefit to a pupil. Writing her memoirs several years after his death, and long after their friendship had ceased, she acknowledged her debt to him, and it is impossible to attribute any ulterior motives to a declaration of this sort:

If I have any merit as a writer, I must gratefully acknowledge it due to the pains he took to teach me to think and speak with propriety; though to tell the truth, he was a very rough sort of tutor for one of my years and sex; for whenever I made use of an inelegant phrase, I was sure of a deadly pinch, and frequently received chastisement before I knew my crime.³

¹Ball, op. cit., IV, 261.

²Ibid.

³Op. cit., p. 74.

Pilkington went to London in 1732 to accept the post of chaplain to the Lord Mayor, a position which Swift had secured for him and had urged him to accept. Swift had also written Pope recommending the young man, and Pope had obligingly invited him to his home for the week-end. Letitia, receiving a letter from her husband filled with words of praise that Pope had given him, took the letter to Swift to show him how well the young man was getting on in London literary circles. How deflated and disappointed she must have been when Swift showed her a letter he had just received from Pope, declaring Pilkington to be a shallow, conceited, impertinent fellow! The baffled young woman went so far as to suggest that possibly Pope erred in judgment. Thereupon the Dean flew into a rage and asked her if she thought her judgment superior to that of Alexander Pope.¹ She left the Deanery in tears and the next morning received from Swift the following letter:

Madam,

You must shake off the leavings of your sex. If you cannot keep a secret and take a chiding, you will quickly be out of my sphere. Corrigible people are to be chid; those who are otherwise may be very safe from any lectures of mine; I should rather choose to indulge them in their follies, than attempt to set them right. I desire you may not inform your husband of what is past, for a reason I shall give you when I see you, which may be this evening if you will.²

When Letitia called on the Dean that evening, he explained

¹Ibid., p. 86.

²Ball, op. cit., IV, 354.

that if Matthew knew of this letter it would cause him to turn against Pope and might cause considerable unpleasantness. The incident was closed, and Mrs. Pilkington took her chiding in good spirit.

Swift knew that Mrs. Pilkington would take from him endless chiding, teasing, and sometimes sarcasm. The following poem is typical of his attitude toward her:

DAPHNE

Daphne knows, with equal ease,
 How to vex and how to please;
 But the folly of her sex
 Makes her sole delight to vex.
 Never woman more devis'd
 Surer ways to be despis'd:
 Paradoxes weakly wielding,
 Always conquer'd, never yielding.
 To dispute, her chief delight,
 With not one opinion right;
 Thick her arguments she lays on,
 And with cavils combats reason;
 Answers in decisive way,
 Never hears what you can say;
 Still her odd perverseness shows
 Chiefly where she nothing knows;
 And where she is most familiar,
 Always peevisher and sillier;
 All her spirits in a flame
 When she knows she's most to blame.
 Send me hence ten thousand miles,
 From a face that always smiles:
 None could ever act that part
 But a Fury in her heart.
 Ye who hate such inconsistence,
 To be easy, keep your distance:
 Or in folly still befriend her,
 But have no concern to mend her.
 Lose not time to contradict her,
 Nor endeavor to convict her.
 Never take it in your thought
 That she'll own, or cure a fault.
 Into contradiction warm her,
 Then, perhaps, you may reform her:

Only take this rule along,
 Always to advise her wrong:
 And reprove her when she's right;
 She may then grow wise for spite.
 No--that scheme will ne'er succeed,
 She has better learnt her creed:
 She's too cunning and too skillful,
 When to yield, and when be willful.
 Nature holds her forth two mirrors,
 One for truth, and one for errors:
 That looks hideous, fierce and frightful;
 This is flattering and delightful:
 That she throws away as foul:
 Sits by this to dress her soul.
 Thus you have the case in view,
 Daphne, 'twixt the Dean and you,
 Heaven forbid he should despise thee!
 But will never more advise thee.¹

