1940

The social aspects of the Augustan drama, 1702-1715

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE AUGUSTAN DRAMA, 1702-1715

by

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(A.B., Emerson College, 1938)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the

requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

1940

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"How would your useless Time 'twixt Five and Eight,
Have dragged its Wings without this loved Retreat;
What other nameless Place had been so fit
For Pit to ogle Boxes, Boxes Pit..."

-Charles Shadwell-

(From the Prologue to THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL)

I.

INTRODUCTION

1.

The Purpose of this Thesis.

It is quite probable that no period in English literature possesses so rich a field for the scholar and historian as the brief reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714). This period, the first phase of England's great century of literature which modern scholarship has justly termed "Augustan," gave us Pope, Prior, Parnell, and Gay in poetry, Swift, Defoe, Addison, and Steele in journalism, Swift and Defoe again in the novel, Dennis, Arbuthnot, Rowe, and the versatile Swift in criticism, Burnet in history, Berkeley, Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, and Mandeville in political science and social philosophy. The list of other names appears inexhaustable, each an eighteenth century lorgnette through which we can view and study the history of that age. However, of the many forms of literature which modern scholarship has utilized for the study of the Augustan age of English life and letters, the drama appears to be almost totally neglected. With the possible exceptions of Rowe, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Addison, the drama of Queen Anne's reign is passed over with only a brief word or two in explanatory comment. Cibber, perhaps the foremost playwright of the age, is remembered more for his autobiography than for his dramas.

It is not our purpose to study the causes for the decline of the drama, or the causes for its neglect by modern scholarship. From an intellectual and literary evaluation, one may find ample justification for its neglect. Nevertheless, it is our belief that the social

implications of the Augustan drama are too valuable to be ignored. "Old Plays will always be read by the Curious, if it were only to discover the Manners and Behavior of several Ages; and how they alter'd. For Plays are exactly like Portraits Drawn in the Garb and Fashion of the Time when painted."(1)

It is our purpose, then, to study the history of Queen Anne's reign through the social implications and allusions of the drama of her day. We are not immediately concerned with the literature of the drama per se. "Literature may of course be studied simply for its own intrinsic merits. But it may also be regarded as one manifestation of what is called 'the spirit of an age'...and the philosphy of an age is in itself determined to a very great extent by the social position."(2)

We have, thanks to the efforts of modern scholarship, a broad comprehension of the relative position of the literature and the writers of the Augustan era. However, opinions in regard to the social position of the drama differ widely-- and that may be due to the neglect of this form of literature by scholars. Leslie Stephen states that "the comedy (of Queen Anne's period) had come to adapt itself to the tastes of the class which, instead of representing the national movement, was composed of the more disreputable part of the town."(3) Allardyce Nicoll's view is, "The theatre was midway between two extremes. It was not universal as in Shakespeare's time, and it was not aristocratic as in the time of the Restoration; it was merely fashionable."(4)

1. Wright: HISTORIA HISTRIONICA, p. 1
2. Stephen: ENGLISH LITERATURE AND SOCIETY IN THE 18TH CENTURY, p. 2
3. Stephen: op. cit., p. 95
4. Nicoll: HISTORY OF THE EARLY 18TH CENTURY DRAMA, p. 11

However interesting the relative social position of the drama as drama or as literature may be to scholars, it is of more interest and importance to us to glean whatever we possibly can of the social aspects of the Augustan drama between 1702 and 1715. The poetry of Pope has given us excellent allusions to this age. Gay, by far, excels Pope in depicting the social life of the times. We are well acquainted with the pictures of London as Steele and Addison have drawn for us in the TATLER and in the SPECTATOR; and the literary effusions of Defoe, or the deft satire of Swift, have etched a graphic pictorialization of the life and times of Queen Anne's London in our minds almost as vividly as Hogarth has done with his paintings. And yet, the most obvious picture of the social conditions of the age, the drama, has been given scant attention.

