**LECTURE 11.CHAPTER IX.PERIOD VII.THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. PSEUDO−CLASSICISM AND THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN ROMANTICISM**

Plan:

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STEELE AND ADDISON AND 'THE TATLER' AND 'THE SPECTATOR'

ALEXANDER POPE, 1688−1744.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1709−1784.

[Footnote: Thackeray's 'Henry Esmond' is the greatest historical novel relating to the early eighteenth century.]

POLITICAL CONDITIONS.

During the first part of the eighteenth century the direct connection between politics and literature was closer than at any previous period of English life; for the practical spirit of the previous generation continued to prevail, so that the chief writers were very ready to concern themselves with the affairs of State, and in the uncertain strife of parties ministers were glad to enlist their aid. On the death of King William in 1702, Anne, sister of his wife Queen Mary and daughter of James II, became Queen. Unlike King William she was a Tory and at first filled offices with members of that party. But the English campaigns under the Duke of Marlborough against Louis XIV were supported by the Whigs, [Footnote: The Tories were the political ancestors of the present−day Conservatives; the Whigs of the Liberals.] who therefore gradually regained control, and in 1708 the Queen had to submit to a Whig ministry. She succeeded in ousting them in 1710, and a Tory cabinet was formed by Henry Harley (afterwards Earl of Oxford) and Henry St. John (afterwards Viscount Bolingbroke). On the death of Anne in 1714 Bolingbroke, with other Tories, was intriguing for a second restoration of the Stuarts in the person of the son of James II (the 'Old Pretender'). But the nation decided for a Protestant German prince, a descendant of James I through his daughter Elizabeth, [Footnote: The subject of Wotton's fine poem, above, p. 158.] and this prince was crowned as George I—an event which brought England peace at the price of a century of rule by an unenlightened and sordid foreign dynasty. The Tories were violently turned out of office; Oxford was imprisoned, and Bolingbroke, having fled to the Pretender, was declared a traitor. Ten years later he was allowed to come back and attempted to oppose Robert Walpole, the Whig statesman who for twenty years governed England in the name of the first two Georges; but in the upshot Bolingbroke was again obliged to retire to France. How closely these events were connected with the fortunes of the foremost authors we shall see as we proceed.

THE GENERAL SPIRIT OF THE PERIOD.

The writers of the reigns of Anne and George I called their period the Augustan Age, because they flattered themselves that with them English life and literature had reached a culminating period of civilization and elegance corresponding to that which existed at Rome under the Emperor Augustus. They believed also that both in the art of living and in literature they had rediscovered and were practising the principles of the best periods of Greek and Roman life. In our own time this judgment appears equally arrogant and mistaken. In reality the men of the early eighteenth century, like those of the Restoration, largely misunderstood the qualities of the classical spirit, and thinking to reproduce them attained only a superficial, pseudo−classical, imitation. The main characteristics of the period and its literature continue, with some further development, those of the Restoration, and may be summarily indicated as follows: 1. Interest was largely centered in the practical well−being either of society as a whole or of one's own social class or set. The majority of writers, furthermore, belonged by birth or association to the upper social stratum and tended to overemphasize its artificial conventions, often looking with contempt on the other classes. To them conventional good breeding, fine manners, the pleasures of the leisure class, and the standards of 'The Town' (fashionable London society) were the only part of life much worth regarding. 2. The men of this age carried still further the distrust and dislike felt by the previous generation for emotion, enthusiasm, and strong individuality both in life and in literature, and exalted Reason and Regularity as their guiding stars. The terms 'decency' and 'neatness' were forever on their lips. They sought a conventional uniformity in manners, speech, and indeed in nearly everything else, and were uneasy if they deviated far from the approved, respectable standards of the body of their fellows. Great poetic imagination, therefore, could scarcely exist among them, or indeed supreme greatness of any sort. 3. They had little appreciation for external Nature or for any beauty except that of formalized Art. A forest seemed to most of them merely wild and gloomy, and great mountains chiefly terrible, but they took delight in gardens of artificially trimmed trees and in regularly plotted and alternating beds of domestic flowers. The Elizabethans also, as we have seen, had had much more feeling for the terror than for the grandeur of the sublime in Nature, but the Elizabethans had had nothing of the elegant primness of the Augustans. 4. In speech and especially in literature, most of all in poetry, they were given to abstractness of thought and expression, intended to secure elegance, but often serving largely to substitute superficiality for definiteness and significant meaning. They abounded in personifications of abstract qualities and ideas ('Laughter, heavenly maid,' Honor, Glory, Sorrow, and so on, with prominent capital letters), a sort of a pseudo−classical substitute for emotion. 5. They were still more fully confirmed than the men of the Restoration in the conviction that the ancients had attained the highest possible perfection in literature, and some of them made absolute submission of judgment to the ancients, especially to the Latin poets and the Greek, Latin, and also the seventeenth century classicizing French critics. Some authors seemed timidly to desire to be under authority and to glory in surrendering their independence, individuality, and originality to foreign and long−established leaders and principles. 6. Under these circumstances the effort to attain the finished beauty of classical literature naturally resulted largely in a more or less shallow formal smoothness. 7. There was a strong tendency to moralizing, which also was not altogether free from conventionality and superficiality. Although the 'Augustan Age' must be considered to end before the middle of the century, the same spirit continued dominant among many writers until near its close, so that almost the whole of the century may be called the period of pseudo−classicism.

DANIEL DEFOE.