That Mrs. Pilkington was contented to bear the barbs of the Dean's irony is evident in the following episode concerning Swift's poem "Death and Daphne," an extremely uncomplimentary picture of a young woman scorned by Death as an unworthy matrimonial prospect, and Lord Orrery's observation of Mrs. Pilkington reading this poem in Swift's presence:

I had scarce been half an hour in her company, before she asked me, if I had seen the Dean's poem upon Death and Daphne. As I told her I had not, she immediately unlocked a cabinet, and bringing out the manuscript, read it to me with a seeming satisfaction, of which, at that time, I doubted the sincerity. While she was reading, the Dean was perpetually correcting her for bad pronunciation, and for placing a wrong emphasis upon particular words. As soon as she had gone thorough sic the composition, she assured me smilingly, that the portrait of Daphne was drawn for herself: I begged to be excused from believing it, and protested that I could not see one feature that had the least resemblance, but the Dean immediately burst into a fit of laughter. 'You fancy, sic says he, "that you are very polite, but you

¹Williams, Poems of Jonathan Swift, III, 906-7.

are much mistaken. That Lady had rather be a Daphne drawn by me, than a Sacharissa by any other pencil.' She confirmed what he had said, with great earnestness.¹

Swift, however, was not always harsh and critical in his treatment of Letitia Pilkington. The two following poems by her elicited the highest praise from him. The first had just appeared in a London newspaper under the name of Lord Chancellor Talbot's twelve-year-old daughter. Mrs. Pilkington commented on the plagiarism and sent the newspaper copy to the Dean:

Paper

O spotless paper, fair and white!
On whom, by force, constrained, I write,
How cruel am I to destroy
Thy purity to please a boy?²
Ungrateful I thus to abuse
The fairest servant of the muse.
Dear friend to whom I oft impart
The choicest secrets of my heart;
Ah, what atonement can be made
For spotless innocence betrayed?
How fair, how lovely didst thou show,
Like lillied banks or falling snow!
But now, alas, become my prey,
No floods can wash thy stains away.
Yet this small comfort I can give,
That which destroyed, shall make thee live.³

The second poem she wrote to accompany an eagle's quill which she sent the Dean on his birthday after learning that he was

¹Orrery, op. cit., pp. 127, 128.

²Hunting for a subject for a poem, she asked her brother, "What shall I write on?" "Why paper, of course," he replied.

³Pilkington, op. cit., p. 75.

to receive a writing book and an inkstand from Lord Orrery and Dr. Delany, respectively, with an accompanying poem from each:

Shall then my kindred all my glory claim
And boldly rob me of eternal fame?
To ev'ry art my gen'rous aid I lend,
To music, painting, poetry, a friend.
'Tis I celestial Harmony inspire,
When fixed to strike the sweetly warbling wire;
To the faithful canvas have consigned
Each bright idea of the painter's mind;
Behold from Raphael's sky-dipped pencils rise
Such heavenly scenes as charm the gazer's eyes.
O let me now aspire to higher praise,
Ambition to transcribe your deathless lays;
Nor thou, immortal bard, my aid refuse--
Accept me as the servant of your muse;
Then shall the world my wondrous worth declare,
And all mankind your matchless pen revere.¹

Swift seemed to have been genuinely pleased with these poetical offerings, for Mrs. Pilkington soon received from him the following letter:

Madam,

I send you your bit of newspaper, with the verses, than which I never saw better in their kind. I have the same opinion of those you were pleased to write upon me, as have also some particular friends of genius and taste, to whom I ventured to communicate them, who universally agree with me. But as I cannot with decency show them except to a very few, I hope, for both our sakes, others will do it for me. I can only assure you I value your present as much as either of the others, only you must permit it to be turned into a pen, which office I will perform with my own hand, and never permit any other to use it.²

In 1733 Letitia, at Pilkington's insistence, went to London to join him, after he had been there about nine months.

¹Ibid., p. 77.

²Ball, op. cit., IV, 371.

