

ADDISON'S INFLUENCE ON THE SOCIAL REFORM OF HIS AGE

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH  
IN THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE  
TEXAS STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

DEPARTMENT OF  
ENGLISH

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DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST, 1936

Thesis  
T1936  
B922a

# TEXAS STATE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN

COLLEGE OF INDUSTRIAL ARTS

DENTON, TEXAS

August 22, 1936

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under my supervision by Doris T. Buck  
entitled ADDISON'S INFLUENCE ON THE SOCIAL  
REFORM OF HIS AGE

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements  
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59163



### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For valuable assistance in the writing of this thesis, I wish to thank Dr. L. M. Ellison and to express my gratitude to him for the encouragement which he has given me throughout the study. I am also grateful to my father, Dr. J. F. Tomlinson, who has made this year of study possible.

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## CHAPTER I

### A SURVEY OF THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE LAST HALF OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The movement toward social reform during the Queen Anne period was the result of forces which had been at work throughout the last half of the seventeenth century. In order to understand the social conditions of the age, a knowledge of the preceding fifty years is necessary. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent of Addison's influence in bringing about social and moral reforms which took place in the early part of the eighteenth century. However, the work of the social reformer can be measured only when it is presented against the background of the age which he sought to reform. It is but logical to preface a study of Joseph Addison's influence on social reform with a survey of the social, political, and literary tendencies which brought about the conditions in English social life that prevailed at the beginning of the Queen Anne period.

Early in the seventeenth century the struggle between King and Parliament, which Elizabeth's personal

popularity had held in check, was resumed with the accession of the first Stuart. As the century progressed, increasing bitterness between the two factions made civil war inevitable. The country was sharply divided into two classes which were motivated partly by political and partly by religious principles. The Royalists were chiefly concerned with the political aspects involved, while the Parliamentarians were equally concerned with the religious aspects. The king and his adherents--the aristocrats and their dependents--defended the theory of divine right and the supremacy of the Established Church. The opposition, composed of the trading and commercial classes, upheld the doctrine of popular rights as embodied in Parliamentary rule and in Puritanism. Cromwell and Milton were typical Puritans, and it was the zeal of such leaders rather than superiority of numbers which brought success to their cause. Feudal wars, the rise of monarchical government, theological controversies centering about the Reformation, and finally the contest between King and Parliament, had culminated in a complete triumph for the Parliamentarians with the execution of Charles I in 1649.

The Commonwealth was an outgrowth of the Reformation, which had tended toward a new arrangement of society according to religious and political creeds instead of the



feudal order of the Middle Ages. Because the middle classes constituted the backbone of the Puritan regime, they gained control of the government--usurping the position hitherto occupied by the aristocracy alone, and never again have they wholly lost their hold on the government. Although Parliamentary rule was not in any sense democratic, and no true reform was brought about in it until the latter part of the century, Puritanism gave a semblance of reality to democracy by proclaiming all men equal before God.

The growth of Puritanism had important results in the social and literary life of the country. One of the first acts of the Long Parliament, in 1642, was to close the theatres, and for fourteen years no regular performances were given. The Elizabethan drama had lost most of its glories since the beginning of the century, and so it was unable to survive this blow. All art and literature except that of a didactic nature were also frowned upon. Milton wrote no poetry of importance during this period, but devoted himself to the writing of political pamphlets. However, there is nothing unusual in the absence of a national literature during the Commonwealth, as a period of political strife has never been favorable for the development of a great literature. Even though Cromwell's government was very efficient, it was nothing less than a military despot-

ism. Every phase of life, including the simplest amusement, was subjected to harsh and intolerant regulation. This policy of attempting to force all men to live in accordance with their own narrow views led many Puritans, especially those who were not religious fanatics, to turn against the Commonwealth. "If this be liberty", said a contemporary, "what nation in Europe lives in servitude?"

After the death of Cromwell, the threat of anarchy was imminent for a period of eighteen months. Every one had grown weary of the extreme austerity of the Puritan regime, and the uncertainty of the future made a reaction in favor of monarchical government inevitable. It was the only form of government that all factions would agree to. So the trend of events in 1659 brought about the next year, a restoration which royalty alone could never have accomplished.

This restoration, however, was not the reestablishment of the Crown with its former prerogatives unimpaired. All the salutary laws limiting the power of the executive for which Pym and Hampden and Cromwell had struggled continued to be in effect, and thus the absolutism of the Tudors and the early Stuarts had been rendered difficult of repetition. The revolution was not reversed.<sup>1</sup>

The sudden relief afforded by the security of a sta-

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<sup>1</sup> E.M.Hulme, A History of the British People. (The Century Company, New York and London, 1924.), p. 313.

ble government caused a violent reaction against the extreme rigidity of morals enforced by Puritan tyranny, so that the lowest stage of moral laxity in national history was reached during the Restoration period. Idealists were superseded by men with no ideals, and disillusionment was reflected in the thoughts, ideas, and manners of the period. The nation, emerging from the restraint exercised by the government for twenty years, manifested whole-hearted enthusiasm for the looseness and immorality which characterized court life. The court that Charles gathered about him was the most brilliant the nation had ever witnessed. With its establishment a period of prolonged festivities ensued during which the intrigues and extravagances of the King and his courtiers became such scandals that the age gained lasting and unenviable notoriety.

The King was handsome, affable, and charming in manner. His gayety, good nature, and freedom from pretense made him generally popular, but his conduct, both public and private, admits of no justification. Whenever he had the opportunity, he sacrificed the interests of England to satisfy his own selfish desires, and only his fondness for pleasure and his laziness prevented him from being a tyrant. Because of his unwillingness to exert himself against prolonged opposition and his determination "not to go on his

travels again", Parliament was able to check any tendency toward that absolutism which was characteristic of the Stuarts. Therefore, the government during the Restoration was a monarchy limited by Parliamentary rule, and the transfer of power from Crown to Parliament went on steadily during the greater part of Charles's reign.

After experiment with the so-called democracy of the Commonwealth had ended, the wide-spread feeling of a return to hard reality led to corruption in politics, as well as in society and in literature. Every one whose interests were concerned welcomed the re-establishment of the monarchy as a stable order of government. Under the cloak of promoting public welfare, all classes set out to gratify their own desires at no expense to themselves. The nobility recovered the prestige and sinecures it had previously held, and the middle classes obtained the peace and opportunities so indispensable for the promotion of business interests. Seemingly all the old world of hereditary caste and ancient custom was re-instated. For the time being, the aristocratic social order triumphed over democracy, and the Cavaliers enjoyed a strength out of all proportion to that they had held before the Civil War. Most of the Royalists, whose estates had been confiscated, recovered their property, but they no longer controlled the wealth of the country.

During the twenty years of the Commonwealth, the rural gentry had suffered probably more than any other class. Their estates, which constituted the whole of their wealth, had been either confiscated or rendered useless, so that they had no means of sustenance. Consequently, their standard of living was so altered that they had become boorish in manner, prejudiced, and illiterate. However, at the Restoration, they resumed their former position in society and regained control of some of the best public and ecclesiastical offices that they regarded as theirs by hereditary right. The House of Lords was recruited from their ranks, and so lords and gentry formed the ruling class during the first part of the period. The Church also identified its interests with theirs.

After the fanaticism of the Puritan regime had passed, religion became a joke and bore the brunt of the scorn and ridicule of the Cavaliers. Even the more serious-minded regarded it as merely a conventional form necessary to hold society together. With religion out of favor, the clergy lost the power and prestige they had formerly held. The dignitaries of the Church were no longer drawn from the peerage, and at one time during the period only two bishops were sons of peers. Ecclesiastical offices that had attractive salaries were more often bestowed on men for po-

litical services than on those who merited them. The new regime was for the especial benefit of the re-constituted hierarchy in both political and social relationships.

In revenge for the civil disabilities imposed upon Anglicans during the Commonwealth, Cavaliers discriminated against the Puritans, politically and socially. The middle classes, who had held all political power during the preceding period, now devoted themselves to commerce and business. Instead of attempting to change the government into a middle-class institution, they accepted the new order without protest, and left all ostensible positions of power and authority to the nobility and gentry. These restricted classes, who continued to be the most substantial and sober, were content to remain in social obscurity. However, since they had acquired a permanent interest in politics during the Commonwealth, they gradually and quietly regained their influence in the affairs of government.

The Restoration had been more of a social than a political reaction, so morals and manners underwent radical changes. The influence of Charles II and his court on morals in general was most pernicious. Since the court set the standards for polite society, their dissolute manners were considered part of good breeding and essential to charm. The Civil War had been a conflict between two modes

of living: that of the nobility who loved pleasure and ease, and that of the middle classes who were austere and serious of purpose. The triumph of the latter had swept away a court and its vices, but with the return of Charles, there was restored a court with worse vices. The Cavaliers' hatred for everything Puritan led to ridicule of all that characterized the regime. The extreme piety, zeal, and also hypocrisy, incited the Cavaliers to the opposite extreme in ostentatious profligacy. The Puritans had banned all that was pleasant in life, so the Cavaliers re-instated pleasure as their only God. It became an age in which pleasure was the main purpose in life, and it was enjoyed to the fullest. The education of children of the nobility was primarily training in social accomplishments. The eldest son was usually sent abroad with a tutor whose chief qualification must be knowledge of the world. Only younger sons went to the university or were apprenticed to some trade. Girls were sent to boarding schools at an early age to be taught dancing, music, painting, and French. On finishing school, they returned home to complete their education by reading the romances, plays, and poems that were fashionable for the time-being.

Life at the court of Charles was, at best, a coarse replica of that of Versailles. French influence prevailed



not only in dress, manners, and amusements, but it also penetrated their modes of thinking and feeling. There was a continuous round of festivities at which the chief amusements were drinking, gambling, dancing, and flirting. However, the King's favorite pastime was attending the theatre. At the beginning of the period, Charles and his courtiers were practically its only patrons, but soon the theatre became the social center, as well as the moral symbol of the age. Restoration drama, especially comedy, was the outcome of a state of manners and of mind. Soon after the theatres were re-opened, a new type of comedy--the comedy of manners inspired by the superficialities of society--became very popular. It was a fitting vehicle for the witty, sparkling dialogue and the artistic workmanship of Sir George Etherege, Sir John Vanbrugh, William Wycherley, William Congreve, and other dramatists of the period. Since these plays mirrored the life of the court, they reflected the vitiated tastes of those for whom they were written. Their wit and humor made licentiousness very attractive. To please the court the dramatists attacked the very foundations of morality in a spirit of cynicism and contempt for conventional behavior. The dissolute character of the hero was presented as a model for a man of breeding and refinement; while all those portrayed with honest and sober character were ridiculed and

denounced. This tone of ribaldry was also intermixed with the pathos of tragedy. For a brief time the Heroic drama was the most popular form of tragedy, but it was impossible because of its artificiality. Later in the period tragedy was fashioned according to the classical unities. Shakespeare's tragedies proved very unpopular in their original form, but their adaptation to classical rules became a favorite practice among dramatists. Pepys' comments on the desirability of such adaptation is characteristic of the Restoration audience: "Fortunately these old plays have been brought up to date by skilful people who have done their work well; a gloomy tragedy like Macbeth becomes quite agreeable with pantomimic effects."

Although the low moral tone of the Restoration period was most directly reflected in the drama, there were great changes in prose and poetry. It was an age in which literature was intellectual rather than imaginative and emotional. This was due, in great part, to the French influence, which prevailed in literature as in everything else after the Restoration.

Poetry became prosaic, for it was made the vehicle for argument, controversy, and personal and political satire. Since the principles of regularity and correctness were cultivated, instead of feeling and imagination, the result was

an entirely artificial type of poetry. Two representative poems were Dryden's Absalom and Achitophel, a political satire, and Butler's Hudibras, a burlesque on Puritans.

That Charles II favored the style of the French prose writers and fostered its development in English prose was responsible for the only worth while advancement made in literature during the period. This change in style marked the beginning of modern English prose. Simplicity, clarity, and precision of expression were substituted for the intricate and elaborate style of the preceding age. The spontaneity and naturalness which characterize conversation were aimed at by the foremost prose writers of the day. This familiar style was peculiarly suited to the age for several reasons: a spirit of criticism and of reasoning marked the intellectual life of the age; a growing interest in science needed plain and unambiguous writing for its exposition; conflicting social interests and opposing political parties called for a vigorous prose. The pen war between Whigs and Tories, which raged during the first part of the eighteenth century, began during the Restoration. Controversial writing tended to develop exactness and simplicity of language for the benefit of public opinion. These and other influences were instrumental in the transformation which prose underwent. Besides the prose dealing with sub-

jects of contemporary interest, there were diaries, journals, and memoirs which have proved of great value to social history because they give detailed accounts of contemporary life. Pepys' Diary, Evelyn's Diary, and Burnet's History of My Own Times are among the best of these works.

In literature the Restoration period is often called the "Age of Dryden", who is known as "the greatest man of a little age." His work in drama, in poetry, and in prose led in adopting the new principles of writing, so that he was really the most representative man of letters of the age; and he was acknowledged as its literary dictator by his contemporaries.