The two earliest notable writers of the period, however, though they display some of these characteristics, were men of strong individual traits which in any age would have directed them largely along paths of their own choosing. The first of them is Daniel Defoe, who belongs, furthermore, quite outside the main circle of high−bred and polished fashion. Defoe was born in London about 1660, the son of James Foe, a butcher, to whose name the son arbitrarily and with characteristic eye to effect prefixed the 'De' in middle life. Educated for the Dissenting ministry, Defoe, a man of inexhaustible practical energy, engaged instead in several successive lines of business, and at the age of thirty−five, after various vicissitudes, was in prosperous circumstances. He now became a pamphleteer in support of King William and the Whigs. His first very significant work, a satire against the High−Church Tories entitled 'The Shortest Way with Dissenters,' belongs early in the reign of Queen Anne. Here, parodying extreme Tory bigotry, he argued, with apparent seriousness, that the Dissenters should all be hanged. The Tories were at first delighted, but when they discovered the hoax became correspondingly indignant and Defoe was set in the pillory, and (for a short time) imprisoned. In this confinement he began The Review, a newspaper which he continued for eleven years and whose department called 'The Scandal Club' suggested 'The Tatler' to Steele. During many years following his release Defoe issued an enormous number of pamphlets and acted continuously as a secret agent and spy of the government. Though he was always at heart a thorough−going Dissenter and Whig, he served all the successive governments, Whig and Tory, alike; for his character and point of view were those of the 'practical' journalist and middle−class money−getter. This of course means that all his professed principles were superficial, or at least secondary, that he was destitute of real religious feeling and of the gentleman's sense of honor. Defoe's influence in helping to shape modern journalism and modern every−day English style was large; but the achievement which has given him world−wide fame came late in life. In 1706 he had written a masterly short story, 'The Apparition of Mrs. Veal.' Its real purpose, characteristically enough, was the concealed one of promoting the sale of an unsuccessful religious book, but its literary importance lies first in the extraordinarily convincing mass of minute details which it casts about an incredible incident and second in the complete knowledge (sprung from Defoe's wide experience in journalism, politics, and business) which it displays of a certain range of middle−class characters and ideas. It is these same elements, together with the vigorous presentation and emphasis of basal practical virtues, that distinguished 'Robinson Crusoe,' of which the First Part appeared in 1719, when Defoe was nearly or quite sixty years of age. The book, which must have been somewhat influenced by 'Pilgrim's Progress,' was more directly suggested by a passage in William Dampier's 'Voyage Round the World,' and also, as every one knows, by the experience of Alexander Selkirk, a sailor who, set ashore on the island of Juan Fernandez, off the coast of Chile, had lived there alone from 1709 to 1713. Selkirk's story had been briefly told in the year of his return in a newspaper of Steele, 'The Englishman'; it was later to inspire the most famous poem of William Cowper. 'Robinson Crusoe,' however, turned the material to account in a much larger, more clever, and more striking fashion. Its success was immediate and enormous, both with the English middle class and with a wider circle of readers in the other European countries; it was followed by numerous imitations and it will doubtless always continue to be one of the best known of world classics. The precise elements of its power can be briefly indicated. As a story of unprecedented adventure in a distant and unknown region it speaks thrillingly to the universal human sense of romance. Yet it makes a still stronger appeal to the instinct for practical, every−day realism which is the controlling quality in the English dissenting middle class for whom Defoe was writing. Defoe has put himself with astonishingly complete dramatic sympathy into the place of his hero. In spite of not a few errors and oversights (due to hasty composition) in the minor details of external fact, he has virtually lived Crusoe's life with him in imagination and he therefore makes the reader also pass with Crusoe through all his experiences, his fears, hopes and doubts. Here also, as we have implied, Defoe's vivid sense for external minutiae plays an important part. He tells precisely how many guns and cheeses and flasks of spirit Crusoe brought away from the wreck, how many days or weeks he spent in making his earthen vessels and his canoe—in a word, thoroughly actualizes the whole story. More than this, the book strikes home to the English middle class because it records how a plain Englishman completely mastered apparently insuperable obstacles through the plain virtues of courage, patience, perseverance, and mechanical ingenuity. Further, it directly addresses the dissenting conscience in its emphasis on religion and morality. This is none the less true because the religion and morality are of the shallow sort characteristic of Defoe, a man who, like Crusoe, would have had no scruples about selling into slavery a dark−skinned boy who had helped him to escape from the same condition. Of any really delicate or poetic feeling, any appreciation for the finer things of life, the book has no suggestion. In style, like Defoe's other writings, it is straightforward and clear, though colloquially informal, with an entire absence of pretense or affectation. Structurally, it is a characteristic story of adventure—a series of loosely connected experiences not unified into an organic plot, and with no stress on character and little treatment of the really complex relations and struggles between opposing characters and groups of characters. Yet it certainly marks a step in the development of the modern novel, as will be indicated in the proper place (below, p. 254). Defoe's energy had not diminished with age and a hard life, and the success of 'Robinson Crusoe' led him to pour out a series of other works of romantic−realistic fiction. The second part of 'Robinson Crusoe' is no more satisfactory than any other similar continuation, and the third part, a collection of moralizings, is today entirely and properly forgotten. On the other hand, his usual method, the remarkable imaginative re−creation and vivifying of a host of minute details, makes of the fictitious 'Journal of the Plague Year' (1666) a piece of virtual history. Defoe's other later works are rather unworthy attempts to make profit out of his reputation and his full knowledge of the worst aspects of life; they are mostly very frank presentations of the careers of adventurers or criminals, real or fictitious. In this coarse realism they are picaresque (above, p. 108), and in structure also they, like 'Robinson Crusoe,' are picaresque in being mere successions of adventures without artistic plot. In Defoe's last years he suffered a great reverse of fortune, paying the full penalty for his opportunism and lack of ideals. His secret and unworthy long−standing connection with the Government was disclosed, so that his reputation was sadly blemished, and he seems to have gone into hiding, perhaps as the result of half−insane delusions. He died in 1731. His place in English literature is secure, though he owes it to the lucky accident of finding not quite too late special material exactly suited to his peculiar talent.

JONATHAN SWIFT.