The literary and intellectual aspects of the Augustan drama have been treated by many scholars and critics. Students of the drama and of literature have considered various phases from viewpoints conditioned by their interest and their respective fields. However, with the possible exceptions of Allardyce Nicoll and Adolphus W. Ward, scarcely any serious attempt has been made to study the Augustan drama from a historical aspect, and even they do not profess any sociological or historical emphasis upon the drama other than its evolution on a literary ar dramatic basis.

The drama of any given age is a mirror of the times. What, then, is a more plausible vehicle for capturing the thoughts and ideas, the likes and dislikes, and the picture of the customs and the manners of the times than the drama? A historical approach to the drama of the Augustan age gives us a valid impression of London society during the reign of Anne as they saw themselves.

2.

Brief Statement of Methods Used.

The social aspects of the Augustan drama during the reign of Anne, and its value to the history of the period cannot be solely viewed from the plays of the time. It has been appropriate to our purpose in this thesis to take as broad a study of this period as was considered necessary. The core of the studies made is forty of the representative plays which, though comparatively unknown today, enjoyed some degree of success during QueenAnne's day. The dramas, without exception, were all presented in London-- for during this period, London was England more than it had ever been. In fact, the importance and significance of the influence of London upon the literature of the time is the outstanding feature of the Augustan age.

The social and political background for this thesis is in the works of recognized authorities for this period, notably George M. Trevelyan and W.E.H. Lecky in history, A.S. Turberville and John Ashton in the social life, manners and customs of the age.

The general works on the drama and the history of the drama, especially those of Allardyce Nicoll and Adolphus W. Ward, are of extreme importance. It was our good fortune to have been able to read a number of plays printed during the period studied. Several works by authors contemporaneous with the age are of great value and interest. The APOLOGY of Cibber, the TRIVIA of Gay, Burnet's TIMES, and the MISCELLANIES of Davies who, though he came at a much later year in the eighteenth century, was close enough, however, to instill some of the atmosphere of Anne's day into his works, have in no small measure aided and added to this thesis.

II.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE AUGUSTAN DRAMA

1.

The Influence of the Restoration on the Drama

The drama during the reign of Queen Anne was in a period of transition. It had, in the space of a century, sunk into a factor of inconsequence in so far as literature was concerned. During the Elizabethan age, the drama was the medium of literary expression which had placed English letters topmost in the literature of Europe. One century later, during the reign of Anne, it had sunk so low as a literary form that it begged for recognition and was rewarded with tolerance. Modern scholars of English literature, while proud of the Shakespearian heritage in the history of English letters, do not bother to seek reasons for apology for the lineal descendant of the drama of Elizabeth's day-- the drama of eighteenth century England.

The reasons for the degeneracy of the drama, and its decline as a literary art form are many. First we may consider the intellectual aspect:

"The deepest thinker is not really-- though we often use the phrase-- in advance of his day so much as in the line along which the advance takes place. The greatest poet does not write for future generations in the sense of not writing for his own; it is only that in giving the fullest utterance to its thoughts and showing the deepest insight into their significance, he is therefore the most perfect type of its general mental attitude, and his work is an embodiment of the thoughts which are common to men of all generations."(1)

The playwrights of the early Augustan era were not 'deep thinkers.'

1. Stephen: op. cit., p. 17

Rather, as a group, they were imitators. It appears that the suppression of the drama during the Cromwellian Commonwealth had emasculated the intellectual virility of the stage. The last great name in literature which is associated primarily with the drama before its decline is that of Ben Jonson (1573-1637). After the Restoration, Dryden, Otway, Nathaniel Lee, and Congreve were the foremost playwrights who might have successfully carried on the literary tradition of the English drama but failed to do so. Dryden achieved fame in other forms of literature, notably poetry; Otway and Lee did not have a chance to reveal fully their potentialities, as both died while still young men. Congreve attained distinction in comedy, but the close connection between drama and literature had been severed prior to his success as a playwright. It is interesting to note that three of the playwrights wrote tragedies.