Because literature is a social product which reflects existing conditions, it is apparent that Restoration literature lacks those qualities of moral strength, spiritual fervor, and creative energy so necessary for a literature to be great. However, analysis, criticism, realism, and satire are qualities of its literary activity which have been definite influences in the development of literature, especially of prose literature.

With the accession of James II there was no definite change in the general trend of affairs. But, because he was more devoted to his religion, and because he entirely lacked the tact and charm which characterized his broth-

er, he soon became very unpopular. He re-asserted the doctrine of royal prerogative so that he might favor his fellow Catholics, and in doing so, brought to a crisis the political unrest and fear of religious oppression which had been increasing during the last years of Charles's reign. The fate of James II proved that the political liberty that the Puritans had gained was not to be sacrificed, and it also put an end to the struggle between King and Parliament for supremacy in government.

The Revolution of 1688 was the true beginning of Parliamentary government in England. Thereafter, the ministers were responsible to Parliament, the representatives of the people, and not to the King. After the setting up of a new regime, there were definite signs of reaction in public opinion against the morals and manners of the Restoration, and soon elements of a distinctly moral nature were inter-fused with political motives. The political and moral transformation, which began then, marked a transition between the Restoration period and the Eighteenth Century period in which most of those features characteristic of the latter had their origin.

Increasing bitterness between political factions and contempt for political principles were characteristics which exerted great influence in the latter part of the seventeenth

century and throughout the eighteenth century. One cause was the continual intriguing of the Jacobites, which did not end until their last hopes were defeated in 1746. However, the principal cause was the rivalry for control of governmental affairs between the landed aristocracy and the rising commercial or middle classes. The latter, who had been pushed into obscurity during the Restoration period, had devoted themselves to making money. With the beginning of the modern era, wealth was no longer centered in land but included money as well, so that through economic power they gained a social and political power which steadily increased until its highest point of development was reached during the first half of the eighteenth century. These classes, who were known politically as Whigs, stood for reform, for expansion and empire, and for an energetic foreign policy. The Tories, composed mostly of country gentlemen and the clergy, were in favor of no change in the established institutions, and many of them were Jacobites.

With the beginning of modern England there was a definite shifting of the center of social gravity. The upper middle class, composed of business and professional men, was able, through wealth, to force an alliance with the hereditary nobility. Although society after 1688 remained aristocratic, the spirit of the middle classes began to pervade

its tone and manners. The moralizing tastes of the middle classes were first manifested in literature. There was a decided reaction against the cynicism and immorality of Restoration drama. Ten years after the "Glorious Revolution", Jeremy Collier published his Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage. About the same time Richard Steele and Colley Cibber introduced the sentimental comedy, which was the beginning of a more sympathetic attitude both in actual life and in literature. Other efforts toward reform had their origin through pamphlets. They were especially important in educating public opinion to the necessity of reform. This phase of reform was taken up and carried on successfully by the periodical essay during the Queen Anne period.

In this transition period between 1688 and 1700, there was a renaissance of national spirit which must exist before there can be a national literature. The reaction of the deeper instincts against the excesses of worldly corruption was the first sign of a moral awakening. Political opposition to the government of Charles II and James II, Protestant unrest, agitation by the Catholics, shame for the subjection of the English Crown to Louis XIV, disgust with the domination of French influence in art and fashion, all contributed toward the re-birth of national spirit and made



the Revolution of 1688 a decisive success.

In summarizing the history of the last half of the seventeenth century, one finds several very definite trends in political and social history which are, in turn, reflected in the literature of the period. One of the most striking features throughout the survey is the steady gain of power by Parliament. Although the Restoration was seemingly a renunciation of all that the Civil War and Commonwealth had stood for, it was a reconstruction of royalty by divine right in form only. The strife and uncertainty of the Commonwealth had worn the people out, so that they outwardly accepted the supremacy of the Crown, but in reality Parliament continued to force the Crown to surrender its prerogatives one by one. This growth in Parliamentary rule culminated in a complete triumph with the Revolution of 1688.

Another interesting feature is the varied political and social fortunes of the middle classes. However, their political history almost parallels that of Parliament, though they experienced a temporary loss of power in it during the first part of the Restoration period. Since the Middle Ages, these classes had been gaining both political and social recognition. Winning the Civil War was a triumph for them, but they made the mistake of monopolizing the government by the absolute control of Parliament. As Parliament was com-

posed wholly of their representatives, the nobility and gentry were dispossessed as completely as royalty. Naturally, these two classes united with the Crown to regain their political position, and with the Restoration, they, in turn, excluded the middle classes from society and politics. Although their social and political powers had been swept away, the middle classes continued to increase in economic power, and eventually, with the modern era, it was this power that gained for them the control of both social and political policies.

The last and probably most important feature traced in this survey is the change in social life and the resulting effect upon literature. Although all these trends have been faithfully reflected in the literatures of the several periods, the changes in morals and manners have had the most direct effect on the development of literature. The fanaticism with which the Puritans governed society inevitably resulted in a reaction to the opposite extreme and this brought about conditions just as impossible. After a period of time, necessary to reach a state of normalcy between these two extremes, had passed, the underlying principles on which English life is based again became apparent. Of course, superficially, the England of the later Stuarts was lacking in every element necessary for progress in social

life and in literature, but out of this England grew those conditions that characterized the eighteenth century and made possible the great reforms in society with which this study is concerned.

## CHAPTER II

### ADDISON IN RELATION TO HIS AGE

Addison's great influence on social reform during the Queen Anne period can be understood only by considering the factors which made his work timely. First, the realization of the need for reform brought about a spirit of humanitarianism hitherto unknown. Second, a combination of circumstances made the essay periodical, as it is represented in the Tatler and Spectator, the most suitable type of literature for directing the social movement. Third, Addison's humanistic qualities of character and literary style were especially effective in gaining for him the position of leadership which he soon attained through his writing.

Socially, the Queen Anne period was one peculiarly ready for the reformer. Class, religion, and political dissensions were characteristic of the age. With the accession of Anne, the struggle between Whigs and Tories for control of the government became more embittered, and penetrated all social and intellectual circles. Defoe says, "A Whig will no more go to the Cocoa Tree or Ozinda's, than a Tory will be

seen at the Coffee-house of St. James's." The conflict between Puritans and Cavaliers continued also, but it had become social rather than militant. The corruption, affectations, and excesses of all kinds, which had characterized Restoration society, still prevailed in the social life of fashionable circles. However, the merchants and financiers who rose to social prominence as a result of their wealth and intermarriage with impoverished aristocrats were, for the most part, descendants of the Puritans. They preserved the rigor of their forebears, tempered and refined by their new prosperity and social contacts. They began the demand for reform in morals and manners by fighting immorality and licentiousness in the theatre. As the middle classes became seriously concerned with reform and morality, social life gained decency and dignity. The number of people who clung to the superficial and dissipated habits of Restoration life gradually decreased as the age became increasingly humane and reasonable. The movement toward reform was actively supported by Anne. She encouraged such humanitarian organizations as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and the Society for Propagating the Gospel. The oldest and most influential of these associations with moral, religious, or philanthropic aims was the Society for the Reformation of Manners. Anne also kept her court free from scandal and

set a personal example as a model of propriety and respectability.

Conditions needing reform and an increasing demand for reform are seemingly all that could be necessary to insure success for the reform of morals and manners. On the contrary, there are other factors just as vital as these in the work of reform. The reformer must have an effective means for reaching those whom he wishes to reform, and he must have the ability to direct the reform he wishes to effect. It is necessary to show that several factors made the essay periodical especially suitable as an instrument for directing the social movement.

Although of earlier origin, the coffee-house of the Queen Anne period became one of the most influential institutions in London. After the isolation of earlier ages, men set about learning the art of living together amicably, even though they held different opinions. Hundreds of public coffee-houses sprang up in London, offering to all classes of people an opportunity for coming together to discuss those problems with which they were confronted. It was an age of domesticity, for men's thoughts dwelt on the every-day problems of life. The wealth of the middle classes afforded them leisure and opportunity for self-improvement. They wanted and needed guidance amid the numer-

ous perplexities of a changing social system; so they depended upon the discussions of the coffee-house circles to help them toward some standardization in these matters. The coffee-house was the newspaper, club, and business office all in one-- "the center of news, the lounge of the idler, the rendezvous for appointments, the mart for business men."<sup>1</sup> Each group had its favorite; Tories frequented the October, Whigs the Kit-Kat, scholars the Grecian, and business men Garraway's. Hence, the coffee-house became a great socializing factor, but its influence on the social movement would necessarily have been limited if the periodical had not become the organ of the coffee-house. Since the essayists were members of one or more coffee-house groups, they were able to choose topics which they knew to be of greatest interest and to discuss them according to general opinion. The periodical essayists were influenced not only in their choice of subject-matter by the conversations they heard, but also in their adoption of an informal, conversational style of writing which further insured the attention of the reading public,

Previous to this time, there had been no wholesome,

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<sup>1</sup> John Ashton, Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne, (Chatto and Windus, London, 1925.), p, 161.

light reading-matter that might be termed literature. Although numerous journals, news sheets, and pamphlets were published, they depended upon political and religious prejudices or scandal and vulgar gossip for their subject-matter. However, these inferior and unsatisfactory writings had gained a wide popularity among the middle classes. Their evident desire for reading-matter, written in a style and manner that they could appreciate, proved that the periodical had unlimited possibilities as a type of literature.

Although the Tatler and Spectator are the most famous of all periodicals, the history of the periodical did not begin with them. There were various types of periodical literature throughout the seventeenth century, but the immediate predecessors of the periodical essay did not appear until the latter part of the century. The best of these were John Dunton's Athenian Mercury (1690-1711) a "learned" periodical; Roger L'Estrange's Observer (1681-1687); Edward Ward's London Spy (1698-1700); and Daniel Defoe's Weekly Review of the Affairs of France (1704-1713).

The eighteenth century periodical resembled these predecessors in several ways, but Defoe's Weekly Review was the only one that approached the Tatler and the Spectator in style and subject-matter. That Steele obtained hints for the plan of the Tatler from these earlier peri-



odicals has never been denied, but, with the exception of Defoe, he was the first of the periodical essayists to endow his paper with a style and tone suitable to the subject-matter, and at the same time, attractive to readers. This easy, familiar style was first used by the French essayist, Montaigne. He had many imitators, but previous to the Queen Anne period, no one had adapted the manner to the subject-matter of the periodical.

All types of literature indicate the relationship between contemporary life and literature. This is particularly true of the essay, since it is easily moulded according to circumstances. There have been periods in the history of several countries when the chief business of the entire nation seemed to be that of talking. This was true at the beginning of the eighteenth century in England when the popularity of the club, tavern, and coffee-house was at its height. In view of this fact, it is not remarkable that the essay (for certain types of letter-writing and journalism may be considered as such) became the most popular form of literature during the period.

In recognizing the middle classes as a reading public and by making the Tatler the organ of the coffee-house, Steele and Addison were able to perform a great work in the movement toward social reform. Through the periodical

essay, they set out to educate their public in sound principles of conduct by purging moral and social evils from men's habits and lives, and by supplying ideals of morality and rules for good manners.

Although the Tatler was far from perfect, it soon became the most popular periodical of the age. It had two distinct advantages over its rivals. Its plan was more flexible and attractive than that of any other periodical, and its superior literary style was due to the writings of Steele, Addison, and other notable writers. The plan and purpose of the Tatler were not original; nevertheless, it is far superior to all its predecessors. Defoe's "Scandalous Club" undoubtedly suggested the club idea that Steele used in his paper, and its form and method of distribution had been features of various papers. Probably the only original, and by far the most successful, feature of the Tatler was its division into sections which were reserved for contributions from the several coffee-houses. Steele stated this part of the plan in the first number of the Tatler:

All accounts of gallantry, pleasure and entertainments, shall be under the article of White's Chocolate-house; poetry, under that of Will's Coffee-house; Learning, under the title of Grecian, foreign and domestic news, you will have from Saint James's Coffee-house, and what else I have to offer on any other subject shall be dated from my own apartment.

With this arrangement Steele had opened an almost inexhaustible fund of material which contained enough variety to hold the interest of nearly all classes. However, in order to insure the success of his paper, Steele used his position as Gazetteer to advantage by featuring foreign and domestic news in the early numbers of the Tatler. As he became more certain of his public, he revealed his intention of carrying out the purpose that he had outlined in the first numbers of the paper--to paint vice and virtue in their true colors. He created the fictitious character which he called Isaac Bickerstaff, a name made popular by Swift, and he proposed to discharge the duties of an imaginary censor of social conduct through Mr. Bickerstaff's "lucubrations".

The first number of the Tatler appeared April 12, 1709, and was published three times a week until January 2, 1711. The reason for its sudden and unexpected termination is not known, but the supposition is that Steele and Addison had decided that the paper was no longer capable of furthering their program of reform. It had served its purpose, for it gave them opportunity to discover and develop the style and method most suitable for presenting their reflections on the customs and habits of contemporary life and for holding the attention of a large and heterogeneous

reading public. They had altered the original plan of the Tatler, but they were still handicapped by features which would allow no further change. On March 1, 1711, the first Spectator, a daily instead of a thrice weekly, appeared.