Jonathan Swift, another unique figure of very mixed traits, is like Defoe in that he connects the reign of William III with that of his successors and that, in accordance with the spirit of his age, he wrote for the most part not for literary but for practical purposes; in many other respects the two are widely different. Swift is one of the best representatives in English literature of sheer intellectual power, but his character, his aims, his environment, and the circumstances of his life denied to him also literary achievement of the greatest permanent significance. Swift, though of unmixed English descent, related to both Dryden and Robert Herrick, was born in Ireland, in 1667. Brought up in poverty by his widowed mother, he spent the period between his fourteenth and twentieth years recklessly and without distinction at Trinity College, Dublin. From the outbreak attending the Revolution of 1688 he fled to England, where for the greater part of nine years he lived in the country as a sort of secretary to the retired statesman, Sir William Temple, who was his distant relative by marriage. Here he had plenty of time for reading, but the position of dependence and the consciousness that his great though still unformed powers of intellect and of action were rusting away in obscurity undoubtedly did much to increase the natural bitterness of his disposition. As the result of a quarrel he left Temple for a time and took holy orders, and on the death of Temple he returned to Ireland as chaplain to the English Lord Deputy. He was eventually given several small livings and other church positions in and near Dublin, and at one of these, Laracor, he made his home for another nine years. During all this period and later the Miss Esther Johnson whom he has immortalized as 'Stella' holds a prominent place in his life. A girl of technically gentle birth, she also had been a member of Sir William Temple's household, was infatuated with Swift, and followed him to Ireland. About their intimacy there has always hung a mystery. It has been held that after many years they were secretly married, but this is probably a mistake; the essential fact seems to be that Swift, with characteristic selfishness, was willing to sacrifice any other possible prospects of 'Stella' to his own mere enjoyment of her society. It is certain, however, that he both highly esteemed her and reciprocated her affection so far as it was possible for him to love any woman. In 1704 Swift published his first important works (written earlier, while he was living with Temple), which are among the masterpieces of his satirical genius. In 'The Battle of the Books' he supports Temple, who had taken the side of the Ancients in a hotly−debated and very futile quarrel then being carried on by French and English writers as to whether ancient or modern authors are the greater. 'The Tale of a Tub' is a keen, coarse, and violent satire on the actual irreligion of all Christian Churches. It takes the form of a burlesque history of three brothers, Peter (the Catholics, so called from St. Peter), Martin (the Lutherans and the Church of England, named from Martin Luther), and Jack (the Dissenters, who followed John Calvin); but a great part of the book is made up of irrelevant introductions and digressions in which Swift ridicules various absurdities, literary and otherwise, among them the very practice of digressions. Swift's instinctive dominating impulse was personal ambition, and during this period he made long visits to London, attempting to push his fortunes with the Whig statesmen, who were then growing in power; attempting, that is, to secure a higher position in the Church; also, be it added, to get relief for the ill−treated English Church in Ireland. He made the friendship of Addison, who called him, perhaps rightly, 'the greatest genius of the age,' and of Steele, but he failed of his main purposes; and when in 1710 the Tories replaced the Whigs he accepted their solicitations and devoted his pen, already somewhat experienced in pamphleteering, to their service. It should not be overlooked that up to this time, when he was already more than forty years of age, his life had been one of continual disappointment, so that he was already greatly soured. Now, in conducting a paper, 'The Examiner,' and in writing masterly political pamphlets, he found occupation for his tremendous energy and gave very vital help to the ministers. During the four years of their control of the government he remained in London on intimate terms with them, especially with Bolingbroke and Harley, exercising a very large advisory share in the bestowal of places of all sorts and in the general conduct of affairs. This was Swift's proper sphere; in the realization and exercise of power he took a fierce and deep delight. His bearing at this time too largely reflected the less pleasant side of his nature, especially his pride and arrogance. Yet toward professed inferiors he could be kind; and real playfulness and tenderness, little evident in most of his other writings, distinguish his 'Journal to Stella,' which he wrote for her with affectionate regularity, generally every day, for nearly three years. The 'Journal' is interesting also for its record of the minor details of the life of Swift and of London in his day. His association, first and last, with literary men was unusually broad; when politics estranged him from Steele and Addison he drew close to Pope and other Tory writers in what they called the Scriblerus Club. Despite his political success, Swift was still unable to secure the definite object of his ambition, a bishopric in England, since the levity with which he had treated holy things in 'A Tale of a Tub' had hopelessly prejudiced Queen Anne against him and the ministers could not act altogether in opposition to her wishes. In 1713 he received the unwelcome gift of the deanship of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, and the next year, when the Queen died and the Tory ministry fell, he withdrew to Dublin, as he himself bitterly said, 'to die like a poisoned rat in a hole.' In Swift's personal life there were now events in which he again showed to very little advantage. In London he had become acquainted with a certain Hester Vanhomrigh, the 'Vanessa' of his longest poem, 'Cadenus and Vanessa' (in which 'Cadenus' is an anagram of 'Decanus,' Latin for 'Dean,' i. e., Swift). Miss Vanhomrigh, like 'Stella,' was infatuated with Swift, and like her followed him to Ireland, and for nine years, as has been said, he 'lived a double life' between the two. 'Vanessa' then died, probably of a broken heart, and 'Stella' a few years later. Over against this conduct, so far as it goes, may be set Swift's quixotic but extensive and constant personal benevolence and generosity to the poor. In general, this last period of Swift's life amounted to thirty years of increasing bitterness. He devoted some of his very numerous pamphlets to defending the Irish, and especially the English who formed the governing class in Ireland, against oppression by England. Most important here were 'The Drapier's [i.e., Draper's, Cloth−Merchant's] Letters,' in which Swift aroused the country to successful resistance against a very unprincipled piece of political jobbery whereby a certain Englishman was to be allowed to issue a debased copper coinage at enormous profit to himself but to the certain disaster of Ireland. 'A Modest Proposal,' the proposal, namely, that the misery of the poor in Ireland should be alleviated by the raising of children for food, like pigs, is one of the most powerful, as well as one of the most horrible, satires which ever issued from any human imagination. In 1726 (seven years after 'Robinson Crusoe') appeared Swift's masterpiece, the only one of his works still widely known, namely, 'The Travels of Lemuel Gulliver.' The remarkable power of this unique work lies partly in its perfect combination of two apparently inconsistent things, first, a story of marvelous adventure which must always remain (in the first parts) one of the most popular of children's classics; and second, a bitter satire against mankind. The intensity of the satire increases as the work proceeds. In the first voyage, that to the Lilliputians, the tone is one mainly of humorous irony; but in such passages as the hideous description of the Struldbrugs in the third voyage the cynical contempt is unspeakably painful, and from the distorted libel on mankind in the Yahoos of the fourth voyage a reader recoils in indignant disgust. During these years Swift corresponded with friends in England, among them Pope, whom he bitterly urged to 'lash the world for his sake,' and he once or twice visited England in the hope, even then, of securing a place in the Church on the English side of St. George's Channel. His last years were melancholy in the extreme. Long before, on noticing a dying tree, he had observed, with the pitiless incisiveness which would spare neither others nor himself: 'I am like that. I shall die first at the top.' His birthday he was accustomed to celebrate with lamentations. At length an obscure disease which had always afflicted him, fed in part, no doubt, by his fiery spirit and his fiery discontent, reached his brain. After some years of increasing lethargy and imbecility, occasionally varied by fits of violent madness and terrible pain, he died in 1745, leaving all his money to found a hospital for the insane. His grave in St. Patrick's Cathedral bears this inscription of his own composing, the best possible epitome of his career: 'Ubi saeva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit' (Where fierce indignation can no longer tear his heart). The complexity of Swift's character and the great difference between the viewpoints of his age and of ours make it easy at the present time to judge him with too great harshness. Apart from his selfish egotism and his bitterness, his nature was genuinely loyal, kind and tender to friends and connections; and he hated injustice and the more flagrant kinds of hypocrisy with a sincere and irrepressible violence. Whimsicalness and a contemptuous sort of humor were as characteristic of him as biting sarcasm, and his conduct and writings often veered rapidly from the one to the other in a way puzzling to one who does not understand him. Nevertheless he was dominated by cold intellect and an instinct for the practical. To show sentiment, except under cover, he regarded as a weakness, and it is said that when he was unable to control it he would retire from observation. He was ready to serve mankind to the utmost of his power when effort seemed to him of any avail, and at times he sacrificed even his ambition to his convictions; but he had decided that the mass of men were hopelessly foolish, corrupt, and inferior, personal sympathy with them was impossible to him, and his contempt often took the form of sardonic practical jokes, practised sometimes on a whole city. Says Sir Leslie Stephen in his life of Swift: 'His doctrine was that virtue is the one thing which deserves love and admiration, and yet that virtue in this hideous chaos of a world involves misery and decay.' Of his extreme arrogance and brutality to those who offended him there are numerous anecdotes; not least in the case of women, whom he, like most men of his age, regarded as man's inferiors. He once drove a lady from her own parlor in tears by violent insistence that she should sing, against her will, and when he next met her, inquired, 'Pray, madam, are you as proud and ill−natured to−day as when I saw you last?' It seems, indeed, that throughout his life Swift's mind was positively abnormal, and this may help to excuse the repulsive elements in his writings. For metaphysics and abstract principles, it may be added, he had a bigoted antipathy. In religion he was a staunch and sincere High Churchman, but it was according to the formal fashion of many thinkers of his day; he looked on the Church not as a medium of spiritual life, of which he, like his generation, had little conception, but as one of the organized institutions of society, useful in maintaining decency and order. Swift's 'poems' require only passing notice. In any strict sense they are not poems at all, since they are entirely bare of imagination, delicacy, and beauty. Instead they exhibit the typical pseudo−classical traits of matter−of−factness and clearness; also, as Swift's personal notes, cleverness, directness, trenchant intellectual power, irony, and entire ease, to which latter the prevailing octosyllabic couplet meter contributes. This is the meter of 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,' and the contrast between these poems and Swift's is instructive. Swift's prose style has substantially the same qualities. Writing generally as a man of affairs, for practical ends, he makes no attempt at elegance and is informal even to the appearance of looseness of expression. Of conscious refinements and also, in his stories, of technical artistic structural devices, he has no knowledge; he does not go out of the straight path in order to create suspense, he does not always explain difficulties of detail, and sometimes his narrative becomes crudely bare. He often displays the greatest imaginative power, but it is always a practical imagination; his similes, for example, are always from very matter−of−fact things. But more notable are his positive merits. He is always absolutely clear, direct, and intellectually forceful; in exposition and argument he is cumulatively irresistible; in description and narration realistically picturesque and fascinating; and he has the natural instinct for narration which gives vigorous movement and climax. Indignation and contempt often make his style burn with passion, and humor, fierce or bitterly mirthful, often enlivens it with startling flashes. The great range of the satires which make the greater part of Swift's work is supported in part by variety of satiric method. Sometimes he pours out a savage direct attack. Sometimes, in a long ironical statement, he says exactly the opposite of what he really means to suggest. Sometimes he uses apparently logical reasoning where either, as in 'A Modest Proposal,' the proposition, or, as in the 'Argument Against Abolishing Christianity,' the arguments are absurd. He often shoots out incidental humorous or satirical shafts. But his most important and extended method is that of allegory. The pigmy size of the Lilliputians symbolizes the littleness of mankind and their interests; the superior skill in rope−dancing which with them is the ground for political advancement, the political intrigues of real men; and the question whether eggs shall be broken on the big or the little end, which has embroiled Lilliput in a bloody war, both civil and foreign, the trivial causes of European conflicts. In Brobdingnag, on the other hand, the coarseness of mankind is exhibited by the magnifying process. Swift, like Defoe, generally increases the verisimilitude of his fictions and his ironies by careful accuracy in details, which is sometimes arithmetically genuine, sometimes only a hoax. In Lilliput all the dimensions are scientifically computed on a scale one−twelfth as large as that of man; in Brobdingnag, by an exact reversal, everything is twelve times greater than among men. But the long list of technical nautical terms which seem to make a spirited narrative at the beginning of the second of Gulliver's voyages is merely an incoherent hodge−podge. Swift, then, is the greatest of English satirists and the only one who as a satirist claims large attention in a brief general survey of English literature. He is one of the most powerfully intellectual of all English writers, and the clear force of his work is admirable; but being first a man of affairs and only secondarily a man of letters, he stands only on the outskirts of real literature. In his character the elements were greatly mingled, and in our final judgment of him there must be combined something of disgust, something of admiration, and not a little of sympathy and pity.