The political aspects in regard to the decline of the drama during the seventeenth century are best expressed by Leslie Stephen:

"The stage, again, had been from the first, essentially aristocratic: it depended upon the court and the nobility and their adherents, and was hostile both to the Puritans and the whole class in which the Puritan found a congenial element. So long, as in Elizabeth's time, as the class which supported the stage also represented the strongest national aspirations of the period, and a marked national sentiment, the drama could embody a marked national sentiment. When the unity was broken up and the court opposed to the strongest current of political sentiment, the players still adhere to their patron. The drama comes to represent a tone of thought, a social stratum, which, instead of leading, is getting more and more opposed to the great bulk of the most vigorous elements of the society. The stage is

ceasing to be a truly national organ, and begins to suit itself to the tastes of the unprincipled and servile courtiers who, if they are not more immoral than their predecessors, are without the old heroic touch which ennobled even the audacious and unscrupulous adventurers of the Armada period. That is to say, the change is beginning which became palpable in the Restoration time, when the stage became simply the melancholy dependent upon the court of Charles II., and faithfully reflected the peculiar morality of the small circle over which it presided. Without taking into account this process by which the organ of the nation gradually became transformed into the organ of the class which was entirely alienated from the general body of the nation, it is, I think, impossible to understand clearly the transformation of the drama. It illustrates the necessity of accounting for the literary movement, not only by intellectual and general causes, but by noting how special social developments radically alter the relation of any particular literary genus to the general national movement."(1)

We have noted one of the causes-- the suppression of the stage during the Puritan regime-- for the decline of the drama. Its subsequent restoration with the Restoration had a none too salutary effect. From the extreme of suppression to its reinstatement, liberty degenerated to licentiousness; theme, manner, and expression developed into salaciousness. One writer defined Restoration tragedy in this fashion, "Intrigue was plot, obscenity wit." And as the patrons of the drama were the court and its attendants, the playwrights gratuitously wrote for their benefactors.

1. Stephen: op. cit., p. 29-31

If the Restoration tragedy was considered to mirror the obscenity of Charles II's court, the comedy was even more licentious. Its immoral implications were augmented with derisive scorn at the once politically predominant Puritans. Comedy led the retreat from the pompous and sublime tone of the Restoration tragedy. The movement was popular, and by gradual steps the drama began to appeal to that powerful class just below in the social strata from the court.

The reign of William III (1688-1702) was a bridge of time over which the playwriters passed and began to sell their efforts to the middle class. Congreve, Crowne, Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Cibber were the chief caterers to the wishes of the theatre-goers of the era. The "genteel" comedy began to flourish "where social folly ruled and affectation reigned."(1) However, the majority of the middle class still clung to the slowly evaporating Puritanical concepts regarding the drama. The Established Church, too, continued to hold a hostile attitude toward the drama. These concepts and attitudes were the roots of the hostility between the lax morality of late seventeenth century drama, its authors, and its patrons and a goodly proportion of the populace of London. One of the results of this hostility was the publication in 1698 of Jeremy Collier's A SHORT VIEW OF THE IMMORALITY AND PROFANENESS OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

"Collier's attack could not reform the stage. The evolution took the form of degeneration. He could, indeed, give utterance to the disapproval of the stage in general, which we call Puritanical, though it was by no means confined to the Puritans or even Protestants... The sentiment was, in fact, that of the respectable middle classes in general."(2)

1. Nicoll: op. cit., p. 126
2. Stephen: op. cit., p. 67

The drama, after the virulent attack by Collier, became "moral" not because of Collier-- although he accelerated the movement-- but because a change was imminent, and because an opportunist, Colley Cibber, saw reaction against the immorality of the drama growing and public taste changing.

2.

The Nature of the Augustan Drama

The drama of the age of Queen Anne is a more or less natural outgrowth of the drama of the Restoration period. There was a decided modification in its moral tone in comparison with the frank immorality of the preceding two decades, not because of the attacks upon it by such as Jeremy Collier, but rather in spite of them. When the Restoration stage had been in the process of readjustment, the opportunity for an infusion of a new spirit and a new life by a fresh school of dramatists had been neglected. The early eighteenth century drama fell heir to the malpractices of the Restoration dramatists and to an antipathy incubated in the political unrest of the times.