It was an unhappy visit that resulted in the definite deterioration of Mrs. Pilkington's reputation. While she was in London, her husband commissioned a friend of his, James Worsdale, to attend his wife while he kept company with a popular actress. Pilkington tried to promote an affair between his wife and his friend, for reasons which are impossible to comprehend. When her husband decided to remain in London after the expiration of his year's term as chaplain, Letitia returned home alone to face the fact that rumors of all sorts were being spread about her conduct in London. When Pilkington did come home, he was penniless. He showed little affection or consideration for his wife, whose troubles were multiplied by her father's death as the result of a knife wound, said to have been inflicted accidentally. Pilkington began being seen regularly with the widow Warren and would not provide for the children. Through all these adversities, Dr. Swift still maintained his friendship with the young couple. In 1736 he wrote a friendly, pleasant letter to Mrs. Pilkington, which is the last evidence to be found of friendly relations between the two:

Madam,
You are very captious; for in my last letter, I only said in the beginning, "Madam, you lie." I have a great deal worse than that to say, when I write to ladies, and my fault is, what my enemies give out, that I use you too well. I send you some fruit of my own planting, and like a fool, I send you the best, though you never give the bearer a farthing, and when you do, may you never be worth another. Let me know perfectly the condition of your eldest sister. I

will wait on you soon, if health will permit me. I am tolerably, which is more than you can pretend to. My humble service to the little woman's little man.¹

The "little woman's little man," however, was plotting a move that would result in the permanent disgrace of Mrs. Pilkington and in his own exile from Dean Swift's grace. Several times Pilkington had tried to arrange a trap for his wife so that he could catch her in a compromising situation with another man and condemn her. Finally he found a man in her room at two o'clock in the morning, had several constables surprise them, and ordered her out of the house. Mrs. Pilkington insisted that the man had brought her a book which she was anxious to read, and since he would not leave it with her, she insisted that he stay until she finished reading it. Whether or not her story was true made little difference to the scandal-hungry public; and after the matter had been advertised in the divorce court, Letitia was ruined. Swift was forced to drop his acquaintance with them, both Letitia and Matthew, and in March, 1738, he wrote to John Barber:

. . . Dr. Delany, the most eminent preacher we have, is a very unlucky recommender; for he forced me to countenance Pilkington, introduced him to me, and praised the wit, virtue, and humor of him and his wife; whereas he proved the falsest rogue and she the most profligate whore in either kingdom.²

Swift's first words upon meeting Letitia, that she was "early engaged in trouble," seem to have been prophetic.

¹Ibid., V, 381.

²Ibid., VI, 68.

From this point forward, Mrs. Pilkington's story is a sad one. As a literary hack, ghost writer, operator of a small shop in St. James's Street in London, she managed to eke out an existence most of the time. Colley Cibber, the poet laureate, one of her admirers and patrons, came to her aid in 1742 when she was imprisoned in Marshalsea for debt. Finally, during the last few years before her death her situation improved. People were beginning to like her poems, her Memoirs was selling, and a play of hers had been acted with some success in Dublin.¹ Perhaps a ray of light may be shed on her last years by William Jessop, who wrote to Bishop Percy, describing a Swift manuscript he had given the Bishop:

I believe it is an autograph of a man, who in his day had some celebrity, to a woman of the same description. With her I had several conversations, but not until she was reduced to a state of burned brandy and fired down into weakness; in clearer language, not until drunkenness had numbed her faculties. Yet she still retained some vestiges of that wit which had ranked her amongst the foremost of Swift's female worshippers.²

It was possibly in a state somewhat similar to this that John Wesley found her in April, 1750:

I breakfasted with one of this Society, and found she had a lodger I little thought of. It was the famous Mrs. Pilkington, who soon made an excuse for following me up stairs. I talked with her seriously about an hour: we then sung, 'Happy Magdalene,' She appeared to be exceedingly struck: how long the impression may last, God knows.³

¹The Turkish Court or the London Apprentice.

²Leslie Shane, The Script of Jonathan Swift and Other Essays (London: Oxford Press, 1935), p. 73.

³The Heart of John Wesley's Journal, ed. F. W. McDonald (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1906), p. 182.

It is sad to compare the precocious young poetess of Swift's early acquaintance with the disillusioned, disreputable woman who died, alone, in a Dublin rooming house in 1750.