The Tatler established the essay periodical as a type; the Spectator perfected it. The Tatler had been little more than a sheaf of notes and sketches, while each issue of the Spectator contained a single, exquisitely developed thought, and was in reality a daily essay on morality, literature, philosophy, serious or humorous reflection. In the Tatler Steele had compared himself to a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbor for aid. Addison had advanced Steele's undertaking to a higher level than his original plans. As a result Steele forfeited his position of leadership and relied upon Addison more and more. Both papers attempted to apply the wisdom of all epochs and nations to current problems, but the Spectator was more insistently moral in purpose, and became the self-appointed but readily accepted leader of the Puritan reaction from Restoration traditions. The pages of both the Tatler and the Spectator were peopled with types of character designed to enliven or illustrate the author's reflections. However Steele's creation, Isaac Bickerstaff, was little more than a mouth-piece for pronouncements. Although he outlined the

character of the Spectator and members of his club, it was Addison who gave reality to the new "Censor Morum". In a day of preachers, the shy, whimsical, genial humorist was vastly more pleasing and influential than the serious, dogmatic theologian. The good-natured ridicule of the Spectator succeeded in making ridiculous, even to himself, the fop who curled his hair, wore a cane "on the fifth button", took snuff, and developed the fine art of love-making.

All London soon knew and loved the amiable philosopher and his club--the squire, the merchant, the clergyman, the soldier, the lawyer, and the man of fashion. But, what was more important, the Spectator humanized for the middle classes their philosophy of manners, conduct, and morals, and it was not long until all classes began to realize the need for reform of a social system which contained so many evils.

Every feature of the eighteenth century periodical as it was developed in the Tatler and the Spectator made it the ideal literary instrument for Addison's task of social reform. In no other type of literature is the writer's personality so clearly revealed as in the informal and intimate style of the familiar essay. Addison's character, training, and literary talents were those of a humanist.

In an age when humanism and classicism were just coming into their own, Addison's genius was peculiarly fitting for leadership in the movement toward social reform.

On first thought it seems remarkable that Addison, a man of reserved and scholarly habits, should hold the highest office the state offered a commoner, that he became the most renowned literary figure, and that he should enjoy great personal popularity. However, he was, in every way, a man of the times--his temperament and character made him the ideal of the middle classes. His life was one of balance in which his artistic creed and his moral faith were in accord, and were encouraged by a serene and tranquil home life. Steele, whose own life was more turbulent, referred to Addison's early environment, his gentle, learned father, as an educational ideal. Addison gave early promise of the classical scholarship with which he was to distinguish himself. His skilled Latin verse won him many academic honors--including a Fellowship which he held until 1711. Political patronage of men of letters was in vogue during the age. Addison, testifying to his political orthodoxy in several poems, gained the support of Charles Montague, a Whig leader. He secured for his protege a pension which enabled Addison to travel abroad in preparation for a diplomatic career.

Addison found France congenial, and for a year he lived in scholarly seclusion. From France he went to Italy, where his chief interest was in the setting of his beloved ancients, Virgil and Horace. But Addison, quoting Latin poets as he climbed Vesuvius and wandered among the almond trees of Capri, was no mere dilettante, though he was thoroughly imbued with the culture of his day when classical learning was part of the intellectual man's education. As well as the historical scenery, he saw the abuses of government and the evils of social life. In the mountain of San Marino, Addison noted the honesty and freedom of the mountaineers, which he contrasted with conditions in Rome where tyranny had reduced the Campagna to a wilderness.

In 1702 the death of King William drove Addison's Whig friends from power, and his pension ceased. A year later, he returned to England to resume old friendships and to make new ones. He was without employment for nearly a year, which necessitated his living very frugally. However, pecuniary difficulties failed to distress him, and he maintained the same serenity and cheerfulness that characterized his temperament throughout his life. When the Whigs rose to power again, Addison was engaged to commemorate Marlborough's great victory at Blenheim. The resulting poem, "The Campaign", with its ingenious flattery of the



British people, was an immediate success, and Addison's political career was assured. Although he followed the fortunes of his party in his writings for the Whig Examiner and other political papers, his political writing was obscured by his Tatler and Spectator essays. On the accession of George I, he was appointed Secretary to the Lord Chief Justice, and entrusted with the conduct of government until the King's arrival. Later he became again Chief Secretary of Ireland and a commissioner for trade and the Colonies. His political career, however, is not of particular interest except that it illustrates the value which political leaders of the time attached to literary talents and the force which his political power gave his social reform.

Addison's personal character may, perhaps, best be seen in contrast with that of his friend Steele. It seems strange that two men so different in character, training, and experience should be inseparably associated in a literary and moral undertaking. But, inasmuch as they were both striving for the same end--to effect social and moral reform--it is natural that succeeding generations should give a common center to their careers. Steele was not, as was Addison, a man of his times, but reflected the care free manners and attitudes of the Restoration. It was only



by accident that he was a classicist in any sense of the word. Addison's influence made him strive for a restraint at variance with his nature, for at heart, his literary ideal consisted of a pleasant negligence and spontaneity, instead of care and discipline. It is significant that his dramatic efforts were sentimental and didactic comedies, whereas Addison's dramas were classical not only in theme but also in form and structure. The contrast between the titles, Cato and The Conscious Lovers, is a silent note on the great difference between the two as men as well as dramatists. Addison's entire training was academic and humanistic. He steeped himself in the purest culture of antiquity, which provided a philosophy of life that served him both as a model for his own and as a measure for the life of the times. Steele, on the other hand, left school without his degree, and led a vagrant life for a time. He wrote treatises and comedies while he served as a soldier and "searched for the philosopher's stone." "His temper was sweet, his affections warm, his spirits lively, his passions strong, and his principles weak. His life was spent in sinning and repenting; in inculcating what was right,<sup>2</sup> and doing what was wrong."

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<sup>2</sup> J.B. Macaulay, Essay on Addison and Milton, (Ginn and Company, Boston, 1898.), p. 48.

Although the difference between Addison, the humanist, and Steele, the sentimentalist, was very great, they worked together without friction. It might be said that one was complement to the other; the qualities one lacked were supplied by the other. More important still, both of these essayists, journalists, statesmen, moralists, and critics of manners possessed keen insight into human character, and genius for presenting effectively the lessons they wished to inculcate.

It is probable that when Addison sent his first contribution to the newly-discovered editor of the Tatler, he had no idea of the extent and variety of his own powers. He was the "possessor of a vast mine, rich in a hundred ores", says Macaulay. Few men have marked such signal advance in the two fields of literature and social reform. His choice and arrangement of words alone is sufficient to make his essays classical. He successfully combined the best of the various trends in the literary style of the period. With the wisdom that many years of study, travel, and public service had given him, Addison was well prepared for his self-imposed task of teaching the classical ideals of a well-ordered and balanced life. Macaulay says, "As an observer of life, of manners, of all shades of human character, he stands in the first class."

He had the gift of "seeing human beings into existence" and of making them exhibit themselves to delighted readers. Only Cervantes and Shakespeare excelled Addison in characterization. In the world of social affairs he marked the admirable fusion of Cavalier elements with the new strength and vigor of the middle classes.

A brief summary of the various socializing factors discussed in this chapter will leave no doubt that Addison's influence in the movement toward social reform was very great. Political, economic, and social forces originating in the seventeenth century and steadily advancing during the latter part of the century made inevitable the revolutionary changes in the social system of the early decades of the eighteenth century. Ideal conditions for reform resulted: the need and desire for reform existed; the ideal literary medium for reaching a large public was at hand; and most important of all, the man best fitted by nature and training directed the movement.

### CHAPTER III

#### ADDISON'S ESSAYS TOWARD MORAL REFORM

Although Addison's first essays on morals and manners were of an experimental nature, they helped him to formulate a definite program for social reform. His essays fall into two main classes according to theme: those of purely moral nature, which deal with "subjects that never vary, but are forever fixt and immutable"; and those "that take their rise from the folly, extravagance, and caprice of the present age." Addison realized that the follies and absurdities which characterized the social life of the period were "only indications of vice, not criminal in themselves." His purpose was to enter into the passions of mankind and to correct the depraved sentiments which were the source of the evils that existed in manners and dress. "Extinguish vanity in the mind, and you naturally retrench the little superfluities of garniture and equipage. The blossoms will fall of themselves when the root that nourishes them is destroyed."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spectator, No. 16, Vol. I, p. 75.  
All references to Addison's or Steele's periodical writings are to The British Essayists, 45 volumes. (Davidson, Lombard Street, London, 1817.)

Most of Addison's more serious essays are criticisms of human nature in its broadest sense. In others he emphasized those aspects of morality with which contemporary life was chiefly concerned. Even though his essays in this group seem full of self-evident truths, one need only refer to the history of culture to realize the progress that has been made in man's morals since the time in which Addison lived. The importance of his teachings can hardly be judged in the light of present day standards. In evaluating their worth, consideration must be given to the conditions peculiar to the age. Addison's reading public consisted largely of two classes: the aristocrats, most of whom upheld improper ideals of life, and the middle classes who lacked standards for judging the values of life.

The great number of Addison's moral essays gives ample evidence of his sincerity in his avowed task "to moralize refinement and to refine morality; to recommend truth, innocence, honesty, and virtue as the chief ornaments of life." The increasing seriousness in tone and theme of Addison's essays and the simultaneous growth in popularity of the Spectator lead to the assumption that his efforts toward moral and social reform were attended with a measure of success. In a day when laxity of

principle was expected of public characters, Addison retained the reverence of all men. Raised to political power by skill in writing, he added to his literary talents all the influence arising from character; and the world was forced to admit that one man at least was able to resist the temptations of success, to adhere to his principles and ideals as a Christian and a gentleman. From one whose "zeal was tempered by a regard for truth, humanity, and social decorum," who knew how to "use ridicule without abusing it, who without inflicting a wound, effected a great social reform, who reconciled wit and virtue,"<sup>2</sup> and who demanded of himself even higher standards than those he exacted of others, it is possible to accept even sermonizing without grumbling. Macaulay attributes Addison's effectiveness as a reformer to the peculiar charm of his satire. Unlike the broad wit of Voltaire or the wit of Swift which preserves a gravity, or sourness, of aspect while uttering the most ludicrous of fancies, Addison's humor is that of a gentleman whose quick sense of the ridiculous is tempered by good nature and good breeding. Even in his merriment there is grace and moral purity. It shines on the victim like a "ray of sunshine" and leaves him the better for it, cleansed

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<sup>2</sup>Macaulay, "Essay on Addison," p. 169.

and refreshed, not dazzled and shamed as by "flashes of Swift's lightning."

At a time when political differences had engrossed the whole nation, the non-partisan policy of the Tatler and the Spectator won the attention of all classes. The religious and moral essays, as well as those on social customs and manners, written in a didactic yet pleasing style, appealed to every moderate, fair-minded person. Many people had grown tired of the bitter political disputes and had become interested in efforts toward improving community morals. However, all classes of readers desired entertainment. Although virtue was scorned as the attribute of the cold, formal Puritan, and vice crowned with garlands and associated with genius, Addison provided entertainment which was morally pure. After the profligate days of the Restoration, he shifted the score, made vice ridiculous, made virtue and decency logical and intelligent, and so revolutionized literature and set the tone for coming generations. His wide sympathies enabled him to reach every class -- men of fashion and fine ladies, who listened to the Spectator's severe censorship of their sins; the Dissenter, whose narrow views were kindly ridiculed; the country gentleman, who set an example for his community. All listened respectfully, for the preacher

was not narrow-minded and unfeeling, but wise, kind, and just.

Before considering those traits of character which he deemed essential to attain any degree of satisfaction and happiness in life, Addison set about correcting the false ideals as represented in the life and character of a "gentleman." In his definition of a true gentleman he placed morality at the head of the list of necessary virtues. In his religious papers, which usually appeared on Saturday as a fitting prelude to Sunday's devotion, he discussed morality and faith as the two divisions of religion. Of the two he found morality to be of greater importance -- infidelity being less malignant in nature than immorality. "There may be salvation," he said, "for the virtuous infidel, but none for the vicious believer."<sup>3</sup> (Here as elsewhere, Addison is untiring in his attack on pious hypocrisy and bigotry.) However, the two elements of religion are complementary, and faith is necessary to carry morality to higher levels, to furnish it new and stronger motives, to make love possible and "morality effectual to salvation."



Morality alone does not constitute a gentleman. Not only must he be qualified for the "services and good," but also for the ornament and delight, of society. The standard set down almost demands perfection. In addition to a mind graced with dignity and elevation of spirit, a clear understanding, reason free from prejudice, steady judgment, extensive knowledge, and a heart full of tenderness and benevolence, the gentleman must possess manners "modest without bashfulness, frank and affable without impertinence, obliging and complaisant without servility, cheerful and good-humored without noise."