Technically the drama of the Restoration was in a transitory state from the pre-Cromwellian era to the age of Anne, and yet, as a social force, the drama from the accession of Charles II (1660) to the death of George II, exactly one century later, was the greater transition as it was the link in the evolvement of the modern drama and the theatre of the Elizabethan period.

The first phases of this social transition occured during the reign of Anne when the playwrights ceased writing exclusively for the court and the nobility, and began to recognize the nascent power of the upper middle

class. Patronage by the aristocracy was negligible; Anne was not interested in the drama, hence the royal patronage of the stage had ceased. The political conditions of the time, the factional strife between Tories And Whigs, prompted many a lord to simulate interest, if not material aid, to the drama because of the advantages of propaganda from the stage. However, and this may explain the lack of 'deep thinkers' among the playwrights, the greater intellects were not using the drama as a medium of literary expression. They were to be found writing for journals, or waging a battle in prose or poetry in the political pamphlets. The rewards were vastly greater. Where during the Restoration the drama was patronized by the court and the courtiers, the new patronage was at the disposal of political factions, and their gratuity ignored the stage; the drama had ceased to be a force.

Political pamphleteering was bringing substantial returns to Swift, Defoe, Prior, Addison, and Steele. The drama, stripped of whatever intellect the great writers of prose and poetry may have given to it, was left largely in the hands of mediocre writers. Although Steele and Addison did venture upon playwriting, the dramatic offerings to the public of Queen Anne's day were left to Vanbrugh and Farquhar, who carried on the current of the light comedy of the Restoration, Rowe, undoubtedly the best writer of the dramatists of the time, and scores of inferior writers, chief among them being Cibber, Mrs. Centlivre, and Charles Shadwell. It is a curious and interesting fact that Shadwell and Mrs. Centlivre wrote plays which in their allusions to the immoral would have ranked them with the coarsest playwrights of the Restoration. Cibber and Steele became the leaders in the drama of sentiment, which was a peculiar characteristic of

the plays of the Augustan age. Cibber deliberately strove to moralize the drama; there were great possibilities in the appeal to the middle class. Steele, too, became a vigorous crusader in the sentimental movement with a purpose actuated by sincerity, not like Cibber who was motivated by the prospects of profit.

Steele and Cibber were comparatively successful. The moralistic tone of the sentimental drama made a hit with the theatre-goers with its appeal to the emotions. Literary expression and intellectual content were conspicuously absent, but it mattered little-- the public liked it, and other dramatists did not lag behind. They jumped aboard the "band-wagon" and wrote what there was a market for. Imitation and adaptation followed.

With few exceptions, almost all of the plays produced during this period were comedies. Tragedy, since the Restoration, had almost disappeared. The only good representations of tragedy during this period, excepting those of Nicholas Rowe, were the plays of Shakespeare, and he could not be imitated successfully, although Rowe tried it. Rowe's efforts, conditioned as they were by the sentimentalism and the classicism of the times, resulted in bathetic expositions of injured and suffering feminism, or "she-tragedies", as they are now called.

The other writers of tragedy are Ambrose Philips and Addison, who made his mark in the theatre with his one appealing (to the audience) tragedy CATO. There were several others who, perhaps, are best left to oblivion.

"Generally speaking, the theatre of the (Augustan) age does not belong to the central current of literature; it reveals rather the divergent or complementary aspects of the epoch; the comedy of Colley Cibber or Steele,

the drama of Rowe, have their place in the study of middle-class inspiration, or of the dawn of sentimentalism. An exception must be made for the correct tragedy in which Addison, more mindful on this occasion of the rules than of his moralising ideal, gave the most finished imitation of the French model (CATO, 1713). In fact, the influence of the French dramatists continues to be felt throughout the reign of Queen Anne; the adaptations of Racine and Corneille are numerous; and Ambrose Philips's DISTREST MOTHER, 1712 (ANDROMAQUE), is only the most famous."(1)

1. Legouis and Cazamian: HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, p. 778

III.

THE LONDON OF QUEEN ANNE

1.

The Social Life of London.