STEELE AND ADDISON AND 'THE TATLER' AND 'THE SPECTATOR'

The writings of Steele and Addison, of which the most important are their essays in 'The Tatler' and 'The Spectator,' contrast strongly with the work of Swift and are more broadly characteristic of the pseudo−classical period. Richard Steele was born in Dublin in 1672 of an English father and an Irish mother. The Irish strain was conspicuous throughout his life in his warm−heartedness, impulsiveness and lack of self−control and practical judgment. Having lost his father early, he was sent to the Charterhouse School in London, where he made the acquaintance of Addison, and then to Oxford. He abandoned the university to enlist in the aristocratic regiment of Life Guards, and he remained in the army, apparently, for seven or eight years, though he seems not to have been in active service and became a recognized wit at the London coffee−houses. Thackeray in 'Henry Esmond' gives interesting though freely imaginative pictures of him at this stage of his career and later. His reckless instincts and love of pleasure were rather strangely combined with a sincere theoretical devotion to religion, and his first noticeable work (1701), a little booklet called 'The Christian Hero,' aimed, in opposition to fashionable license, to show that decency and goodness are requisites of a real gentleman. The resultant ridicule forced him into a duel (in which he seriously wounded his antagonist), and thenceforth in his writings duelling was a main object of his attacks. During the next few years he turned with the same reforming zeal to comedy, where he attempted to exalt pure love and high ideals, though the standards of his age and class leave in his own plays much that to−day seems coarse. Otherwise his plays are by no means great; they initiated the weak 'Sentimental Comedy,' which largely dominated the English stage for the rest of the century. During this period Steele was married twice in rather rapid succession to wealthy ladies whose fortunes served only very temporarily to respite him from his chronic condition of debt and bailiff's duns. Now succeeds the brief period of his main literary achievement. All his life a strong Whig, he was appointed in 1707 Gazetteer, or editor, of 'The London Gazette,' the official government newspaper. This led him in 1709 to start 'The Tatler.' English periodical literature, in forms which must be called the germs both of the modern newspaper and of the modern magazine, had begun in an uncertain fashion, of which the details are too complicated for record here, nearly a hundred years before, and had continued ever since with increasing vigor. The lapsing of the licensing laws in 1695 had given a special impetus. Defoe's 'Review,' from 1704 to 1713, was devoted to many interests, including politics, the Church and commerce. Steele's 'Tatler' at first likewise dealt in each number with several subjects, such as foreign news, literary criticism, and morals, but his controlling instinct to inculcate virtue and good sense more and more asserted itself. The various departments were dated from the respective coffee−houses where those subjects were chiefly discussed, Poetry from 'Will's,' Foreign and Domestic News from 'St. James's,' and so on. The more didactic papers were ascribed to an imaginary Isaac Bickerstaff, a nom−de−plume which Steele borrowed from some of Swift's satires. Steele himself wrote two−thirds of all the papers, but before proceeding far he accepted Addison's offer of assistance and later he occasionally called in other contributors. 'The Tatler' appeared three times a week and ran for twenty−one months; it came to an end shortly after the return of the Tories to power had deprived Steele and Addison of some of their political offices. Its discontinuance may have been due to weariness on Steele's part or, since it was Whig in tone, to a desire to be done with partisan writing; at any rate, two months later, in March, 1711, of Marlborough's victory at Blenheim, secured the favor of the ministers of the day, and throughout almost all the rest of his life he held important political places, some even, thanks to Swift, during the period of Tory dominance. During his last ten years he was a member of Parliament; but though he was a delightful conversationalist in a small group of friends, he was unable to speak in public. Addison's great fame as 'The Spectator' was increased when in 1713 he brought out the play 'Cato,' mostly written years before. This is a characteristic example of the pseudo−classical tragedies of which a few were produced during the first half of the eighteenth century. They are the stiffest and most lifeless of all forms of pseudo−classical literature; Addison, for his part, attempts not only to observe the three unities, but to follow many of the minor formal rules drawn up by the French critics, and his plot, characterization, and language are alike excessively pale and frigid. Paleness and frigidity, however, were taken for beauties at the time, and the moral idea of the play, the eulogy of Cato's devotion to liberty in his opposition to Caesar, was very much in accord with the prevailing taste, or at least the prevailing affected taste. Both political parties loudly claimed the work as an expression of their principles, the Whigs discovering in Caesar an embodiment of arbitrary government like that of the Tories, the Tories declaring him a counterpart of Marlborough, a dangerous plotter, endeavoring to establish a military despotism. 'Cato,' further, was a main cause of a famous quarrel between Addison and Pope. Addison, now recognized as the literary dictator of the age, had greatly pleased Pope, then a young aspirant for fame, by praising his 'Essay on Criticism,' and Pope rendered considerable help in the final revision of 'Cato.' When John Dennis, a rather clumsy critic, attacked the play, Pope came to its defense with a reply written in a spirit of railing bitterness which sprang from injuries of his own. Addison, a real gentleman, disowned the defense, and this, with other slights suffered or imagined by Pope's jealous disposition, led to estrangement and soon to the composition of Pope's very clever and telling satire on Addison as 'Atticus,' which Pope did not publish, however, until he included it in his 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,' many years after Addison's death. The few remaining years of Addison's life were rather unhappy. He married the widowed Countess of Warwick and attained a place in the Ministry as one of the Secretaries of State; but his marriage was perhaps incompatible and his quarrel with Steele was regrettable. He died in 1719 at the age of only forty−seven, perhaps the most generally respected and beloved man of his time. On his deathbed, with a somewhat self−conscious virtue characteristic both of himself and of the period, he called his stepson to come and 'see in what peace a Christian could die.' 'The Tatler' and the more important 'Spectator' accomplished two results of main importance: they developed the modern essay as a comprehensive and fluent discussion of topics of current interest; and they performed a very great service in elevating the tone of English thought and life. The later 'Tatlers' and all the 'Spectators' dealt, by diverse methods, with a great range of themes—amusements, religion, literature, art, dress, clubs, superstitions, and in general all the fashions and follies of the time. The writers, especially Addison, with his wide and mature scholarship, aimed to form public taste. But the chief purpose of the papers, professedly, was 'to banish Vice and Ignorance' (though here also, especially in Steele's papers, the tone sometimes seems to twentieth−century readers far from unexceptionable). When the papers began to appear, in spite of some weakening of the Restoration spirit, the idea still dominated, or was allowed to appear dominant, that immorality and lawlessness were the proper marks of a gentleman. The influence of the papers is thus summarized by the poet Gray: 'It would have been a jest, some time since, for a man to have asserted that anything witty could be said in praise of a married state or that Devotion and Virtue were in any way necessary to the character of a fine gentleman.... Instead of complying with the false sentiments or vicious tastes of the age he [Steele] has boldly assured them that they were altogether in the wrong.... It is incredible to conceive the effect his writings have had upon the Town; how many thousand follies they have either quite banished or given a very great check to! how much countenance they have added to Virtue and Religion! how many people they have rendered happy by showing them it was their own faults if they were not so.' An appeal was made, also, to women no less than to men. During the previous period woman, in fashionable circles, had been treated as an elegant toy, of whom nothing was expected but to be frivolously attractive. Addison and Steele held up to her the ideal of self−respecting intellectual development and of reasonable preparation for her own particular sphere. The great effectiveness of 'The Spectator's' preaching was due largely to its tactfulness. The method was never violent denunciation, rather gentle admonition, suggestion by example or otherwise, and light or humorous raillery. Indeed, this almost uniform urbanity and good−nature makes the chief charm of the papers. Their success was largely furthered, also, by the audience provided in the coffee−houses, virtually eighteenth century middle−class clubs whose members and points of view they primarily addressed. The external style has been from the first an object of unqualified and well−merited praise. Both the chief authors are direct, sincere, and lifelike, and the many short sentences which they mingle with the longer, balanced, ones give point and force. Steele is on the whole somewhat more colloquial and less finished, Addison more balanced and polished, though without artificial formality. Dr. Johnson's repeatedly quoted description of the style can scarcely be improved on—'familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious.' It still remains to speak of one particular achievement of 'The Spectator,' namely the development of the character−sketch, accomplished by means of the series of De Coverly papers, scattered at intervals among the others. This was important because it signified preparation for the modern novel with its attention to character as well as action. The character−sketch as a distinct form began with the Greek philosopher, Theophrastus, of the third century B. C., who struck off with great skill brief humorous pictures of typical figures—the Dissembler, the Flatterer, the Coward, and so on. This sort of writing, in one form or another, was popular in France and England in the seventeenth century. From it Steele, and following him Addison, really derived the idea for their portraits of Sir Roger, Will Honeycomb, Will Wimble, and the other members of the De Coverly group; but in each case they added individuality to the type traits. Students should consider how complete the resulting characterizations are, and in general just what additions and changes in all respects would be needed to transform the De Coverly papers into a novel of the nineteenth century type.