Although the essayist included polite education and correct attire as attributes which a gentleman should have, he was scornful of current standards which raised anyone above the vulgar level who was possessed with such accomplishments as a "nimble pair of heels, a smooth complexion, or an embroidered suit," and was more concerned for "wit and sense than honesty and virtue." With justice the Spectator charged the people of England, "as polite a nation as any in the world,"<sup>4</sup> with allowing the affectation of being "gay and in fashion to eat up good sense and religion." Addison had a new message -- that a man might be pure and virtuous without being a "stiff-necked Puritan," and might

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<sup>4</sup>Spectator, No. 6, Vol. I, p. 31.

live a life based on reason and good sense without being a social outcast. His work was to destroy false and negative ideals, the chief weakness of the age, and to replace them with true ones. In short, to be a fine gentleman is to be a generous and a brave man -- a man both learned and good-natured. The new ideal was a fusion of the best of the two elements of English society -- Puritan and Cavalier.

Virtue had hitherto been discussed only as a duty and a means of making for happiness in the hereafter, but Addison considered it "no farther than as it is in itself<sup>5</sup> of an amiable nature." Calmly, logically, and with the support of the ancient Stoics in their idealization of a virtuous mind in a fair body, Addison makes virtue requisite for human happiness. To be virtuous one must possess such characteristics -- advantageous alike to owner and observer -- as temperance and abstinence, faith and devotion, justice, charity, and munificence. These virtues make a man popular and beloved, though he have other serious defects of character. But the "two great ornaments of virtue" are cheerfulness and good-nature.

These generally go together, as a man cannot be

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<sup>5</sup>Spectator, No. 243, Vol. IV, p. 226.

agreeable to others who is not easy within himself. They are both very requisite in a virtuous mind, to keep out melancholy from the many serious thoughts it is engaged in, and to hinder its natural hatred of vice from souring into severity and censoriousness.<sup>6</sup>

A virtue which is indispensable for attaining happiness is modesty. Addison says, "Mere bashfulness without merit is awkward; and merit without modesty insolent; but modest merit has a double claim to acceptance."<sup>7</sup> Exceedingly dangerous, in that it is so prevalent, is that politeness which "recommends impudence as good-breeding" and keeps a man in countenance not because he is innocent, but because he is shameless. By the side of true modesty Addison places a picture of false modesty which is governed not by rules of right and wrong, but by that most pernicious of rules -- what is fashionable. (Unfortunately the man who is restrained from "doing what is good and laudable" and led to do things indiscreet or even ignoble by his associates' opinion is not confined to Addison's day.)

Characteristically, Addison associated piety with cheerfulness, counting both important virtues of humanity. The association of the two must have been welcomed in a day when the possession of a melancholy and sober spirit

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<sup>6</sup> Spectator, No. 243, Vol. IV, p. 228

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., No. 231, Vol. IV, p. 170

was extolled as the only passport to heaven. Addison discusses all attitudes and behavior as habits of mind or body which become dearer as they become more familiar. He shows how ridiculous it is to establish habits of sin, lust and vice which lead inevitably to eternal damnation, when virtue, morality, and piety are much more pleasant. Going further, he ingeniously argues that during our lives we are conditioned either for heaven or hell. As he interprets heaven, it is not the reward but the natural effect of a religious life in which the seeds of spiritual joys and reflection have been planted, while pain and misery are the only possible results of an aversion to all that is good.<sup>8</sup> Addison shows his reader that far from being a vice, cheerfulness is a virtue approved by God, and then proceeds to prove that cheerfulness, or "that evenness and tranquillity of mind which is the health of the soul" -- not to be confused with wanton mirth -- is a necessary accompaniment or a natural effect of virtue that can be destroyed only by the sense of guilt of one who lives in a state of vice or in atheism. Evidently one apprehensive either of torment or annihilation -- "of being miserable or of not being at all" -- can scarcely live in good humor.<sup>9</sup> To be

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<sup>8</sup> Spectator, No. 447, Vol. VII, p. 296.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., No. 381, 387, Vol. VII

cheerful, therefore, one has only to live virtuously and to believe in and be grateful for a benevolent God. The result naturally will be the love and admiration of others, so that a third factor enters to increase the original cheerfulness, for the cheerful person grows healthy, attractive, and charming.

Good-nature, which is "more agreeable in conversation than wit" and gives an "air to the countenance more amiable than beauty," is a virtue that is born with us rather than acquired. It is good-nature, or its closest substitute, good-breeding, which makes possible all society and conversation. It is expressed in an "affability, complaisance, and easiness of temper." But as with other things, there are classes or degrees of good-nature, and that which is a temporary matter depending upon one's digestion or circulatory system does not demand the respect of that which is an "irradiation of the mind." Every reader must see the absurdity in a world already subject to pains and sorrows innumerable of "adding grief to grief and aggravating the common calamity by our cruel treatment of one another."<sup>10</sup>

Addison continues:

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<sup>10</sup>Spectator, No. 169, Vol. III, p. 177.

Half the misery of human life might be extinguished, would men alleviate the general curse they be under, by mutual offices of compassion, benevolence, and humanity. There is nothing therefore thich we ought more to encourage in ourselves and others, than that disposition of mind which in our language goes under the title of good-nature.<sup>11</sup>

The converse of the maxim that happiness is the natural result of virtue -- namely, that unhappiness follows upon vice -- is approached by Addison with equal tact and understanding. His teaching, though didactic, is not painful; for he never despairs of mankind's ability to conquer its own defects. The Spectator does not shake a finger of hopeless scorn, but points the way to a simpler and purer life. In the parable of Menippus' visit to heaven and the trap-door through which the constant clamor of wild, selfish prayers beat upon the ears of tired Jove, the application is obvious. But far from throwing up his hands in despair at the vanity of human wishes, Addison accepts human frailty and suggests that one way to keep the folly and extravagance of men's desires within bounds is by set-forms of prayer.<sup>12</sup>

Addison, who "stooped to the level of most men," was far from being self-effacing; and his rise to political and

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<sup>11</sup> Spectator, No. 169, Vol. III, pp. 176.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, No. 391, Vol. VII, pp. 51.

literary success implies that he was not without worldly ambition. It is not a vice within itself. His philosophy is best expressed in the following passage:

Though it be true that we can have nothing in us that ought to raise our vanity, yet a consciousness of our own merit may be sometimes laudable. The folly therefore lies here: we are apt to pride ourselves in worthless, or, perhaps, shameful things; and on the other hand count that disgraceful which is our truest glory . . . What I would observe is this, that we ought to value ourselves upon those things only which superior beings think valuable, since that is the only way for us not to sink in our own esteem hereafter.<sup>13</sup>

Ambition, indeed, is a fundamental instinct implanted in our natures as an "added incentive in virtuous excellence;" needed to stir the soul of a "remiss and sedentary nature," and if properly directed, if it be a desire for merit rather than for grandeur, a wish to be worthy rather than remarkable, ambition is a virtue, not a vice. Man is marked by nature with a desire for glory. It may be a worthy impulse which leads him to strive for distinction and superior excellence; it may also raise a secret tumult, inflame the mind, and put it into a violent hurry of thought -- in a search after an empty imaginary good.<sup>14</sup> The absurdity of

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<sup>13</sup>

Spectator, No. 621, Vol. X, pp. 228-230

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, No. 256, Vol. V, pp. 13

frantically sought baubles designed to advertise success, such as glaringly extravagant apparel and expensive equipage, is obvious to all. Addison uses a death-bed scene to illustrate the empty vanity of titles. There is something grimly ironic about a "poor dispirited sinner's trembling under the apprehensions of the state he is entering on" and being addressed "under the title of Highness or Excellency."<sup>15</sup> Titles at such a time look rather like insults and mockery than respect.

In his calm and serene manner, Addison, who did not "know what it is to be melancholy," could "view nature in her deep and solemn scenes with the same pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones." He found that wandering through the gloom of Westminster Abbey and looking at the tombs and epitaphs of the great was an excellent way to check ambition and envy.

When I see kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and astonishment on the little competitions, factions, and debates of mankind.<sup>16</sup>

Much may be learned of a man from his thoughts in

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<sup>15</sup>Spectator, No. 219, Vol. IV, pp. 115.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, No. 26, Vol. I, pp. 122.



the presence of death, and it is interesting to note Steele's reflections under similar circumstances. His thoughts, sentimentalist that he was, did not share the chaste and classical restraint of Addison's, although with Addison he found it a "pleasing entertainment to recollect in a gloomy moment the many who have gone before out of this life." Instead of reflecting on the futility of grief for the departed when in a short time the mourner too will follow, Steele groans over the untimely death of the young and innocent, the "humble, the undiscerning, and the thoughtless."<sup>17</sup>

Although impressed by the vanity of human desire, Addison, perhaps because he himself did not shun fame, justifies desire for fame as an impetus, necessary in a world in which few men are moved by a genuine and virtuous desire to promote the interests of mankind, to the invention and development of the arts, to the writing of books, and to<sup>18</sup> the conquest and civilization of nations. It does not denote greatness in the mind of man that he must be actuated in his endeavors by so selfish a motive as personal glory. It is strange that man subjects himself to the

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<sup>17</sup> Tatler, No. 181, Vol. IV, p. 190.

<sup>18</sup> Spectator, No. 255, Vol. V, p. 6.

exceedingly painful process whereby fame is acquired when it is as easily lost as it is difficult to acquire; for human nature, to take a more cynical view than Addison usually does, jealously resists and resents the success of others. Admiration brought by fame is at best a short-lived passion. Moreover, the famous personage is rarely happy, but more often the victim of uneasiness and dissatisfaction. But more vital than the difficulties involved in gaining and retaining fame, or the lack of true pleasure it provides, is that it hinders us from obtaining an end which is accompanied with fullness of satisfaction -- "that<sup>19</sup> happiness which is reserved for us in another world."

In discussing the various vices and virtues to which humanity is prone, Addison repeatedly refers to hypocrisy, a vice of which he was never guilty. In several instances he tells of the different types of hypocrites, from the modish variety that endeavors to appear more vicious than he is, fearing all display of sincere emotion, religious or otherwise, and posing as a wicked, amorous gallant, to the type who covers a multitude of sins under a face of sanctity and conspicuous piety. Either species is despic-

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<sup>19</sup>

Spectator, No. 257, Vol. V, p. 16.

able; but the most prevalent and most pernicious kind of hypocrisy is that which conceals a man's own heart from himself and causes him to believe even his vices to be virtues -- and "no vices are so incurable as those which men are apt to glory in." Self-deception is perhaps the commonest of all weaknesses. In finding out one's secret faults and in making a true estimate of himself, one must consider well the character that he bears among his enemies. Friends can not be entirely relied upon, for often they flatter or do not see one's faults. After carefully evaluating the various opinions, one should diligently<sup>20</sup> "examine all the dark recesses of the mind."

There are sorrows and trouble in the world; hypocrisy abounds; men are self-interested and vain; and the grave awaits us all. After depicting all the dangers and evils attending men's passions, the Spectator presents another side of the picture -- the beauties and comfort of friendship, love, and marriage. To compensate for the griefs, the terrors, and the loneliness of this life, to heal the "pains and anguish which naturally cleave to one's existence in this world," is friendship, which "improves happiness

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<sup>20</sup>

Spectator, No. 399, Vol. VII, p. 83.

and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and dividing of our grief." Here again Addison points the way to virtue, the most sensible of attributes, for "a virtuous man shall as a blessing meet with a friend who is as virtuous as himself."<sup>21</sup> Citing Horace and Epictetus as his sources, Addison lists the qualities which are essential for gaining and holding friends: first, constancy or faithfulness, then virtue, knowledge, discretion, equality in age and fortune, and pleasantness of temper. To these Addison himself adds evenness of behavior, an inestimable virtue in the eyes of this moralist, who was a classicist both in art and in life. Addison sums up the value of friendship in his statement that it is a God-given gift to humanity to make life endurable and it is not to be taken casually but nourished and cherished by its fortunate possessor.

Addison, who regarded friendship so seriously, considered the greater passion of love with a seriousness approaching awe. It was an age when such institutions as marriage and the home were regarded with scorn by worldly young men, who "avoided the trammels of matrimony" as needless expense and responsibility. Recalling the

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<sup>21</sup> Spectator, No. 68, Vol. II. pp. 34-35

teachings of his kind, learned father and the beauty of his childhood home, Addison attempted to invest marriage with the sacredness that should properly attend it. He advises prolonged courtships, the "pleasantest part of man's life," whereby the lover is "habituated to a fondness of the person loved." In discussing the choice of a mate, Addison not only stresses the qualities of character essential for successful marriage, but also wonders at the disregard of those qualities which inevitably result in unhappiness.

Good-nature and evenness of temper will give you an easy companion for life; virtue and good sense, an agreeable friend; love and constancy, a good wife or husband. Where we meet one person with all these accomplishments, we find an hundred without any one of them. . . . It is one of the most unaccountable passions of human nature, that we are at greater pains to appear easy and happy to others, than really to make ourselves so. of all disparities, that in humour makes the most unhappy marriages, yet scarce enters into our thoughts at the contracting of them.<sup>22</sup>

What a shock it must have been to the London beau, priding himself on the delicacy of his passion, to be told by the Spectator that he should be "inquisitive and discerning in the faults of the person beloved" before marriage ! Even

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<sup>22</sup>

Spectator, No. 261, Vol. V, p. 36.

the sentimental Steele agreed with Addison by declaring that "unhappy marriage conditions" are more often than not the result of a theatrical, romantic courtship in which imaginations are "raised to what is not to be expected in human life."<sup>23</sup> Here, as throughout the papers, the Spectator worked to establish genuine ideals.