When, on March 8, 1702, Anne came to the throne of England, London was a bustling, energetic metropolis of almost a half million people. Commercially and politically, London was surging to the pinnacle as the greatest city in the world. And when Anne died, she left a city whose population had grown to nearly three-quarters of a million, and was indisputably the greatest city in the world.

Throughout eleven of her twelve years on the throne, Anne ruled a nation and an empire in embryo which held and subdued the political and military might of France. The dozen years of the War of the Spanish Succession had seen a remarkable surge upward in literature, commerce, and in the economic and political power of the English people. During this same period Great Britain had come into existence when, in 1707, Scotland became united to England.

London was the center of this surge. During the reign of William III (1688-1702) the Bank of England had been established, the national debt funded, and the currency stabilized by the renewal of coinage by the guilds and Corporation of London in conjunction with the government. Anne, on her accession, became the queen of a financially stable and prosperous nation. "Under Queen Anne... home-keeping Englishmen had more space to breathe in than they have now, and trade was not demoralized by excessive competition. No attempt was made to separate class from class, and the population was not large enough to make the battle for life almost hopeless in the lowest section of the community. If there was less refinement

than among ourselves, there was far less nervous susceptibility, and the country was free from the half-educated class of men and women who know enough to make them dissatisfied, without attaining to the larger knowledge which yields wisdom and content. To say that the age was better than our own would be to deny a thousand signs of material and intellectual progress, but it had fewer dangers to contend with, and if there was far less wealth in the country the people were probably more satisfied with their lot."(1) Commerce had expanded to India and the royal colonies. The war had stopped the commercial intercourse with France; however, the government offset this by a favorable trade treaty with Portugal (Methuen Treaty, 1703), and also arranged favorable trade pacts with the Netherlands. In fact, the war was responsible for the sharp increase of exports; the Netherlands proved to be a great market for broadcloth, as, for example, the year 1706 marked a fifteen percent increase in the export of this commodity.

Agriculture in the hinterland was in a healthy state; but industry and commerce in the other cities of England were not keeping pace with the economic progress of the rest of the nation at large, and falling sharply in contrast to the growing prosperity of London. As a matter of fact, the smaller ports were suffering because the vast bulk of England's trade was being carried on in London.

The factional politics of the time were intensely fervid. The bank, commerce, religion, and the national policies of the government were fodder for dispute. In the bitter political wrangling little quarter was given or asked. In May 1708, just before the elections, "a run on

1. Dennis: THE AGE OF POPE, p. 23

the Bank of England was engineered by its rivals, the goldsmiths and the private bankers, led by Sir Francis Child, Tory member of Parliament... The incident told heavily against the Tories at election time. Patriotism and the desire for stability ranged themselves on the side of the Whig candidates."(1)

An example of pro-Whig propaganda from the stage concerning trade as an issue is given to us by Mrs. Centlivre in A GOTHAM ELECTION:

> "Sir Roger-- (speaking to an Alderman) I am amaz'd to find you in the Interest of the High-Boys, you that are a Clothier! What, can you be for giving up Trade to France, and starving poor Weavers?"(2)

In a later scene from the same play, we find religion as an issue:

> "Tickup-- It is not out of any sinister End to suborn your Husband; no, I scorn it, I am an honest Man, and a Lover of the Church, and will take Care the Roguish Whigs don't pull down a Hassock in't.
>
> Lady Worthy-- Ay, Neighbours, Mr. Tickup's a good Churchman, mark that! He is none of your hellish pantile Crew;-- Oh, we shall never thrive till all these Canting Whigs are whipt out of the Kingdom;-- Oh, that I had the Jerking of 'em, I'd teach 'em Passive Obedience, or make the Devil come out of 'em."(3)

Tickup mouths Tory dogma; however, Mrs. Centlivre's purpose in this drama was blunt ridicule of the Tories, and Tickup is later proven to be a sorry and ridiculous target for the Whigs.

Socially, London was a merry city with its theatres, taverns, coffee-houses, balls, and the hundred or so matters and affairs to take up the time and interests of its citizens. An illustration of social life in London is given to us by Shadwell in his THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY.