ALEXANDER POPE, 1688−1744.

The chief representative of pseudo−classicism in its most particular field, that of poetry, is Dryden's successor, Alexander Pope. Pope was born in 1688 (just a hundred years before Byron), the son of a Catholic linen−merchant in London. Scarcely any other great writer has ever had to contend against such hard and cruel handicaps as he. He inherited a deformed and dwarfed body and an incurably sickly constitution, which carried with it abnormal sensitiveness of both nerves and mind. Though he never had really definite religious convictions of his own, he remained all his life formally loyal to his parents' faith, and under the laws of the time this closed to him all the usual careers of a gentleman. But he was predestined by Nature to be a poet. Brought up chiefly at the country home near Windsor to which his father had retired, and left to himself for mental training, he never acquired any thoroughness of knowledge or power of systematic thought, but he read eagerly the poetry of many languages. He was one of the most precocious of the long list of precocious versifiers; his own words are: 'I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.' The influences which would no doubt have determined his style in any case were early brought to a focus in the advice given him by an amateur poet and critic, William Walsh. Walsh declared that England had had great poets, 'but never one great poet that was correct' (that is of thoroughly regular style). Pope accepted this hint as his guiding principle and proceeded to seek correctness by giving still further polish to the pentameter couplet of Dryden. At the age of twenty−one, when he was already on familiar terms with prominent literary men, he published some imitative pastorals, and two years later his 'Essay on Criticism.' This work is thoroughly representative both of Pope and of his period. In the first place the subject is properly one not for poetry but for expository prose. In the second place the substance is not original with Pope but is a restatement of the ideas of the Greek Aristotle, the Roman Horace, especially of the French critic Boileau, who was Pope's earlier contemporary, and of various other critical authorities, French and English. But in terse and epigrammatic expression of fundamental or pseudo−classical principles of poetic composition and criticism the 'Essay' is amazingly brilliant, and it shows Pope already a consummate master of the couplet. The reputation which it brought him was very properly increased by the publication the next year of the admirable mock−epic 'The Rape of the Lock,' which Pope soon improved, against Addison's advice, by the delightful 'machinery' of the Rosicrucian sylphs. In its adaptation of means to ends and its attainment of its ends Lowell has boldly called this the most successful poem in English. Pope now formed his lifelong friendship with Swift (who was twice his age), with Bolingbroke, and other distinguished persons, and at twenty−five or twenty−six found himself acknowledged as the chief man of letters in England, with a wide European reputation. For the next dozen years he occupied himself chiefly with the formidable task (suggested, no doubt, by Dryden's 'Virgil,' but expressive also of the age) of translating 'The Iliad' and 'The Odyssey.' 'The Iliad' he completed unaided, but then, tiring of the drudgery, he turned over half of 'The Odyssey' to two minor writers. So easy, however, was his style to catch that if the facts were not on record the work of his assistants would generally be indistinguishable from his own. From an absolute point of view many criticisms must be made of Pope's version. That he knew little Greek when he began the work and from first to last depended much on translations would in itself have made his rendering inaccurate. Moreover, the noble but direct and simple spirit and language of Homer were as different as possible from the spirit and language of the London drawing−rooms for which Pope wrote; hence he not only expands, as every author of a verse−translation must do in filling out his lines, but inserts new ideas of his own and continually substitutes for Homer's expressions the periphrastic and, as he held, elegant ones of the pseudo−classic diction. The polished rimed couplet, also, pleasing as its precision and smoothness are for a while, becomes eventually monotonous to most readers of a romantic period. Equally serious is the inability which Pope shared with most of the men of his time to understand the culture of the still half−barbarous Homeric age. He supposes (in his Preface) that it was by a deliberate literary artifice that Homer introduced the gods into his action, supposes, that is, that Homer no more believed in the Greek gods than did he, Pope, himself; and in general Pope largely obliterates the differences between the Homeric warrior−chief and the eighteenth century gentleman. The force of all this may be realized by comparing Pope's translation with the very sympathetic and skilful one made (in prose) in our own time by Messrs. Lang, Leaf, and Myers. A criticism of Pope's work which Pope never forgave but which is final in some aspects was made by the great Cambridge professor, Bentley: 'It's a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer.' Yet after all, Pope merited much higher praise than this, and his work was really, a great achievement. It has been truly said that every age must have the great classics translated into its own dialect, and this work could scarcely have been better done for the early eighteenth century than it is done by Pope. The publication of Pope's Homer marks an important stage in the development of authorship. Until the time of Dryden no writer had expected to earn his whole living by publishing works of real literature. The medieval minstrels and romancers of the higher class and the dramatists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had indeed supported themselves largely or wholly by their works, but not by printing them. When, in Dryden's time, with the great enlargement of the reading public, conditions were about to change, the publisher took the upper hand; authors might sometimes receive gifts from the noblemen to whom they inscribed dedications, but for their main returns they must generally sell their works outright to the publisher and accept his price. Pope's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' afforded the first notably successful instance of another method, that of publication by subscription—individual purchasers at a generous price being secured beforehand by solicitation and in acknowledgment having their names printed in a conspicuous list in the front of the book. From the two Homeric poems together, thanks to this device, Pope realized a profit of nearly L9000, and thus proved that an author might be independent of the publisher. On the success of 'The Iliad' alone Pope had retired to an estate at a London suburb, Twickenham (then pronounced 'Twitnam'), where he spent the remainder of his life. Here he laid out five acres with skill, though in the formal landscape−garden taste of his time. In particular, he excavated under the road a 'grotto,' which he adorned with mirrors and glittering stones and which was considered by his friends, or at least by himself, as a marvel of artistic beauty. Only bare mention need here be made of Pope's edition of Shakspere, prepared with his usual hard work but with inadequate knowledge and appreciation, and published in 1725. His next production, 'The Dunciad,' can be understood only in the light of his personal character. Somewhat like Swift, Pope was loyal and kind to his friends and inoffensive to persons against whom he did not conceive a prejudice. He was an unusually faithful son, and, in a brutal age, a hater of physical brutality. But, as we have said, his infirmities and hardships had sadly warped his disposition and he himself spoke of 'that long disease, my life.' He was proud, vain, abnormally sensitive, suspicious, quick to imagine an injury, incredibly spiteful, implacable in resentment, apparently devoid of any sense of honesty—at his worst hateful and petty−minded beyond any other man in English literature. His trickiness was astonishing. Dr. Johnson observes that he 'hardly drank tea without a stratagem,' and indeed he seems to have been almost constitutionally unable to do anything in an open and straightforward way. Wishing, for example, to publish his correspondence, he not only falsified it, but to preserve an appearance of modesty engaged in a remarkably complicated series of intrigues by which he trapped a publisher into apparently stealing a part of it—and then loudly protested at the theft and the publication. It is easy to understand, therefore, that Pope was readily drawn into quarrels and was not an agreeable antagonist. He had early taken a violent antipathy to the host of poor scribblers who are known by the name of the residence of most of them, Grub Street—an antipathy chiefly based, it would seem, on his contempt for their worldly and intellectual poverty. For some years he had been carrying on a pamphlet war against them, and now, it appears, he deliberately stirred them up to make new attacks upon him. Determined, at any rate, to overwhelm all his enemies at once in a great satire, he bent all his energies, with the utmost seriousness, to writing 'The Dunciad' on the model of Dryden's 'Mac Flecknoe' and irresponsibly 'dealt damnation 'round the land.' Clever and powerful, the poem is still more disgusting—grossly obscene, pitifully rancorous against scores of insignificant creatures, and no less violent against