Both Addison and Steele develop ideals of conjugal fidelity as the bulwark of a happy home, and dwell upon the natural beauties and attractions of conjugal love. They admit that through blundering or wilful refusal to appear in as amiable a manner at home as abroad the married state may be the unhappiest in life. On the other hand, they point out that with affection, understanding, and good-nature it may be the "compleatest image of heaven we are capable of receiving in this life."<sup>24</sup> The Spectator repeatedly declares that "a mind ought to be free from the apprehension of want and poverty before it can fully attend to all the softness and endearments of the passion of love." Wealth is certainly not the source of love nor the only thing necessary to make a successful marriage; for "nothing but the good qualities of the person beloved can

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<sup>23</sup> Spectator, No. 479, Vol. VIII, p. 124.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

be the foundation for true love." Lasting happiness may result only from virtue, wisdom, good-humor, and a similitude of manners. If husband and wife have based their choice of each other on due consideration of such virtues, if they continue to respect and cherish each other after marriage, their happiness is practically assured; and if their union is blessed with children, the home will be the scene of the idyllic peace and happiness which the soft-hearted Steele admired and dreamed of. Addison is more restrained, but not less certain, in his declaration of the rewards which come to the happily married person.

Marriage enlarges the scene of our happiness and miseries. A marriage of love is pleasant; a marriage of interest easy; and a marriage where both meet, happy. A happy marriage has in it all the pleasures of friendship, all the enjoyments of sense and reason, and indeed, all the sweets of life. Nothing is a greater mark of a degenerate and vicious age, than the common ridicule which passes on this state of life. It is, indeed, only happy in those who can look down with scorn and neglect on the impieties of the times, and tread the paths of life together in a constant uniform course of virtue.<sup>25</sup>

Addison had attempted to inculcate the true principles upon which happiness and fulfillment in life are based by showing the results of the virtues and vices inherent within human nature and by depicting the attractions

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Spectator, No. 261, Vol. V, p. 37.

and rewards of love and marriage. However, he realized that no lasting impression could be made in the moral life of the age until religious and educational standards were reformed.

Religion in the early eighteenth century was in a very low state. Reference has already been made to the current hypocrisy which took the form of concealing whatever religious devotion existed under a pretended dissipation or of cloaking vice beneath an assumed sanctity and piety. The ignoble position of the Church, the symbol of religion, can best be judged by the treatment of its clergy. They had little freedom and were oppressed by a dependence either on some wealthy man who had the privilege of bestowing the "livings" of a parish or on Parliament, which had control over appointments to many high ecclesiastical positions. People in high social position granted scant respect to the clergy-men who were not able to demand more, even though they were often intelligent and cultured men. Addison, indignant at such treatment, severely criticizes a custom which places men of worth and ability in the same class with servants. His condemnation is expressed in the following passage:

I know not which to censure, the patron, or the chaplain, the insolence of power, or the abjectness of dependence. For my own part, I have often blushed to see a



gentleman, whom I knew to have much more wit and learning than myself, and who was bred up with me at the university upon the same foot of a liberal education, treated in such an ignominious manner, and sunk beneath those of his own rank, by reason of that character which ought to bring him honour.<sup>26</sup>

In the country there was sometimes actual antagonism between the parson and the squire "who," writes Addison, "are often in a state of warfare -- the parson preaching at the squire, and the squire never coming to church."<sup>27</sup> Under such circumstances one could hardly expect much religious feeling to exist among the ordinary people.

But with the coming of peace and prosperity, the strong, self-assertive middle classes desired a more satisfactory religious life. Addison and Steele, realizing the importance of spiritual ideals, set about restoring, or creating, a true conception of religion. It was a religion which "consulted the harmony and order of the great community." It met the needs of moral regularity, idealism, and feeling, and above all, expelled the gloom that had hitherto shrouded all matters of the spirit and with a superficially

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<sup>26</sup>

Tatler, No. 255, Vol. V, pp. 207.

<sup>27</sup>

Spectator, No. 112, Vol. II, pp. 237.

imposed, mournful piety and a narrow, fanatical zeal. The Spectator had already defined piety as an attractive virtue which is essential for human happiness; then he set forth a gospel of peace and good-will as a practical religion for the average man. This new religion was a comfortable one resting securely on firm faith in the "justice, goodness,  
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wisdom, and veracity" of the Supreme Being.

But in Addison's mind, humanist and academician that he was, education was uppermost. Addison declares in his Spectator, No. 215, "I consider a human soul without education like marble in the quarry, which shews none of its inherent beauties, till the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot, and vein." In the same paper he considers it "an unspeakable blessing to be born in those parts of the world where knowledge flourishes" -- that is, in England of the eighteenth century. But in close accord with the general trend of his ideal, education is not an end in itself.--(Here the classical and humanistic aspects of his character seem to fuse), but a means for drawing out the latent virtue in an innately noble mind.

Unlike the later romanticists who were inspired by the demonstrations of nobility by savages to declaim against conventionalities of civilization, Addison considers to what heights such a savage might be carried if "rightly cultivated." He pities the savage, who "denied that which we look upon as the proper means for attaining it," is<sup>29</sup> "cut off from prospects of happiness in another world."

Devoted to the study of classical literature, Addison approved of the study of Greek and Latin, which formed the major part of all school work at that time, but he deplored the superficial uses for which most gentlemen of fashion studied the literature of the ancients. In the case of the genuine scholar, Addison voiced the complaint (familiar in the present day) that a liberal education is the only one that a polite nation makes unprofitable. The Spectator papers on education seem to be concerned with the attitude toward education and with the limitation of educational opportunities rather than radical reform of the system. His complaint that too few were given educational advantages was well founded. Addison especially deplored the lack of education among women. This disregard for their

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<sup>29</sup> Spectator, No. 215, Vol. IV, p. 98.

usefulness was indicative of the general attitude toward women during the period, and Addison has been accused of sharing it to the extent that he was condescending and contemptuous in his treatment of their affairs. Whatever his opinion might be of the sex, he repeatedly declares his respect for their intellectual abilities and his belief in the importance of their influence if they were properly educated. Another group whose education was usually neglected was the country gentry. If the young squires went to school or college at all, they frequently left before finishing the course, and on their return home showed little benefit from their studies. Because of their positions of influence as heirs of great estates, Addison lamented the casual manner in which they were educated.

Addison followed his discussions on educational ideals and conditions with a series of essays on esthetic taste. He believed that the development of appreciation for the best in literature and art was a phase of education which could accomplish much in the movement toward reform.

In his essays devoted to that faculty of the mind known as imagination, Addison reiterates the gentleman's need of a classical education. He discusses the pleasures available to a man of "polite imagination" but closed to

the vulgar, who cannot, it seems, "converse with a picture or find an agreeable companion in a statue"<sup>30</sup> or derive any great satisfaction from the prospect of fields and meadows. Both a moralist and humanist, Addison finds a purpose even in the pleasures of the imagination. Enjoying the great, one is prepared for contemplation of the Supreme Being. Pleasure in the novel encourages the pursuit of knowledge and the search into the wonders of Creation. And above all, appreciation of the beautiful challenges all that is noble in human nature.

Addison's definition of taste is that it consists of "the faculty of the soul which discovers the beauties of an author with pleasure, and the imperfections with dislike." Admitting that the faculty "must in some degree be born with us," he declares that the most natural method for developing it is "to be conversant among the writings of the most polite authors." Other methods consist in "conversation with men of a polite genius" and familiarity with the works of the best critics both ancient and modern. Taste too, then, is barred to the ignorant. Conscientiously and with the purpose of "banishing vice and ignorance out

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<sup>30</sup>Spectator, No. 411, Vol. VII, pp. 132

of the territories of Great Britain," Addison endeavored to establish a taste for "polite writing," for he believed appreciation of ancient literature constituted proof of fine taste.<sup>31</sup>

Another improvement that Addison endeavored to accomplish in his refinement of taste related to the appreciation of drama. He imparts his notions of comedy, "that it may tend to its refinement and perfection," and he declares, "perfect tragedy is the noblest production of human nature, capable of giving the mind one of its most delightful and improving entertainments;" but unfortunately, he adds, "our English poets have succeeded better in the style than in the sentiment." Comedy should, as it did among the Greeks, recommend the religion, the government, and the public worship of the country."<sup>32</sup> But the English stage was not under Athenian regulations and usually complied with the corrupt taste of the more vicious part of the audience.

A review of Addison's serious essays, whether in the field of morality, education, religion, or literature, will show that he carried out a definite program in his

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<sup>31</sup>Spectator, No. 409, Vol VII, pp. 120-125.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, No. 446, Vol. VII, pp. 288-292.

work toward moral reform. First, he distinguished between true and false ideals of life by showing that happiness is based on virtue and that only misery can result from unworthy passions. Second, he described the attractions of friendship, love, and marriage which are the rewards of a virtuous life, and finally, realizing the influence of religion and education on morals and manners, he pointed out the evils in the religious practices and educational system of the age, and attempted to inspire the spiritual and intellectual life of his readers by depicting the comforts of a true religion and the satisfaction of a well-rounded education.

## CHAPTER IV

### ADDISON'S CRITICISM OF SOCIAL CONDUCT AND MANNERS

There is, of course, no arbitrary division between the two groups of essays into which Addison classifies his writings on moral and social reform. The examination, in the preceding chapter, of the first group, which he calls his "more serious" essays, has revealed his philosophy of life through his criticism of human nature. Therefore, it is not difficult to determine what his policy as a reformer will be in the second group, which he terms his "occasional papers, that take their rise from the folly, extravagance, and caprice of the present age."<sup>1</sup> Naturally, the latter group are more representative of the spirit and the aims of the period. In his treatment of current social life, his knowledge and judgment as a classicist and humanist and his keen insight proved a happy combination. His evaluations of life and sympathy for, and understanding of, the frailties of human nature guided him in his consideration of the numerous problems and perplexities of everyday life that

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<sup>1</sup>Spectator, No. 435, Vol. VII, pp. 242.



had arisen in a changing social system. Addison's criticism of current fashions in dress and manners was not a condemnation of them as a whole -- his definition of the term "gentleman" had included such requisites as modish apparel and acceptable manners -- but only as they were "outward" symbols of "inward" faults. Moral depravity and social evils are so closely interrelated that Addison considered both groups of essays -- those dealing with the deepest aspects of morality or religion and those concerning the most trivial affectations in social conduct -- of equal importance in furthering his program for reform. That all his essays seemingly had equal appeal to a large reading public is surprising, but a fact which can be attributed to his skillful adaptation of style to theme. It is even more surprising that the readers of the Tatler and Spectator, who were from all walks of life, did not show a decided preference for those essays on social conduct, since these dealt with the concrete and specific, while those on morality dealt with the abstract.

Addison classified the evils of manners and dress as "greater" evils and "lesser" evils. The first class consisted of those evils which were widely practised and of serious nature; the second group consisted of those which

were practised by certain classes and not especially harmful within themselves. However, Addison attributed all of them to these three causes: false ideals, ignorance, and idleness.

One of the "greater evils" which pervaded all classes during the early part of the eighteenth century was the bitter dissension caused by religious and political prejudices. Addison considered this among the chief anti-social forces with which the movement toward reform was confronted. Not only was it a great evil but it was also the source of other serious vices which were commonly practised. That he recognized the gravity of partisanship is evident by his determination to keep the Tatler and the Spectator free from all political and religious entanglements. In an early number of the Spectator he declared his reasons for a policy of neutrality:

However, as I am very sensible my paper would lose its whole effect, should it run out into the outrages of a party, I shall take care to keep clear of every thing which looks that way. If I can any way assuage private inflammations, or allay public ferments, I shall apply myself to it with my utmost endeavors: but will never let my heart reproach me with having done anything towards increasing those feuds and animosities, that extinguish religion, deface government, and make a nation miserable.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Spectator, No. 16, Vol. I, pp. 77-78.

Even the fashionable world was divided into two political camps. Ladies of fashion publicly declared themselves Whigs or Tories by patches, popular facial ornaments at the time. Addison humorously describes the custom as a "patch war." However, he severely censures women for participating in political disputes. Instead of promoting the passions which arise from party rage, women should use their influence toward abolishing or, at least, tempering them. The spirit of passion and prejudice in politics was even more violent in the country than it was in the city. There, party spirit colored every aspect of life -- social and economic, as well as political. In Spectator No. 126, Addison illustrates the intensity of political differences in the country. A man who had moved into a rural community was welcomed at first by his new neighbors, but when they learned he was a Whig, he was completely ostracized.