1. Trevelyan: ENGLAND UNDER QUEEN ANNE, v. II, p. 394
2. Centlivre: A GOTHAM ELECTION, i:4
3. Centlivre: ibid., i:2

"Major Young Fox-- ...come not within an Arm's Length of me, and I will give you all the News, all the Scandal, all the Fashions, and all the Pleasures of the Town?

Hearty and Wildish-- Agreed then.

Young Fox-- First I left our Royal Mistress in a very good State of Health, Reigning intirely in the Hearts of the People, whose Representatives are doing Wonders; and by their well-timed Zeal, and vast Supplies, shew the World they are still able to Balance Europe's Power.

Hearty and Wildish-- Very good.

Young Fox-- The Taxes are paid cheerfully, there's no Discount upon Exchequer Bills and honest Soldiers are trusted by every Body. St. James's Coffee-House is full of grave Statesmen, whimsical gentry and coxcombly Physicians. Young Man's is fill'd with Military Beaus, Sea Gentlemen, and Admiralty Clerks. Garroway's with Knaves, Aldermen, Agents, Commissioners of Excise, and now and then a straggling Beau. And the Court of Request with Country Gentlemen, Petitioners, Freeholders, Sheriffs, and Politicians that hate Business. The Women of Quality have that discerning Taste of good Sense, that they always crowd the front Boxes at a good Play; and our rakelly young Fellows, live as much by their Wits as ever; and to avoid the clinking Dun of a Box-Keeper, at the end of one Act, they sneak to the opposite Side 'till the end of another; they call the Box-Keeper saucy Rascal, ridicule the Poet, laugh at the Actors, march to the Opera, and spunge away the rest of the Evening. The Women of the Town take their Places in the Pit, with their wonted Assurance. The middle Gallery is fill'd with the middle Part of the Town: and your high exalted Galleries are grac'd with handsom Footmen, that wear their Master's Linnen, and their Mistresses Favours."(1)

The lowest class in the social strata is only vaguely mentioned in the dramas of the time. The sentimental comedy, and the very movement of sentimentalism itself, led away from realism. Hence, the drama of the time had little or no representation of artisans or the world of labor. 'Low' characters had almost completely disappeared; the drama of this age became "pre-eminently the drama of middle- and upper-middle class society with conversations and scenery to match."(2) The study of this section

1. Shadwell: HUMOURS OF THE ARMY, i:1
2. Nicoll: BRITISH DRAMA, p. 286

of Augustan society is of importance as this class was rapidly becoming politically predominant. It was the class of the merchant, the trader, the banker, and the industrialist. And as its power grew along with its wealth, it began to imitate the manners of the aristocracy; it went to the theatre, or vacationed at the popular and fashionable resorts, Tunbridge Wells in Kent and the mineral springs at Bath, Somersetshire.

Shadwell has mentioned a few of the fashionable spots where the men of Augustan London whiled away their hours. The coffee-houses and the taverns were extremely popular at this time. It has been estimated that there were about three thousand coffee-houses in London in 1708. Some of the more prominent coffee-houses and taverns, in addition to those mentioned by Shadwell, were Tom's on Russell Street--Colley Cibber was very fond of this place, as it was here that he left a goodly portion of his earnings as a playwright and as an actor over the gaming table--, Will's on Bow Street, on the corner of Russell Street, Button's, which attracted the literary coterie, White's, Child's, near St. Paul's Churchyard-- a favorite spot for doctors and clergymen--, the Grecian at Devereux Court, where a fatal duel was fought over a misunderstanding of an accent of a Greek word, the Rose Tavern near Drury Lane, and, of course, the Kit-Kat Club, Steele's favorite place. Not far from Covent Garden, Estcourt the actor opened the Bumper Tavern. It soon became a rival to the Beefsteak Club as a gathering spot for the men of the theatre.