some of the ablest men of the time, at whom Pope happened to have taken offense. Yet throughout the rest of his life Pope continued with keen delight to work the unsavory production over and to bring out new editions. During his last fifteen years Pope's original work was done chiefly in two very closely related fields, first in a group of what he called 'Moral' essays, second in the imitation of a few of the Satires and Epistles of Horace, which Pope applied to circumstances of his own time. In the 'Moral' Essays he had intended to deal comprehensively with human nature and institutions, but such a systematic plan was beyond his powers. The longest of the essays which he accomplished, the 'Essay on Man,' aims, like 'Paradise Lost,' to 'vindicate the ways of God to man,' but as regards logic chiefly demonstrates the author's inability to reason. He derived the ideas, in fragmentary fashion, from Bolingbroke, who was an amateur Deist and optimist of the shallow eighteenth century type, and so far was Pope from understanding what he was doing that he was greatly disturbed when it was pointed out to him that the theology of the poem was Deistic rather than Christian [Footnote: The name Deist was applied rather generally in the eighteenth century to all persons who did not belong to some recognized Christian denomination. More strictly, it belongs to those men who attempted rationalistic criticism of the Bible and wished to go back to what they supposed to be a primitive pure religion, anterior to revealed religion and free from the corruptions and formalism of actual Christianity. The Deistic ideas followed those expressed in the seventeenth century by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, brother of George Herbert, who held that the worship due to the Deity consists chiefly in reverence and virtuous conduct, and also that man should repent of sin and forsake it and that reward and punishment, both in this life and hereafter, follow from the goodness and justice of God.] In this poem, as in all Pope's others of this period, the best things are the detached observations. Some of the other poems, especially the autobiographical 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,' are notable for their masterly and venomous satirical sketches of various contemporary characters. Pope's physical disabilities brought him to premature old age, and he died in 1744. His declining years were saddened by the loss of friends, and he had never married, though his dependent and sensitive nature would have made marriage especially helpful to him. During the greater part of his life, however, he was faithfully watched over by a certain Martha Blount, whose kindness he repaid with only less selfishness than that which 'Stella' endured from Swift. Indeed, Pope's whole attitude toward woman, which appears clearly in his poetry, was largely that of the Restoration. Yet after all that must be said against Pope, it is only fair to conclude, as does his biographer, Sir Leslie Stephen: 'It was a gallant spirit which got so much work out of this crazy carcase, and kept it going, spite of all its feebleness, for fifty−six years.' The question of Pope's rank among authors is of central importance for any theory of poetry. In his own age he was definitely regarded by his adherents as the greatest of all English poets of all time. As the pseudo−classic spirit yielded to the romantic this judgment was modified, until in the nineteenth century it was rather popular to deny that in any true sense Pope was a poet at all. Of course the truth lies somewhere between these extremes. Into the highest region of poetry, that of great emotion and imagination, Pope scarcely enters at all; he is not a poet in the same sense as Shakspere, Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley, or Browning; neither his age nor his own nature permitted it. In lyric, original narrative, and dramatic poetry he accomplished very little, though the success of his 'Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady' and 'Eloisa to Abelard' must be carefully weighed in this connection. On the other hand, it may well be doubted if he can ever be excelled as a master in satire and kindred semi−prosaic forms. He is supreme in epigrams, the terse statement of pithy truths; his poems have furnished more brief familiar quotations to our language than those of any other writer except Shakspere. For this sort of effect his rimed couplet provided him an unrivalled instrument, and he especially developed its power in antithesis, very frequently balancing one line of the couplet, or one half of a line, against the other. He had received the couplet from Dryden, but he polished it to a greater finish, emphasizing, on the whole, its character as a single unit by making it more consistently end−stopped. By this means he gained in snap and point, though for purposes of continuous narrative or exposition he increased the monotony and somewhat decreased the strength. Every reader must decide for himself how far the rimed couplet, in either Dryden's or Pope's use of it, is a proper medium for real poetry. But it is certain that within the limits which he laid down for himself, there never was a more finished artist than Pope. He chooses every word with the greatest care for its value as both sound and sense; his minor technique is well−night perfect, except sometimes in the matter of rimes; and in particular the variety which he secures, partly by skilful shifting of pauses and use of extra syllables, is remarkable; though it is a variety less forceful than Dryden's. [Note: The judgments of certain prominent critics on the poetry of Pope and of his period may well be considered. Professor Lewis E. Gates has said: 'The special task of the pseudo−classical period was to order, to systematize, and to name; its favorite methods were, analysis and generalization. It asked for no new experience. The abstract, the typical, the general—these were everywhere exalted at the expense of the image, the specific experience, the vital fact.' Lowell declares that it 'ignored the imagination altogether and sent Nature about her business as an impertinent baggage whose household loom competed unlawfully with the machine−made fabrics, so exquisitely uniform in pattern, of the royal manufactories.' Still more hostile is Matthew Arnold: 'The difference between genuine poetry and the poetry of Dryden, Pope, and all their school, is briefly this: Their poetry is conceived and composed in their wits, genuine poetry is conceived and composed in the soul. The difference is immense.' Taine is contemptuous: 'Pope did not write because he thought, but thought in order to write. Inky paper, and the noise it makes in the world, was his idol.' Professor Henry A. Beers is more judicious: 'Pope did in some inadequate sense hold the mirror up to Nature.... It was a mirror in a drawing−room, but it gave back a faithful image of society, powdered and rouged, to be sure, and intent on trifles, yet still as human in its own way as the heroes of Homer in theirs, though not broadly human.' It should be helpful also to indicate briefly some of the more specific mannerisms of pseudo−classical poetry, in addition to the general tendencies named above on page 190. Almost all of them, it will be observed, result from the habit of generalizing instead of searching for the pictorial and the particular. 1. There is a constant preference (to enlarge on what was briefly stated above) for abstract expressions instead of concrete ones, such expressions as 'immortal powers' or 'Heaven' for 'God.' These abstract expressions are especially noticeable in the descriptions of emotion, which the pseudo−classical writers often describe without really feeling it, in such colorless words as 'joys, 'delights,' and 'ecstasies,' and which they uniformly refer to the conventionalized 'heart, 'soul,' or 'bosom.' Likewise in the case of personal features, instead of picturing a face with blue eyes, rosy lips, and pretty color, these poets vaguely mention 'charms,' 'beauties,' 'glories,' 'enchantments,' and the like. These three lines from 'The Rape of the Lock' are thoroughly characteristic: The fair [the lady] each moment rises in her charms, Repairs her smiles, awakens ev'ry grace, And calls forth all the, wonders of her face. The tendency reaches its extreme in the frequent use of abstract and often absurdly pretentious expressions in place of the ordinary ones which to these poets appeared too simple or vulgar. With them a field is generally a 'verdant mead'; a lock of hair becomes 'The long−contended honours of her head'; and a boot 'The shining leather that encased the limb.' 2. There is a constant use of generic or generalizing articles, pronouns, and adjectives, 'the,' 'a,' 'that,' 'every,' and 'each' as in some of the preceding and in the following examples: 'The wise man's passion and the vain man's boast.' 'Wind the shrill horn or spread the waving net.' 'To act a Lover's or a Roman's part.''That bleeding bosom.' 3. There is an excessive use of adjectives, often one to nearly every important noun, which creates monotony. 4. The vocabulary is largely conventionalized, with, certain favorite words usurping the place of a full and free variety, such words as 'conscious,' 'generous, 'soft,' and 'amorous.' The metaphors employed are largely conventionalized ones, like 'Now burns with glory, and then melts with love.' 5. The poets imitate the Latin language to some extent; especially they often prefer long words of Latin origin to short Saxon ones, and Latin names to English—'Sol' for 'Sun, 'temple' for 'church,' 'Senate' for 'Parliament,' and so on.]