Addison places most of the responsibility for the corruption prevalent in public life upon intense party spirit. "A furious party spirit," he says, "when it rages in its full violence, exerts itself in civil war and bloodshed; and when it is under its greatest restraints naturally breaks out in falsehood, detraction, calumny,

and a partial administration of justice."<sup>3</sup>

"Party lying" was one of the vices which resulted from party zeal. It was so commonly practised among politicians "that a man is thought of no principles who does not propagate a certain system of lies! The coffee-houses are supported by them, the press is choked with them, eminent authors live upon them." Addison is of the opinion that "half the great talkers in the nation would be struck dumb were this fountain of discourse dried up."<sup>4</sup> He concludes his condemnation of the practice with these remarks:

I have frequently wondered to see men of probity, who would scorn to utter a falsehood, for their own particular advantage, give so readily into a lie, when it is become the voice of their faction, notwithstanding they are thoroughly sensible of it as such. How is it possible for those who are men of honour in their persons, thus to become notorious liars in their party?<sup>5</sup>

Another evil resulting from "furious party spirit" was the practice of scandalizing and libelling public characters. Numerous pamphlets, journals, and papers,

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<sup>3</sup>Spectator, No. 125, Vol. II, pp. 297

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, No. 507, Vol. VIII, pp. 250

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, pp. 251

especially those that were supported by one of the rival parties, featured defamation of their political opponents. This practice of dealing in personalities was so abhorrent in the eyes of Addison that he protested repeatedly against bitter party prejudices which not only "blinds one to all but the vices of an opponent but also inspires one to blacken his character and disgrace him publicly." He considered political leaders partly responsible for the widespread practice of this evil. In attempting to further the interests of their party, they employed writers to lampoon and scandalize their opponents. Then, too, the custom of writing anonymously was quite common at that time. Many writers published their work and awaited its reception by the public before claiming authorship. This practice naturally favored the abominable one of libel and defamation. At the beginning of the Spectator, Addison had boldly declared his intention of keeping it free from scandal, gossip, and reference to personalities. This kind of writing had become so popular with the reading public that many writers had gained wealth and eminence from it. Addison was unusually severe in his criticism of these "blockheads about town entertaining ambitious

thoughts of setting up as polite authors"<sup>6</sup> and of their writings.

Our satire is nothing but ribaldry, and billingsgate. Scurrility passes for wit; and he who can call names in the greatest variety of phrases, is looked upon to have the shrewdest pen. By this means the honour of families is ruined, the highest posts and greatest titles are rendered cheap and vile in the sight of the people, the noblest virtues and most exalted parts exposed to the contempt of the vicious and the ignorant.<sup>7</sup>

Addison declares that he considers the readers who enjoy reading and dispersing such detestable libels as gully as the writers. "For, if they do not write such libels themselves, it is because they have not the talent of writing, or because they will run no hazard."<sup>8</sup> Addison satirizes the love of scandal by printing a proposal from an imaginary reader for the establishment of a newspaper of whispers, which is a fitting name for a paper composed of "those pieces of news that are communicated as secrets, and that bring a double pleasure to the hearer; first, as they are private history, and in the next place, as they have always in them a dash of scandal." Two persons, each representative of a species, will furnish the news for the paper.

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<sup>6</sup>Spectator, No. 58, Vol. I, p. 270.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., No. 451, Vol. VII, pp. 315-316.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., No. 451, Vol. VII, p. 318.

One is Peter Hush, a habitue of the coffee-house, who has usually launched or gathered the secrets of the day by dinner time, and the other is Lady Blast, who agrees to furnish the paper with the current gossip of the tea-table. Her whisper "has such a particular malignity that it blights like an easterly wind, and withers every reputation that it<sup>9</sup> breathes upon." Addison concludes his criticism of the evil of libel and scandal by advocating government intervention as the only effective means of stamping out a practice which was so prevalent and had such harmful results.

A vice of less serious nature which indirectly grew out of the intense party spirit that existed among all classes was the average Londoner's passion for news. Addison not only ridiculed the absurdity of this unquenchable thirst for news but also reveals the serious results of a practice which led men to neglect their business in pursuit of it. Addison's caricature of a man who is especially interested in political news is known as the "political upholsterer." Although he had a family to support, this man was much more concerned about the welfare of the world at large than that of his own family. "He looked extremely

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<sup>9</sup>Spectator, No. 457, Vol. VIII, pp. 21-24

thin in a dearth of news, and never enjoyed himself in a westerly wind. This indefatigable kind of life was the ruin of his shop, for, about the time that his favorite prince left the crown of Poland, he broke and disappeared." Several years later, Mr. Bickerstaff (the imaginary author of the paper) met the upholsterer in the Park. The man's appearance betrayed his extreme poverty, but he and his friends were still busily concerned with the affairs of the world. Mr. Bickerstaff joined the group -- "park-bench politicians" is his name for them -- and took part in their discussion. He gives an account of the conclusion of the session.

When we had fully discussed these points, my friend the upholsterer, began to exert himself upon the present negotiations of peace; in which he deposed princes, settled the bounds of kingdoms, and balanced the powers of Europe, with great justice and impartiality.<sup>10</sup>

Although the political upholsterer is nothing more than a caricature, he and his cronies, the "park-bench politicians," have such a quality of reality that they are immediately recognized among the present day "street-corner and park-bench politicians." In another essay Addison

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<sup>10</sup> Tatler, No. 155, Vol. IV, pp. 59.



humorously calls all men who are too much concerned about affairs of state "volunteers in politics." They "undergo all the watchfulness and disquiet of a first minister, without any advantage to themselves or to their country.

A tailor often breaks his rest over the affairs of Europe and there is scarcely a shop not held by a statesman."<sup>11</sup>

Addison concludes his reflections on the subject with this remark: "This paper I design for the peculiar benefit of those worthy citizens who live more in a coffee-house than in their shops, and whose thoughts are so taken up with the affairs of the allies, that they forget their customers."<sup>12</sup>

The avidity for all kinds of news, whether foreign or domestic, private or public, and the credulity of the reading public led to practices among news writers that Addison good-naturedly ridicules in the first essay that he wrote for the Tatler. In contrast to the lies and calumnies of the political writers, the deceptions practised by many news writers were minor offences. These writers had little regard for truth or accuracy in their reports, and they often vied with one another in the exaggeration and sensationalism of their reports. If a war was in

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<sup>11</sup>Tatler, no. 160, vol. IV, p. 83.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., no. 155, vol. IV, p. 59.

progress, they had an inexhaustible source of news which never failed to interest their readers. "They have", says Addison, "made us masters of several strong towns many weeks before our generals could do it; and completed victories when our greatest captains have been glad to come off with a drawn battle." If there was no war, the news writers were hard pressed for material with which to fill their papers. However, their power of invention was usually equal to the occasion, for "in every dearth of news, Grand Cairo was sure to be unpeopled."<sup>13</sup>

Although party spirit with its resulting "greater and lesser" evils reached a peak of intensity during the early part of the eighteenth century, it was not the only anti-social force which resulted from dissension. Religious differences were not so acute as those in politics because of the indifference toward religion which prevailed during this time among the people. For many people, going to church had become an empty form, and religion implied a struggle for political control among the various sects. However, religious prejudices, which were of primary importance during most of the seventeenth century, were still

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<sup>13</sup>Tatler, No. 18, Vol. I, pp. 146.

strong enough to be considered a drawback to social reform. Addison's history of the "ecclesiastical thermometer" is a satire on the origin and progress of religious dissension in England. He declares, "It is one of the unaccountable things of our times, that multitudes of honest gentlemen, who entirely agree in their lives, should take it in their heads to differ in their religion."<sup>14</sup> By testing his "thermometer", Addison decides that all religious disputes are caused by ignorance. Over-zealousness, as well as indifference in religion, will result in dissension. He cites Horace as the source for his belief that "we should be careful not to over-shoot ourselves in the pursuits even of virtue. Whether zeal or moderation be the point we aim at, let us keep fire out of the one, and frost out of the other."<sup>15</sup>

Another evil prevalent throughout England during the age was belief in superstitions. Addison classifies it as a "greater evil" only in its most serious form, belief in witchcraft. He attributes all superstition to ignorance, but he declares belief in witchcraft also implies a "weak understanding and a crazed imagination." He demonstrates the truth of the old saying that the source from which witch-

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<sup>14</sup>Tatler, No. 220, Vol. V, pp. 52.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 51.

craft springs in poverty, age, and ignorance, and that a woman has seldom been accused of being a witch unless she is very poor, very old, and lives among people who are both ignorant and malicious. According to the popular conception of witchcraft, he describes Moll White, who is suspected of being a witch. The personal appearance and habits of this poor, decrepit old woman are those associated with witches. The hovel in which she lives contains all the accoutrements necessary for her diabolical practices -- black cat, broomstick, and switches. The usual charges have been made against her: that she made children spit pins; gave maids the nightmare; and helped hares escape the hounds. There is a note of pathos in Addison's conclusion of the account:

I have been the more particular in this account, because I hear there is scarce a village in England that has not a Moll White in it. When an old woman begins to doat, and grow chargeable to a parish, she is generally turned into a witch, and fills the whole country with extravagant fancies, imaginary distempers, and terrifying dreams. In the mean time, the poor wretch that is the innocent occasion of so many evils, begins to be frightened at herself, and sometimes confesses secret commerces and familiarities that her imagination forms in a delirious old age. This frequently cuts off charity from the greatest objects of compassion, and inspires people with a malevolence towards those poor decrepit parts of our species, in whom nature is defaced by infirmity and dotage.<sup>16</sup>

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Spectator, No. 117, Vol. II, pp. 262-263.

In an account of a visit to the home of a friend, Addison criticizes other superstitions just as common as witchcraft but of less serious nature. Soon after his arrival he discovers that his friend's wife is so obsessed with superstition that she makes not only herself miserable but also all her family and friends. A few of the superstitious beliefs which she gives great significance as omens of disaster are: strange and foreboding dreams, the spilling of salt, thirteen in a company, the hooting of a screech-owl at midnight. There are many others of a similar nature, "all of which," Addison declares, "arise from fear and ignorance." In commenting upon the power of such silly omens to add hardships to life by increasing the terrors of the unknown future, Addison says: "For as it is the chief concern of wise men to retrench the evils of life by the reasonings of philosophy; it is the employment of fools to multiply them by the sentiments of superstition."<sup>17</sup> Realizing that fear of death caused many people to give credence to omens and presentiments, Addison kindly suggests that an unfaltering trust in God is the only relief from the terrifying uncertainties of the future. (It seems incredible

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<sup>17</sup>Spectator, No. 7, Vol. I, pp. 35.

in this modern age, almost a century and a half after Addison's condemnation of superstition, that many of the same beliefs, which had their origin in the primitive stages of civilization, are still widely popular.)

Although superstition and dissensions, with their attending evils, were common to all classes, there were, however, many vices which were practised only by the upper classes. The immorality and licentiousness characteristic of Restoration social life were not so evident during the Queen Anne period. But most of the members and would-be members of fashionable society were still engrossed with the superficialities of life. Reference has already been made to the false standards of life as revealed in a comparison of Addison's definition of the term "gentleman" and the popular conception of its meaning. That a man who dressed in the height of fashion, practised numerous affectations in manners, spent all his time in frivolous pursuits, and scoffed at all that was honorable or serious was considered a model of the "perfect gentleman" represented the conditions with which Addison was confronted in his attempt to inculcate the true principles and ideals of life. He realized that the glamor of wealth and fashion preserved these artificial standards which were based upon appearance and

manners, and he believed the only way to expose them for their real worth was by ridiculing the absurdities and affectations that prevailed in the manners and fashions of the period.

Addison considered idleness one of the chief sources of social evils. Because of it there was great waste in talent and wealth and it engendered many vices among the upper classes. More than once Addison refers to it as a "distemper" which destroys more people than the plague. The aristocracy scorned work of any kind as plebeian and degrading. Their exalted social position and superficial education had prepared them only for a life of leisure and ease. Many members of the upper middle classes who had great ability as well as wealth had gained entrance into fashionable circles where they learned to spend their time in the empty and trivial pursuits that spring from idleness.

In a satire upon the useless and idle lives that many people lead Addison, in the character of Mr. Bickerstaff, brings to trial several persons who are "dead in reason." Acting as judge, Mr. Bickerstaff decides that those who have no purpose in life should be judged as dead and separated from those laudably employed in the improvement of their own minds or for the advantage of others. The latter he terms "living men." After hearing the cases of two men, one

sixty and the other twenty-five, he declares the evidence furnished by their daily routines proves them guilty of the charge of living perfectly useless lives. He sentences them to be interred together "with inscription proper to their characters, signifying that the old man died in the year 1689 and was buried in the year 1709; and over the young one that he departed this world in the twenty-fifth year of his death."

In Spectator No. 317, Addison recommends that all the Spectator's readers keep a journal of their lives for one week. He believes that "this kind of self-examination would give them a true state of themselves, and incline them to consider seriously what they are about." In accordance with his suggestion several readers send in a copy of the journal they have kept. Commenting upon the revelations made in one of these journals, Addison says, "I question not but the reader will be surprised to find the above-mentioned journalist taking so much care of a life filled with such inconsiderable actions -- and yet if we look into the behaviour of many whom we daily converse with, we shall find that most of their hours are taken up in those three important articles of eating, drinking, and sleeping."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Spectator, No. 317, Vol. XVI, p. 39.