In choosing the medium of the memoir in which to express herself, Mrs. Pilkington demonstrated that she was, consciously or instinctively, aware of the literary trend of the times. Mary Manley had published the New Atalantis with great success. The public was avid for anecdotes of the great and near great. The Cambridge History of English Literature says that behind the scenes acted by the statesmen and patriots

may be perceived a slowly gathering knot of observers and note-takers, the chroniclers and memoir writers of the period. They offer us a unique and fascinating picture of the privileged classes who then presided over the fortunes of the country, and they open a new chapter in literary history.¹

Dr. Johnson and John Wesley continually urged their friends to keep journals. "Those relations are therefore commonly of most value," announced Johnson in Idler No. 84, "in which the writer tells his own story." Mrs. Pilkington told her own story, and the story of a Jonathan Swift that few others knew.

For two hundred years her name has been kept alive by the reluctant indebtedness of Swift's biographers. Thackeray used her account of Swift in his English Humorists.

¹CHEL, IX, 243.

Leslie Stephen said her "anecdotes of Swift's last years were interesting but untrustworthy,"¹ but Shane Leslie said, "her Memoirs embalm a partial but faithful reflection of the Dean's declining grandeur."² Gerald Moriarty acknowledged his debt to her in Dean Swift and His Writings. W. D. Taylor admitted that it is from her that "one learns best what kind of mirth seasoned his (Swift's) conversation at this time."³ Carl Van Doren uses many of her anecdotes in his Swift. Without the very vivid sketches by Mrs. Pilkington, the Jonathan Swift that we know would be infinitely less colorful and human.

Although Mrs. Pilkington considered herself primarily a poetess, her poems, adequate and typical, brought her little notice. Probably the greatest honor she ever received as a poet was to have her poem, "Sorrow," included by Wordsworth in the "Poems and Extracts" he chose for Lady Mary Lowther's reading. In this volume her poem has for company verses by Shakespeare and Dryden.⁴

Swift's greatest act of patronage to the little Dublin poetess was simply to befriend her and to make her

¹Swift (London: Macmillan and Co., 1928), p. 196.

²The Skull of Swift (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill and Co., 1928), p. 6.

³Jonathan Swift (London: Peter Davies, 1933), p. 283.

⁴Iris Barry, Introduction, op. cit., p. 20.

welcome at his house for a few years. Almost certainly, were it not for Mrs. Pilkington's association with the Dean in his last years in Dublin, and her ability to write down her remembrances of him, she would have long since disappeared into the mist of obscurity which hides the numberless, nameless versifiers of all times.

CHAPTER V

COMPARISONS AND THE BROAD VIEW

One of the first points that occur to us in making a comparison of the five literary women with whom Swift was associated, is that they were all married. In this respect they were entirely typical of the women of their era. Marriage, virtually the only course open to a woman of Swift's day, was entered into almost without question. If a woman relinquished certain legal rights and gained definite responsibilities upon marrying, she also became, upon leaving her father's house, an individual in her own right. This was especially true of the women in the middle classes, where the wife often worked beside her husband and thereby came in contact with a stimulating world of ideas denied to the sheltered, pampered ladies of society.

Simone de Beauvoir calls material independence one of the necessary conditions for inner liberty.¹ Assuming inner liberty to be necessary to literary creation, and material independence to be closely related to economic and social status, let us examine our authoresses in this light. Although Mrs. Manley was of aristocratic birth, the unfortunate circumstances of her marriage and her subsequent loss of

¹The Second Sex (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953), p. 155.

reputation reduced her to virtually the social level of the three citizens' wives and the poor clergyman's wife of Dublin. Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Pilkington seem closer in spirit than do any of the others. Perhaps this similarity is because, duped by the men they loved and forced to earn their own living, both turned to the medium of the memoir as having the greatest and most profitable public appeal. We might wonder, also, if this literary genre did not give them opportunity to strike back at the opposite sex--at man, to whom they both felt obliged for their downfalls. While Mrs. Barber was often pushed by economic necessity, one feels that the pressure on her was not so great as it was on Mrs. Manley and Mrs. Pilkington, partly because of the fact that Mrs. Barber's husband, unreliable as he seemed to be, was somewhere in the background. Mrs. Grierson, secure in a prosperous, congenial home, was able to write entirely for pleasure, with no consideration of economic necessity. Mrs. Sican, who probably did not write at all, might have done so had not her wealthy husband provided so amply for her and "checked her vein," to use a phrase from Swift's description of his attitude.