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1709−1784.

To the informal position of dictator of English letters which had been held successively by Dryden, Addison, and Pope, succeeded in the third quarter of the eighteenth century a man very different from any of them, one of the most forcefully individual of all authors, Samuel Johnson. It was his fortune to uphold, largely by the strength of his personality, the pseudo−classical ideals which Dryden and Addison had helped to form and whose complete dominance had contributed to Pope's success, in the period when their authority was being undermined by the progress of the rising Romantic Movement. Johnson was born in 1709, the son of a bookseller in Lichfield. He inherited a constitution of iron, great physical strength, and fearless self−assertiveness, but also hypochondria (persistent melancholy), uncouthness of body and movement, and scrofula, which disfigured his face and greatly injured his eyesight. In his early life as well as later, spasmodic fits of abnormal mental activity when he 'gorged' books, especially the classics, as he did food, alternated with other fits of indolence. The total result, however, was a very thorough knowledge of an extremely wide range of literature; when he entered Oxford in 1728 the Master of his college assured him that he was the best qualified applicant whom he had ever known. Johnson, on his side, was not nearly so well pleased with the University; he found the teachers incompetent, and his pride suffered intensely from his poverty, so that he remained at Oxford little more than a year. The death of his father in 1731 plunged him into a distressingly painful struggle for existence which lasted for thirty years. After failing as a subordinate teacher in a boarding−school he became a hack−writer in Birmingham, where, at the age of twenty−five, he made a marriage with a widow, Mrs. Porter, an unattractive, rather absurd, but good−hearted woman of forty−six. He set up a school of his own, where he had only three pupils, and then in 1737 tramped with one of them, David Garrick, later the famous actor, to London to try his fortune in another field. When the two reached the city their combined funds amounted to sixpence. Sir Robert Walpole, ruling the country with unscrupulous absolutism, had now put an end to the employment of literary men in public life, and though Johnson's poem 'London,' a satire on the city written in imitation of the Roman poet Juvenal and published in 1738, attracted much attention, he could do no better for a time than to become one of that undistinguished herd of hand−to−mouth and nearly starving Grub Street writers whom Pope was so contemptuously abusing and who chiefly depended on the despotic patronage of magazine publishers. Living in a garret or even walking the streets at night for lack of a lodging, Johnson was sometimes unable to appear at a tavern because he had no respectable clothes. It was ten years after the appearance of 'London' that he began to emerge, through the publication of his 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' a poem of the same kind as 'London' but more sincere and very powerful. A little later Garrick, who had risen very much more rapidly and was now manager of Drury Lane theater, gave him substantial help by producing his early play 'Irene,' a representative pseudo−classical tragedy of which it has been said that a person with a highly developed sense of duty may be able to read it through. Meanwhile, by an arrangement with leading booksellers, Johnson had entered on the largest, and, as it proved, the decisive, work of his life, the preparation of his 'Dictionary of the English Language.' The earliest mentionable English dictionary had appeared as far back as 1604, 'containing 3000 hard words ... gathered for the benefit and help of ladies, gentle women, or any other unskilful persons.' Others had followed; but none of them was comprehensive or satisfactory. Johnson, planning a far more thorough work, contracted to do it for L1575—scanty pay for himself and his copyists, the more so that the task occupied more than twice as much time as he had expected, over seven years. The result, then, of very great labor, the 'Dictionary' appeared in 1755. It had distinct limitations. The knowledge of Johnson's day was not adequate for tracing the history and etymology of words, and Johnson himself on being asked the reason for one of his numerous blunders could only reply, with his characteristic blunt frankness, 'sheer ignorance.' Moreover, he allowed his strong prejudices to intrude, even though he colored them with humor; for example in defining 'oats' as 'a grain which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.' Jesting at himself he defined 'lexicographer' as 'a writer of dictionaries, a harmless drudge.' Nevertheless the work, though not creative literature, was a great and necessary one, and Johnson did it, on the whole, decidedly well. The 'Dictionary,' in successive enlargements, ultimately, though not until after Johnson's death, became the standard, and it gave him at once the definite headship of English literary life. Of course, it should be added, the English language has vastly expanded since his time, and Johnson's first edition contained only a tithe of the 400,000 words recorded in the latest edition of Webster (1910). With the 'Dictionary' is connected one of the best−known incidents in English literary history. At the outset of the undertaking Johnson exerted himself to secure the patronage and financial aid of Lord Chesterfield, an elegant leader of fashion and of fashionable literature. At the time Chesterfield, not foreseeing the importance of the work, was coldly indifferent, but shortly before the Dictionary appeared, being better informed, he attempted to gain a share in the credit by commending it in a periodical. Johnson responded with a letter which is a perfect masterpiece of bitter but polished irony and which should be familiar to every student. The hard labor of the 'Dictionary' had been the only remedy for Johnson's profound grief at the death of his wife, in 1752; and how intensively he could apply himself at need he showed again some years later when to pay his mother's funeral expenses he wrote in the evenings of a single week his 'Rasselas,' which in the guise of an Eastern tale is a series of philosophical discussions of life. Great as were Johnson's labors during the eight years of preparation of the 'Dictionary' they made only a part of his activity. For about two years he earned a living income by carrying on the semi−weekly 'Rambler,' one of the numerous imitations of 'The Spectator.' He was not so well qualified as Addison or Steele for this work, but he repeated it some years later in 'The Idler.' It was not until 1775 that Johnson received from Oxford the degree of LL.D. which gave him the title of 'Dr.,' now almost inseparable from his name; but his long battle with poverty had ended on the accession of George III in 1762, when the ministers, deciding to signalize the new reign by encouraging men of letters, granted Johnson a pension of L300 for life. In his Dictionary Johnson had contemptuously defined a pension thus: 'An allowance made to any one without an equivalent. In England, it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country.' This was embarrassing, but Johnson's friends rightly persuaded him to accept the pension, which he, at least, had certainly earned by services to society very far from treasonable. However, with the removal of financial pressure his natural indolence, increased by the strain of hardships and long−continued over−exertion, asserted itself in spite of his self−reproaches and frequent vows of amendment. Henceforth he wrote comparatively little but gave expression to his ideas in conversation, where his genius always showed most brilliantly. At the tavern meetings of 'The Club' (commonly referred to as 'The Literary Club'), of which Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Goldsmith, Gibbon, and others, were members, he reigned unquestioned conversational monarch. Here or in other taverns with fewer friends he spent most of his nights, talking and drinking incredible quantities of tea, and going home in the small hours to lie abed until noon. But occasionally even yet he aroused himself to effort. In 1765 appeared his long−promised edition of Shakspere. It displays in places much of the sound sense which is one of Johnson's most distinguishing merits, as in the terse exposure of the fallacies of the pseudo−classic theory of the three dramatic unities, and it made some interpretative contributions; but as a whole it was carelessly and slightly done. Johnson's last important production, his most important really literary work, was a series of 'Lives of the English Poets' from the middle of the seventeenth century, which he wrote for a publishers' collection of their works. The selection of poets was badly made by the publishers, so that many of the lives deal with very minor versifiers. Further, Johnson's indolence and prejudices are here again evident; often when he did not know the