The taverns and the coffee-houses were the favorite environments of the 'wits' who produced the literature generally called after Queen Anne. The significance of these men can best be explained by Leslie

Stephen, who writes, "Here, then, we have the general indication of the composition of the literary organ. It is made up of men of the world-- 'Wits' is their favorite self-designation, scholars and gentlemen, with rather more of the gentlemen than the scholars-- living in the capital, which forms a kind of island of illumination amid the surrounding darkness of the agricultural country-- including men of rank and others of sufficient social standing to receive them on friendly terms-- meeting at coffee-houses and in a kind of tacit confederation of clubs to compare notes and form the public opinion of the day. They are conscious that in them is concentrated the enlightenment of the period. The class to which they belong is socially and politically dominant-- the advance guard of national progress."(1)

This period in English history reached a high mark for drinking. Thackeray has stated that the drinking in the clubs of London shortened the lives and enlarged the waistcoats of the men of this era. Lecky, writing on the same matter, stated, "'We seem,' wrote a somewhat rhetorical writer in 1657, 'to be steeped in liquors, or to be the dizzy island. We drink as if we were nothing but sponges...or had funnels in our mouths... We are the grape-suckers of the earth.'... It was remarked that in the reign of Anne the desire to obtain French wines at a reasonable rate greatly strengthened the opposition to Marlborough and the war. The amount of hard drinking among the upper classes was still very great, and it is remarkable how many of the most conspicuous characters were addicted to it. Addison, the foremost moralist of the time, was not free from it. Oxford, whose private character was in most respects singularly high, is said to

1. Stephen: op. cit., p. 53

have come, not infrequently, drunk into the very presence of the Queen. Bolingbroke, when in office, sat up whole nights drinking, and in the morning, having bound a wet napkin round his forehead and his eyes, to drive away the effects of his intemperance, he hastened, without sleep, to his official business."(1) One of the excuses for the intoxication of this period was the badness of the water.(2) "Duelling was fostered by drunkenness, and the age was emphatically drunken...The fashionable

have come, not infrequently, drunk into the very presence of the Queen. Bolingbroke, when in office, sat up whole nights drinking, and in the morning, having bound a wet napkin round his forehead and his eyes, to drive away the effects of his intemperance, he hastened, without sleep, to his official business."(1) One of the excuses for the intoxication of this period was the badness of the water.(2) "Duelling was fostered by drunkenness, and the age was emphatically drunken...The fashionable dinner hour was five, which allowed plenty of time for steady soaking, and for suppers, when bottles could again be opened... Societies for the promotion of temperance would have been regarded as insane, and the law rather encouraged than checked the consumption of excisable liquor. When gentlemen began seriously to drink, ladies retired."(3)

Gin was well liked in the city, while beer was popular with all classes, and besides it was inexpensive. In a scene from THE ROYAL MERCHANT, three or four boors are in a tavern. One of them speaks:

> "O excellent! two-pence apiece, boys, two-pence apiece. Give the Boys some Drink there. Piper, wet your Whistle."(4)

To the hangers-on in taverns, the well-liked beer was affectionately associated with some of the heroes of the era, not unlike our modern 'immortalizing' of some person by naming a cock-tail after him. Since his tragic end, Sir Cloudesly Shovell (5) had affectionately been remembered by the fleet. The following passage by Shadwell illustrates the esteem in which Shovell was held:

1. Lecky: HISTORY OF ENGLAND IN THE 18TH CENTURY, v. I, pp. 477-8
2. Paul: QUEEN ANNE, p. 302
3. Paul: ibid., pp.258-9
4. Norris: THE ROYAL MERCHANT, iii:1
5. Shovell died when his ship was wrecked as it was returning from a victorious campaign in the Mediterranean, October 22, 1707.