Let us for a moment, in a flight of fancy, transplant these women from Swift's century to our own. By translating them into contemporary characters we might be able to see more clearly their relative positions in the literary world. We can imagine that Constantia Grierson is publishing scholarly

articles in Modern Philology and an occasional poem in the Atlantic Monthly. Mrs. Manley, whose first risqué novel was made a Book-of-the-Month selection, is busily at work on a sequel. Failing to find success with a first novel, Letitia Pilkington is making a living writing short stories for Cosmopolitan and Ladies' Home Journal. Mrs. Barber's thin volume of poems gathers dust on most bookstore shelves, though aunts and grandmothers often receive them for Christmas, grateful for their morality and sanity in a turbulent world. Mrs. Sican, President of the literary branch of the Woman's Club, reviews from time to time the published works of the other four women, serves tea, and plans to write something sometime.

In view of the many discussions today of men's attitude toward their wives' careers, one must wonder at the sentiments of the husbands of the literary women of Swift's day. At one extreme is Mrs. Pilkington's husband, whose jealousy of her literary prowess played a part in his ultimate treachery to her, or so she would have us believe. Sulking and pouting whenever Letitia was complimented on her verses or her conversation, Pilkington used the weapons of sarcasm and scorn to belittle his wife.¹ Speaking of her husband's intolerance, Letitia said:

¹Pilkington, op. cit., p. 79.

If a man cannot bear his friend that should write, much less can he endure it in his wife: it seems to set them too much upon a level with their lords and masters; and this I take to be the reason why even men of sense discountenance learning in women.¹

While Pilkington's disapproval did little to dampen Mrs. Pilkington's creative ardor, it apparently made life unpleasant while they were together. Mrs. Sican, as we have seen,² had a rich, surly husband who "cheeked her vein," an expression which one assumes indicates intolerance of her literary interests. Of Jonathan Barber's attitude we have no hint. Agreeing to go to London to live when his wife desired to do so, he apparently did not oppose her publishing venture, but we cannot imagine that he did anything to encourage it. Mrs. Grierson, so ideal in so many respects, seems also to have had the ideal husband. As a printer he was in a position not only to understand and appreciate her genius, but to publish her works as well. We must always wonder what would have been the fruits of this happy combination if Mrs. Grierson had not died at an early age. Since John Manley departed from the scene before his "wife" had ventured into the writing career that was to sustain her the rest of her life, we cannot know of his approbation or disapproval. Mrs. Manley's liaison with John Barber, the English printer, seems to us to fall quite

¹Ibid., p. 82.

²Supra., p. 45.

short of the perfection of the Grierson menage.

One point of comparison between Mrs. Pilkington and Mrs. Manley which I find puzzling is the attitude of Swift toward the questionably morality of the two women. Accepting the situation of Mrs. Manley as Barber's mistress and knowing, undoubtedly, her past history, Swift supported her literary endeavors and praised her as having "very generous principles for one of her sort."¹ In Dublin, twenty-five years later, upon hearing about Mrs. Pilkington's indiscretion, he called her a "profligate whore"² and suspended his friendship with her. Whether his position as Dean of St. Patrick's forced him to take this stand or whether his intolerance of women's weakness had increased with his age, it is hard to say. Perhaps immorality in London was a quite different and less serious matter than indiscretion in Dublin.

Viewing our authoresses as a part of an ever present movement to establish women as men's equals, we must consider them to be of some importance. The freedom of women to come and go, or to buy and sell, while a matter of practical expedience, is less important than the freedom to think and to express oneself. Relegated to the realm of a secondary, inferior being by the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, and most men throughout the ages, women, or at least some women, have

¹Supra., p. 32.