Another reason for the numerous evils in the social conduct of the upper classes was the popularity of French fashions. Fashionable society followed French modes in manners and behavior as well as in dress. Addison repeatedly expresses his antipathy for French customs. In Spectator No. 45, he declares that the war with France has had some good attending it. He says:

There is nothing which I desire more than a safe and honourable peace, though at the same time I am very apprehensive of many ill consequences that may attend it. I do not mean in regard to our politics, but to our manners. What an inundation of ribbons and brocades will break in upon us? What peals of laughter and impertinence shall we be exposed to? For the prevention of these great evils, I could heartily wish that there was an act of parliament for prohibiting the importation of French fopperies.<sup>19</sup>

Among the "French fopperies" which Addison ridicules was the custom of using French military terms in conversation. He observed that hitherto the English language had been sufficient for expressing any subtlety of thought that an Englishman might have, but during the war English officers and news-writers had found it necessary to give their accounts of the battles in a language so interspersed with French phrases that it was almost unintelligible. Addison especially

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Spectator, No. 45, Vol. I, p.208.

deplored several French customs that ladies of fashion had adopted -- that of receiving callers while in bed or while dressing; of talking and laughing boisterously; and of affecting childish impertinences in their behavior. Women who traveled abroad were susceptible to every new whim in dress and manner that was of continental origin. For this reason Addison held French influence largely responsible for the great extravagance and fondness for "splendid equipage" which prevailed among women.

The most amusing charge that he makes against French influence pertained to the changes in the diet of Englishmen. In the character of Mr. Bickerstaff he gave an account of a dinner at a friend's house. French cookery had disguised the food so well that he was unable to recognize a single one of the many dishes on the table. Finally, he discovered his favorite dish, roast-beef, occupying an obscure position instead of reigning in the center of the table. He launches forth into an eulogy on roast-beef, which had been the mainstay of the diet of former generations. He declares that "the common people of this kingdom do still keep up the taste of their ancestors; and it is to this that we, in a great measure, owe the unparalleled victories that have been gained in this reign; for I would desire my reader to consider,

what work our countrymen would have made at Blenheim and Ramillies, if they had been fed with fricassees and ragouts." Because of their preference for French dishes to English roast-beef, Mr. Bickerstaff declares that "many great families are insensibly fallen off from the athletic constitution of their progenitors and are dwindled away into a pale, sickly, spindle-legged generation of valetudinarians."<sup>20</sup>

There was hardly a detail concerning the life and customs of the age that Addison did not touch upon. Some of the most unusual subjects were the grotesque and often inappropriate sign posts, the gibberish cried by the London street venders, and the yawning, whistling, and grinning contests, which were popular in that day, and were somewhat similar to the modern marathon. In an early number of the paper Addison proposed the appointment of a "Censor of Small Wares" for the consideration of the numerous petty vices that were brought to his notice. Setting aside one day each week for the purpose, he brought before his imaginary court the many points of etiquette and good manners which were too trivial to merit much attention, yet important enough that they could not be ignored. "For however slightly

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Tatler, No. 148, Vol. IV, pp. 18.

men may regard these particulars, little follies in dress and behaviour, they lead to greater evils."<sup>21</sup> The court, presided over by Mr. Bickerstaff, would hear and judge the injuries, affronts, little perplexities in behavior and manners, and peculiarities of dress, "that are not to be redressed by the common laws of this land."<sup>22</sup>

On the day appointed for examining petitions for the use of canes, snuff-boxes, and other "necessary ornaments", Mr. Bickerstaff receives a petition from Simon Trippit, a typical cane addict. He claims a cane as necessary to him as any other of his limbs, and "that the knocking of it upon his shoe, leaning one leg upon it, or whistling with it on his mouth are such great reliefs to him in conversation, that he does not know how to be good company without it." The judge decides to permit him to use it three days of the week until he can be "weaned from it by degrees."

After the court has heard and disposed of numerous cases against such offenders as the false ogler, the Sabbath breaker, the fortune hunter, the flirt, and the bore, Mr. Bickerstaff sits down before his fire to reflect upon the good he has accomplished. He believes that those who

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<sup>21</sup> Tatler, No. 103, Vol. III, p. 110.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., No. 250, Vol. V, p. 183.

make themselves ridiculous in the eyes of their fellows by singularities of dress or behavior are thereby discredited, so that no matter what talents they possess, they are denied the opportunity of doing any good in the world.

In the second number of the Spectator Steele outlined the characters who were members of the Spectator's club. Each represented a class in the society of the period, and by using these characters for illustration Addison and Steele gave their essays an element of reality that added effectiveness to their teaching. The members of the Spectator Club were the most important, but they were only a few of the characters which the essayists created. The use of the type character was a favorite device of Addison's for illustrating his satire of the vices which existed in fashionable society. His natural gift of characterization gave a quality of reality to these types which led many readers to believe them from real life. However, Addison repeatedly denied the accusation of directing his satire at individuals. In explaining his use of these characters, he says, "I must entreat every particular person, who does me the honour to be a reader of this paper, never to think himself, or any one of his friends or enemies, aimed at in what is said; for I promise him, never to draw a faulty character which does not fit at least a thousand people; or to publish a single paper, that

is not written in the spirit of benevolence, and with a love of mankind."<sup>23</sup>

Some of the types which he characterized according to outstanding faults of character or absurdities in dress and manners, Addison classified under the general names of pedant, coxcomb and coquette. The first of these "species" as Addison terms them, was particularly criticized. His hatred of pedantry is indicated by his definition that it is "a farm of knowledge without the power of it; that attracts the eyes of the common people; breaks out in noise and show; and finds its reward not from any inward pleasure that attends it; but from the praises and approbations which it receives from them."<sup>24</sup> Several forms of pedantry flourished during the age. Many who called themselves scholars were in actuality dilettantes. They had neither the ability nor the desire for learning. Their education had given them a smattering of knowledge which was sufficient for their purpose -- to appear to be a wit or critic. In Addison's opinion the critic of his day was the most "importunate, empty, and conceited animal" in existence. Sir Timothy Tittle, Addison's name for the typical critic, can best be described in Addison's own words.

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<sup>23</sup>

Spectator, No. 34, Vol. I, p. 160

<sup>24</sup>

Tatler, No. 165, Vol. IV, pp. 107-108.

He is master of a certain set of words, as Unity, Style, Fire, Phlegm, Easy, Natural, Turn, Sentiment, and the like; which he varies, compounds, divides, and throws together, in every part of his discourse, without any thought or meaning. The marks you may know him by are, an elevated eye, and dogmatical brow, a positive voice, and a contempt for every thing that comes out, whether he has read it or not. He dwells altogether in generals. He praises or dispraises in the lump. --- With these extraordinary talents and accomplishments, Sir Timothy Tittle puts men in vogue, or condemns them to obscurity; and sits as judge of <sup>life</sup> and death upon every author that appears in public.<sup>25</sup>

Another kind of pedantry for which Addison had almost equal contempt is that practised by those who have knowledge but lack common sense in its use. Many editors, commentators, and critics were guilty of it. Addison says, "These persons set a greater value on themselves for having found out the meaning of a passage in Greek, than upon the author for having written it, nay, will allow the passage itself not to have any beauty in it, at the same time that they would be considered as the greatest men of the age, for having interpreted it."<sup>26</sup>

A "broker in learning" is the name for the kind of pedant represented by Tom Folio. His chief occupation was to stock the libraries of wealthy and fashionable men with the best editions. He considered himself an universal scholar because he was familiar with the names of authors, the sub-

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<sup>25</sup>

Tatler, No. 165, Vol. IV, pp. 108.

<sup>26</sup>

Ibid., No. 158, Vol. IV, pp. 74

jects on which they wrote, the number of editions through which their works had passed, and the criticisms which had been given them. "This he looks upon to be sound learning and substantial criticism. As for those who talk of the fineness of style, and the justness of thought, or describe the brightness of any particular passages; --- Tom looks upon them as men of superficial learning and flashy parts."<sup>27</sup>

In Addison's opinion, the virtuoso had many of the faults of the pedant, but he was a harmless type. Addison uses an entomologist for illustrating his satire upon the pursuits of a virtuoso. His most serious charge against the entomologist, Nicholas Gimcrack, is that he spends too much time and thought upon trifles when he might find better employment for his genius. Addison points his criticism with his humorous account of the entomologist's will. It disposes of the "treasures" of the deceased with such bequests as a "female skeleton" to the widow, and to a daughter "upon the birth of her first child, if she marries with her mother's consent, the nest of an humming bird."<sup>28</sup>

Characterization of the second "species", the coxcomb, included several varieties of coxcombry. However, he agreed with Mr. Wycherley's definition of every type of coxcomb: "He is

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<sup>27</sup> Tatler, No. 158, Vol. IV, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., No. 216, Vol. V, p. 30.



ugly all over with the affectations of a fine gentleman."

The most distinguished and popular type was the one Addison called a "Pretty Fellow."

The chief of this sort is Colonel Brunett, who is a man of fashion, because he will be so; and practises a very janty way of behaviour, because he is too careless to know when he offends, and too sanguine to be mortified if he did know it: ---- Therefore he is very successfully loud among the wits, and familiar among the ladies, and dissolute among the rakes: ----- All he says or does, which would offend in another, are passed over in him; and all actions and speech which please, doubly please if they come from him: no one wonders or takes notice when he is wrong; but all admire him when he is in the right. ----- Where nature has formed a person for this station amongst men, he is gifted with a peculiar genius for success, and his very errors and absurdities contribute to it; this felicity attending him to his life's end: for, it being in a manner necessary that he should be of no consequence, he is as well in old age as youth.<sup>29</sup>

Another type of coxcomb is the whisperer without business whom Addison calls Lord No-Where. He is frequently seen in the club, coffee-house, and theatre. He assumes the air of one who knows important secrets, and "what adds to the jest is, that his emptiness has its moods and seasons, and he will not condescend to let you into his discoveries except he is in very good humour, or has seen somebody of fashion talk to you. He will keep his nothing to himself."<sup>30</sup> Then there is the courteous Umbra, whose

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<sup>29</sup> Tatler, No. 24, Vol. I, pp. 186-187

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., No. 38, Vol. II, pp. 5

officiousness would be regarded as impertinence in any other man. Addison declares that he should not be judged by the trifles upon which he is assiduously engaged, but by his intentions which are to render valuable service. He believes he is giving his friends the greatest assistance by performing insignificant errands or by prescribing toward the cure of a pimple or a rash, which is as far as his knowledge of medicine will allow.

Although rake, fop, and beau were names for other types of coxcomb, they all had the same general character. However, each had one or two traits which distinguished him from the rest of the "species." There were a few whom Addison names according to singularities in dress or behavior. "A cane upon the fifth button shall from henceforth be the type of a Dapper; red-heeled shoes, and a hat hung upon one side of the head, shall signify a Smart; a good periwig made into a twist, with a brisk cock, shall speak a Mettled Fellow; and an upper lip covered with snuff, denote a Coffee-house Statesman."<sup>31</sup>

The coquette, or "female coxcomb", is a species of many varieties. Addison is especially severe in his ridicule of the type which he calls Salamander. He explains his choice

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<sup>31</sup>

Tatler, No. 96, Vol. III, p. 67

of name by this definition: "Now a Salamander is a kind of heroine in chastity, that treads upon fire, and lives in the midst of flames without being hurt."<sup>32</sup> Even though her behavior toward men is unusually suggestive and provocative, she is scandalized at the narrow-mindedness and severity of a parent or the unreasonableness and jealousy of a husband, who objects to such innocent liberties. Thus the Salamander lives in a state of simplicity and innocence, and wonders what people mean by temptations. Only women made of flesh and blood are subject to human frailties while the characteristics of a Salamander preserve her constitution in a kind of natural frost. Addison gives the name of Idol to the type of coquette whose vanity demands continuous manifestations of adoration. She spends all her time in adorning her person or in gaining new adorers. At the theatre, assembly, in the Ring, and even in church, she sets up the ritual for her worship and receives the offerings of her votaries. If she is skillful, she contrives to make each of her adorers believe he is the favored one, and at the same time she acquires new worshippers. Although this flirt is fittingly named, her adorers differ in one respect from those of the real idol. "For as others fall out be-

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Tatler, No. 198, Vol. IV, pp. 16

cause they worship different idols",<sup>33</sup> her idolaters are likely to quarrel because they worship the same. Addison gives the causes why many idols are "undeified." Marriage is a sure cause, for "when a man becomes familiar with his goddess, she quickly sins into a woman." Old age is also a certain cause, and "there is not a more unhappy being, than a superannuated idol."