facts he did not take the trouble to investigate; a thorough Tory himself he was often unfair to men of Whig principles; and for poetry of the delicately imaginative and romantic sort his rather painfully practical mind had little appreciation. Nevertheless he was in many respects well fitted for the work, and some of the lives, such as those of Dryden, Pope, Addison and Swift, men in whom he took a real interest, are of high merit. Johnson's last years were rendered gloomy, partly by the loss of friends, partly by ill−health and a deepening of his lifelong tendency to morbid depression. He had an almost insane shrinking from death and with it a pathetic apprehension of future punishment. His melancholy was perhaps the greater because of the manly courage and contempt for sentimentality which prevented him from complaining or discussing his distresses. His religious faith, also, in spite of all intellectual doubts, was strong, and he died calmly, in 1784. He was buried in Westminster Abbey. Johnson's picturesque surface oddities have received undue attention, thanks largely to his friend and biographer Boswell. Nearly every one knows, for example, that he superstitiously made a practice of entering doorways in a certain manner and would rather turn back and come in again than fail in the observance; that he was careless, even slovenly, in dress and person, and once remarked frankly that he had no passion for clean linen; that he ate voraciously, with a half−animal eagerness; that in the intervals of talking he 'would make odd sounds, a half whistle, or a clucking like a hen's, and when he ended an argument would blow out his breath like a whale.' More important were his dogmatism of opinion, his intense prejudices, and the often seemingly brutal dictatorial violence with which he enforced them. Yet these things too were really on the surface. It is true that his nature was extremely conservative; that after a brief period of youthful free thinking he was fanatically loyal to the national Church and to the king (though theoretically he was a Jacobite, a supporter of the supplanted Stuarts as against the reigning House of Hanover); and that in conversation he was likely to roar down or scowl down all innovators and their defenders or silence them with such observations as, 'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig.' At worst it was not quite certain that he would not knock them down physically. Of women's preaching he curtly observed that it was like a dog walking on its hind legs: 'It is not done well, but you are surprised to find it done at all.' English insular narrowness certainly never had franker expression than in his exclamation: 'For anything I can see, all foreigners are fools.' For the American colonists who had presumed to rebel against their king his bitterness was sometimes almost frenzied; he characterized them as 'rascals, robbers and pirates.' His special antipathy to Scotland and its people led him to insult them repeatedly, though with some individual Scots he was on very friendly terms. Yet after all, many of these prejudices rested on important principles which were among the most solid foundations of Johnson's nature and largely explain his real greatness, namely on sound commonsense, moral and intellectual independence, and hatred of insincerity. There was really something to be said for his refusal to listen to the Americans' demand for liberty while they themselves held slaves. Living in a period of change, Johnson perceived that in many cases innovations prove dangerous and that the progress of society largely depends on the continuance of the established institutions in which the wisdom of the past is summed up. Of course in specific instances, perhaps in the majority of them, Johnson was wrong; but that does not alter the fact that he thought of himself as standing, and really did stand, for order against a freedom which is always more or less in danger of leading to anarchy. Johnson's personality, too, cannot be fairly judged by its more grotesque expression. Beneath the rough surface he was a man not only of very vigorous intellect and great learning, but of sincere piety, a very warm heart, unusual sympathy and kindness, and the most unselfish, though eccentric, generosity. Fine ladies were often fascinated by him, and he was no stranger to good society. On himself, during his later years, he spent only a third part of his pension, giving away the rest to a small army of beneficiaries. Some of these persons, through no claim on him but their need, he had rescued from abject distress and supported in his own house, where, so far from being grateful, they quarreled among themselves, complained of the dinner, or even brought their children to live with them. Johnson himself was sometimes exasperated by their peevishness and even driven to take refuge from his own home in that 'of his wealthy friends the Thrales, where, indeed, he had a room of his own; but he never allowed any one else to criticize or speak harshly of them. In sum, no man was ever loved or respected more deeply, or with better reason, by those who really knew him, or more sincerely mourned when he died. Johnson's importance as a conservative was greatest in his professional capacity of literary critic and bulwark of pseudo−classicism. In this case, except that a restraining influence is always salutary to hold a new movement from extremes, he was in opposition to the time−spirit; romanticism was destined to a complete triumph because it was the expression of vital forces which were necessary for the rejuvenation of literature. Yet it is true that romanticism carried with it much vague and insincere sentimentality, and it was partly against this that Johnson protested. Perhaps the twentieth−century mind is most dissatisfied with his lack of sympathy for the romantic return to an intimate appreciation of external Nature. Johnson was not blind to the charm of Nature and sometimes expresses it in his own writing; but for the most part his interest, like that of his pseudo−classical predecessors, was centered in the world of man. To him, as he flatly declared, Fleet Street, in the midst of the hurry of London life, was the most interesting place in the world. In the substance of his work Johnson is most conspicuously, and of set purpose, a moralist. In all his writing, so far as the subject permitted, he aimed chiefly at the inculcation of virtue and the formation of character. His uncompromising resoluteness in this respect accounts for much of the dulness which it is useless to try to deny in his work. 'The Rambler' and 'The Idler' altogether lack Addison's lightness of touch and of humor; for Johnson, thoroughly Puritan at heart, and dealing generally with the issues of personal conduct and responsibility, can never greatly relax his seriousness, while Addison, a man of the world, is content if he can produce some effect on society as a whole. Again, a present−day reader can only smile when he finds Johnson in his Preface to Shakspere blaming the great dramatist for omitting opportunities of instructing and delighting, as if the best moral teachers were always explicit. But Johnson's moral and religious earnestness is essentially admirable, the more so because his deliberate view of the world was thoroughly pessimistic. His own long and unhappy experience had convinced him that life is for the most part a painful tribulation, to be endured with as much patience and courage as possible, under the consciousness of the duty of doing our best where God has put us and in the hope (though with Johnson not a confident hope) that we shall find our reward in another world. It has long been a popular tradition, based largely on a superficial page of Macaulay, that Johnson's style always represents the extreme of ponderous pedantry. As usual, the tradition must be largely discounted. It is evident that Johnson talked, on the whole, better than he wrote, that the present stimulus of other active minds aroused him to a complete exertion of his powers, but that in writing, his indolence often allowed him to compose half sleepily, at a low pressure. In some of his works, especially 'The Rambler,' where, it has been jocosely suggested, he was exercising the polysyllables that he wished to put into his 'Dictionary,' he does employ a stilted Latinized vocabulary and a stilted style, with too much use of abstract phrases for concrete ones, too many long sentences, much inverted order, and over−elaborate balance. His style is always in some respects monotonous, with little use, for instance, as critics have pointed out, of any form of sentence but the direct declarative, and with few really imaginative figures of speech. In much of his writing, on the other hand, the most conspicuous things are power and strong effective exposition. He often uses short sentences, whether or not in contrast to his long ones, with full consciousness of their value; when he will take the trouble, no one can express ideas with clearer and more forceful brevity; and in a very large part of his work his style carries the finely tonic qualities of his clear and vigorous mind.