²Supra., p. 90.

never ceased to struggle and hope for independence and equality. Aristotle's theory that a female is a female by virtue of a certain lack of Qualities, and female nature is afflicted with a natural defectiveness,¹ became so firmly implanted in both male and female minds that two thousand years have seen but little alteration of the concept. Mrs. Manley and the Dublin poetesses, by claiming their right to self-expression, added their slight force to the ever-growing army of women who, considering themselves men's intellectual equals, are not afraid to assert their beliefs.

Jonathan Swift, by approving of and giving assistance to literary women, at a time when such women were extremely unfashionable, contributed his not inconsequential support to women's bid for equality. Quintana verified this when he said:

Swift did not look upon woman as a flagitious and inferior being; properly, she was man's equal, contemptible only when she assumed the conventionally feminine role and laid reason aside for wiles and affected airs. When Swift browbeat the women of his acquaintance it was to make them act like the rational beings that he assumed they were.²

Possibly because of Swift's position as a clergyman, as well as because of his literary fame, the intellectual women of Dublin came to him for understanding and support,

¹de Beauvoir, op. cit., p. xvi.

²The Mind and Art of Jonathan Swift (New York: Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 171-2.

and they found it. Mrs. Pilkington and Mrs. Barber received the most advice from the Dean because they sought it and admitted their need. Swift spoke of Mrs. Barber as having one quality that all good poets should have--a readiness to take correction and advice.¹ To Mrs. Pilkington he once said, "You must shake off the leavings of your sex. If you cannot . . . take a chiding, you will be quickly out of my sphere."² If a woman wanted literary help from Swift, she had to ask for it and then learn to accept it with utmost grace. In behalf of these two women Swift spent considerable time and effort endeavoring to bring them to the attainments of which he thought them capable. Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Grierson, and Mrs. Sican, having less need of him and less opportunity for his assistance, served principally to broaden his conception and liberalize his views of literary women.

For the measure of equality that women enjoy today in education, society, and marriage, they owe at least some debt to the Dean of St. Patrick's. By recognizing the injustice of their inferior position in the life of his time and by taking action to counteract it, he became a patron not only to literary women but to women of all time.

¹Supra., p. 101.

²Ibid., p. 84.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

A List of Persons to Whom Swift Wrote on Behalf of Mrs. Barber

John Gay	Poet, dramatist.
Alexander Pope	Poet.
Lord Bathhurst	Allen, first Baron and Earl of Bathhurst.
Lord Carteret	Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.
Lord Pembroke	Richard Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke. Attached to the court of George II.
Lady Worsley	Frances, wife of Sir Robert Worsley, granddaughter of Viscount Weymouth.
Lady Elizabeth Germaine	Wife of Sir John Germaine. Second daughter of the Earl of Berkeley.
Duke of Dorset	Lionel Cranfield Sackville, seventh earl and first duke of Dorset.
Duchess of Queensbury	Lady Catherine Hyde, daughter of the fourth earl of Clarendon.
Lord Orrery	John Boyle, fifth earl of Orrery, afterwards fifth earl of Cork.
Countess of Suffolk	Henrietta Howard, wife of Charles. Bedchamber woman to the Princess of Wales.
Countess Granville	Mother of Lord Carteret.
John Arbuthnot	Physician and wit, son of Scotch clergyman.
John Barber	Printer, Lord Mayor of London.
Mrs. Mary Caesar	Wife of the Treasurer of the Navy.

- Mrs. Pratt Daughter of Sir John Brooks, wife of Cap't. John Pratt, Deputy Vice Treasurer of Ireland and Constable of Dublin Castle.
- Mrs. Mary Pendarves Formerly Mary Granville, later married to Swift's friend Patrick Delany.
- Mrs. Conduitt Catherine Barton, niece of Sir Isaac Newton.
- Andrew Fountain Virtuoso of Narford in Norfolk. In Ireland, Usher of the Black Rod.

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