Those coquettes "who are for spinning out the time of courtship to an immoderate length" are called Demurrers by Addison. He good-naturedly ridicules the temerity of demurrers and reflects upon the evils of demurrage:

First of all, I would have them seriously think on the shortness of their time. Life is not long enough for a coquette to play all her tricks in. A timorous woman drops into her grave before she has done deliberating. Were the age of man the same that it was before the flood, a lady might sacrifice half a century to a scruple, and be two or three ages in demurring.-----Alas! she ought to play her part in haste, when she considers that she is suddenly to quit the stage, and make room for others. In the second place,--as the term of life is short, that of beauty is much shorter.-----A third consideration which I would likewise recommend to a demurrer, and that is the great danger of her falling in love when she is about three score, if she cannot satisfy her doubts and scruples before that time. There is a kind of latter spring, that sometimes gets into the blood of an old woman, and turns her into a very odd sort of an animal.<sup>34</sup>

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Spectator, No. 73, Vol. II, p. 60

<sup>34</sup>

Ibid., No. 89, Vol. II, pp. 136-137

These examples of various types of coxcombs, pedants, and coquettes are representative of the superficial lives and characters of men and women in fashionable society. Addison reveals through these characterizations that many of the evils that were practised by men were likewise practised by women. In recognition of this fact, he dedicated a large number of his essays to the consideration of their manners and morals, for he believed they could wield great influence toward social and moral reform if they were properly directed. In an early number of the Spectator, Addison declares:

But there are none to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world. I have often thought there has not been sufficient pains taken in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones. Their amusements seem contrived for them, rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures; and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal employment of their lives. . . . Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparation of jellies and sweetmeats. . . . I shall endeavour to point out all those imperfections that are the blemishes, as well as those virtues which are the embellishments of the sex.<sup>35</sup>

Addison regarded the improvement of women's morals and manners as an important part of his program for social reform. His belief in the wisdom of a practical education for women has already been mentioned. It is to the glory of both Addison and Steele that they did not share the general attitude toward women, for it was an age in which women of all classes were neglected and regarded with contempt. Lord Chesterfield's opinion of the sex was characteristic: "Women are only children of a larger growth; they have an entertaining tattle and sometimes wit; but for solid reasoning and good sense, I never knew one that had it."

In his attempt to point out "the imperfections that are the blemishes" of the fair sex, Addison touches upon numerous absurdities in dress, follies of conduct, and affectations in manners. The head-dress and the hoop-petticoat were fashions in dress which Addison most frequently ridiculed. In his comment on head-dresses, he remarks "that women in all ages have taken more pains than men to adorn the outside of their heads."<sup>36</sup> The unwieldy size and ungainly appearance of the hoop-petticoat are sufficient

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<sup>36</sup>

Spectator, No. 98, Vol. II, p. 178

reasons for abolishing such a fashion, "for," he declares, "should this fashion get among the ordinary people, our public ways would be so crowded, that we should want street-room."<sup>37</sup> Many rigid rules of conduct and appurtenances of dress were regarded as absolutely essential for success in the elaborate system of love-making, which was the chief occupation in fashionable society. By proposing the founding of an academy for training young women in the exercise of the fan and by establishing set rules for judging the progress of an amour, Addison's ridicule reveals the degree of absurdity which marked fashionable practices of the age. One practice among women of high social position which Addison criticized more severely than most of their vices was that of demanding "pin-money", a popular name for exorbitant allowances, which they squandered on extravagant dress or expensive diversions.

It has been said that the state of a nation's morals may be judged by its amusements. The truth of this statement is borne out by the amusements which were popular in the early decades of the eighteenth century. The upper classes, desirous of displaying expensive dress and equipage, paraded the Ring and fashionable Gardens, attended the opera

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Spectator, No. 127, Vol. II, p. 307



and the theatre, and held private assemblies and masquerades. One of the chief pastimes among "gentlemen" was duelling, a practice which had lost what little dignity it had ever had. Gay young aristocrats organized lawless bands such as the famous Mohocks and for their amusement perpetrated outrages that were little less than criminal. In numerous essays Addison pointed out the evils which originated in, or resulted from, these diversions.

Widespread prosperity brought about an increase in luxury and leisure and above all, in a spirit of speculation which affected social life by popularizing gambling as a pastime and finally culminated in the gigantic South Sea Bubble. Gambling was practised by all classes in a variety of forms, but one of the most popular was the lottery. Addison criticizes this pastime not only because it led to waste of money but also because it represented the tendency among most people to live beyond their means in the expectation of winning or making money easily. His moral is:

It should be an indispensable rule in life; to contract our desires to our present condition, and, whatever may be our expectations, to live within the compass of what we actually possess. It will be time enough to enjoy an estate when it comes into our hands; but if we anticipate our good fortune, we shall lose the pleasure of it when it arrives, and may possibly never possess what we have so



foolishly counted upon.<sup>36</sup>

The morals and manners of the average Londoner furnished most of the subjects for Addison's essays, but the lives and habits of country people, especially of the rural gentry, received their share of his criticism. If the manners of the city dweller were crude, those of the country man were often boorish. The paternalistic system of society that still predominated in rural England gave the country gentleman, who was usually lord of an estate, a position of great influence. Reference has already been made to Addison's belief that the education and refinement of the country gentlemen were important factors in social reform. He created the ideal type of country gentleman in the character of the lovable and kindly Sir Roger, whose relations with his devoted tenants proved a worthy example for every English squire. Furthermore, he discussed many phases of country life as he saw it at Sir Roger's manor. This group of Spectator essays are known as the "Sir R oger de Coverley Papers."

At that time there was little communication between town and country, for the roads were frequently impassable, and the dangers and discomfort of travel were great. The lack of contact between the inhabitants of the rural districts and of the city resulted in great differences in dress and

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<sup>36</sup> Spectator, No. 191, Vol. III, p. 295

manners. Although the country gentleman was of the aristocracy and often possessed wealth, he was laughed at by the Londoner. When he made one of his infrequent visits to town, he was conspicuous because of his rustic ways and peculiarities of dress.

Addison good-naturedly ridicules a country gentleman whose eccentric dress and affected behavior make him the center of much attention as he walks through the park. Addison says: "I have often wondered, that honest gentlemen, who are good neighbors and live quietly in their own possessions, should take it in their heads to frighten the town after this unreasonable manner." He concludes his reflections with the droll remark: "I can not tell who this gentleman is, but for my part, may say with the lover in Terence, who lost sight of a fine lady, 'wherever thou art, thou canst not be long concealed.'" <sup>39</sup>

Addison says that the first thing one notices on going into the country is the difference in dress from that of the city. The rural gentry attempt to follow the city fashions of manners and dress but they merely succeed in being conspicuous and ridiculous, when they fancy themselves in the height of the mode.

They have no sooner fetched themselves up to the fashions of the polite world, but the town has dropped them, and are nearer in the first state of nature than to those refinements which formerly reigned in the court, and still prevailed in the country. One may now know a man that never conversed in the world, by his excess of good-breeding. A polite country esquire shall make you as many bows in half an hour, as would serve a courtier for a week.<sup>40</sup>

Addison expresses the wish that all those who live beyond a short distance from town would agree upon one fashion in dress which they would never change. "If instead of running after the mode, they would continue fixed in one certain habit, the mode would sometime overtake them."<sup>41</sup>

The chief diversion of the country gentleman was hunting, which in itself was harmless enough, but the average country squire had such a passion for it that he neglected everything else in order to spend his time in the chase. Not only did he neglect his estate, but also lavished money and affection on his horses and hunting dogs. Addison declares that every county of Great Britain has a hundred or more of this kind of Esquire "with an estate that might make him the blessing and ornament of the world around him; yet he has no other view and ambition, but to be an animal above dogs and horses, without the relish of any one enjoyment which is pec-

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<sup>40</sup> Spectator, No. 119, Vol. II, pp. 269

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., No. 129, Vol. II, p. 314

uliar to the faculties of human nature."<sup>42</sup>

A summary view of Addison's essays on manners and dress proves that few aspects of the social life during his age escaped his attention. In his attempt at reform, he first revealed that the underlying causes for the many social and moral evils were ignorance, idleness, and a false standard of life. He realized that no lasting reform could be effected merely by criticizing the "outward" indications of "inward" rottenness. After he had systematically classified the various evils according to their prevalence and seriousness, he exposed their nature with the attending evils for which they were directly or indirectly responsible.

The most prevalent evil during the period was political dissension, and directly from it came all those evils that characterized public life. Although religious prejudice was not so marked as in politics, it was still evident, especially in relation to politics. Popular superstition was another major evil. Its most serious aspect was belief in witchcraft, but even its minor aspects had an unwholesome effect on society. The superficial life of fashionable society was the breeding place for numerous vices that Addison mercilessly ridicules, not because they were of more serious nature than many other evils of the period, but because of

the example which they set for humbler classes. For the same reason he made a critical examination of the lives and habits of the country gentry. Addison's program for social reform did not consist wholly of destructive criticism. He not only exposed the true nature of many social practices and traditions but also offered many practical suggestions for their correction or improvement.

## CHAPTER V

### EVIDENCE OF ADDISON'S INFLUENCE ON SOCIAL REFORM

In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to establish the thesis of this study, Addison's influence on social reform, by tracing the forces which brought about the great need for moral and social reform at the beginning of the eighteenth century, by showing that a combination of circumstances made work toward reform timely, by pointing out that Addison's character and training were ideal for leadership of the movement, and most important of all, by setting forth his criticisms of morals and manners in the light of his philosophy of life.

The purpose of this chapter is to prove that Addison did exert a great influence on social reform. An examination of his essays on aesthetic tastes, religion, morality, and social manners have shown that the underlying principles upon which his criticisms are based have in time been accepted as the true foundation upon which society is built. Although some of the reforms he advocated, such as higher education for women, seem commonplace to the modern reader, they were new to his contemporaries, and prove that he was far in advance of

his age. No extravagant claims are made for Addison. There have been more profound philosophers and greater reformers. Recognition has been given to the ideal conditions for reform during the period. But Addison was the man who could most effectively direct the movement. After all, wise leadership is the most essential factor in such a movement, for without it other factors favoring reform would be dissipated.

Reform, like other changes in civilization, is an almost imperceptible process resulting from various causes. To claim that immediate and complete reforms were effected by Addison's teachings would be absurd. However, there is evidence that he was largely responsible for numerous reforms in the social conduct of the age. Of course, Addison wrote in collaboration with Steele, and received aid from other essayists whose assistance was invaluable; but it is generally admitted that Addison was the guiding spirit of the Spectator both in the program for reform and in the literary style and tone which characterized it. That the paper enjoyed extreme popularity with the reading public and that it had numerous imitators of its style and subject-matter are indications of Addison's influence. Although entertainment was one purpose of the paper, its chief purpose (which Addison repeatedly declared) was to instruct. In carrying out this



purpose, Addison's writings grew more insistently moral as the paper advanced; and since his reading public steadily increased, it is naturally assumed that his criticisms of social life were not only being accepted, but also approved by many readers.

Recognition of Addison's influence on social reform may be found in the letters written by readers to the Spectator, in biographies and criticisms of Addison, and in literary and social histories of the age. An excerpt or comment from each of these sources should be sufficient to substantiate the belief that Addison exerted great influence on the social reform of his age.

The following poem, written by the poet laureate of England, Nahum Tate, was printed in the Spectator, September 19, 1712:

#### ON THE SPECTATOR

When first the Tatler to a mute was turn'd,  
Great Britain for her censor's silence mourn'd;  
Robb'd of his sprightly beams, she wept the night,  
Till the Spectator rose and blaz'd as bright.  
So the first man the sun's first setting view'd,  
And sigh'd till circling day his joys renew'd.  
Yet, doubtful how that second sun to name,  
Whether a bright successor, or the same,  
So we: but now from this suspense are freed,  
Since all agree, who both with judgment read,  
'Tis the same sun, and does himself succeed.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Spectator, No. 489, Vol. VIII, p. 169



Samuel Johnson says in his Lives of the English Poets:

"Before the Tatler and the Spectator, if the writers for the theater are excepted, England had no masters of common life. No writer had undertaken to reform either the savageness of neglect or the impertinence of civility; to teach when to speak or when to be silent, how to refuse or how to comply. We wanted not books to teach us our more important duties; but an arbiter elegantiarum, a judge of propriety, was yet wanting."

In his biography of Addison, W. J. Courthope makes this comment in regard to Addison's influence in reforming the common attitude toward marriage: "Dorimant and Sir Fopling Flutter felt ashamed of themselves. The cuckold disappeared from the stage. In society itself marriage no longer appeared ridiculous."

Probably the comment of Bonamy Dobrée, who is not very complimentary to Addison, "that he always would rank as a revered Censor Morum, and as one who had leavened the most critical period in English manners", should be valued most highly as evidence because it was given so grudgingly. Since Thomas Babington Macaulay's admiration of Addison is so extravagant and so generally known, there is no need to quote from his biographical account of Addison.

The Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences has a very definite statement as to Addison's position in the history of social reform:

..... He had a permanent influence on morals and journalism. .... He was the first English critic, in the light vein, of both morals and manners..... His wide range of interests in the daily problems of human life served both his own age and posterity..... His good sense and humanity, his moral purity and reverence for the sublime in man and nature,<sup>2</sup> set him as a milestone in the progress of social criticism.

Similar comments could be quoted indefinitely, but these few are representative of the general opinion as to Addison's worth. Although there is some difference of opinion as to whether Addison has rendered greater service as an essayist or as a reformer, there is no doubt that he represents a definite and significant step forward in the evolutionary process of civilization.

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<sup>2</sup>

Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, Vol. I, pp. 437

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