"Flip-- Tar and Tobacco are sweeter, one would think, than the excrements of a Civetty-Cat...Friend Rovewell, I don't care if you and I toss off a Can of Sir Cloudesly before we sail."(1)

But then, not every one had money to spend on drink:

"Topper--...Oh, that Fortune shou'd be so liberal to such a Fool, when many honest Fellows sit in a Coffee-House all the Evening for want of Money to go to the Tavern."(2)

When the pleasures of the coffee-house or the tavern sated the London gentleman, the theatre was always ready and near at hand to amuse him. At the beginning of Queen Anne's reign the leading theatres were Dorset Gardens on Fleet Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Drury Lane. Fashionable London usually rode to the theatre. "In London there were at this time eight hundred hackney carriages, the fare being fixed at eighteen pence a mile. A more fashionable conveyance was the sedan-chair. There were three hundred licensed chairs in London, the fixed charge being one shilling."(3) Shortly after Anne's accession, Dorset Gardens was closed. It was torn down in 1709. However, in 1705, a new theatre was opened at Haymarket. It was built by Vanbrugh, whose architectural style was ponderous and heavy in contrast to the light and flippant quality of his comedies.(4) Haymarket and Drury Lane were popular throughout the Augustan period, while Lincoln's Inn Fields was little used.

"Five o'clock was the time for plays, although the ultra-fashionable usually planned a late arrival in order to be conspicuous. The rush from coffee-house to the theatre is very well described by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu...

1. Shadwell: THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, i:1
2. Centlivre: THE BEAUX DUEL, i:1
3. Paul: QUEEN ANNE, pp. 300-301
4. Vanbrugh was also the architect who built the massive monument to the Duke of Marlborough, Blenheim Palace.

The opera queens had finished half their faces,
And city dames already taken places;
Fops of all kinds, to see the Lion, run;
And beauties stay till the first act's begun,
No well-dressed youth in coffee-house remain'd."(1)

And of course there was the opera. Lady Montagu has referred to it above in a small way. "The capital fact of this period was the introduction and great popularity of the Italian opera. Operas on the Italian model first appeared in England in 1705. They were at first sung in English, and by English performers; but soon after, some Italian castrati having come over, the principal characters in the dialogue sung in Italian, while the subordinate characters answered in English. After two or three years this absurdity passed away, and the operas became wholly Italian. In 1710, the illustrious Handel first came to England, and RINALDO, his earliest opera, appeared in 1711. Boncini, who at one time rivalled his popularity as a composer, followed a few years later."(2)

The London of Queen Anne did not lack for places of amusement. The ebb and flow of its social life, however, was conditioned by the tastes of the upper and the middle class. The lower classes-- forgotten men of all generations-- were ever present but counted for little in the commercial and social life of the city.

1. Irving: JOHN GAY'S LONDON, p. 338
2. Lecky: op. cit., p. 532

2.

The Streets of London.

The city of London was earnestly striving to keep pace with the growth of England. It was in the process of gradual transformation. Old buildings were being torn down; new ones were being built. Scars of the great fire of 1666 were still visible in many places, but were being removed as fast as the industry and the wealth of the citizens of London could be applied. The work on the rebuilding of the great land-mark, St. Paul's Cathedral, was almost complete.

In broad daylight, London was a comparatively safe place, but one had to be a poet indeed to love it at night. The streets were narrow, ill-lighted, poorly policed, and infested with thieves, foot-pads, and rogues. "A knowledge of fencing was part of every gentleman's education, and even in the streets of London, it was not safe to rely upon the forces of the law. The streets were dimly lighted with oil lamps. The constables were seldom nimble-minded, and not always able-bodied."(1) The terror of London at night, particularly in the latter years of Anne's reign, was a "club of young men of the higher classes, who assumed the name of Mohocks, (and) were accustomed nightly to sally out drunk into the streets to hunt the passers-by and to subject them in mere wantonness to the most atrocious outrages. One of their favourite amusements, called 'tipping the lion,' was to squeeze the nose of their victum flat upon his face and bore out his eyes with their fingers. Among them were the 'sweaters,' who formed a circle round their prisoner and pricked him with swords till he sank exhausted to the ground, the 'dancing masters,' so called from their skill

1. Paul: QUEEN ANNE, p. 260

in making men caper by thrusting swords into their legs, the 'tumblers,' whose favourite amusement was to set women on their heads and commit various indecencies and barbarities on the limbs that were exposed. Maid servants as they opened their masters' doors were waylaid, beaten, and their faces cut. Matrons inclosed in barrels were rolled down the steep and stony incline of Snow Hill. Watchmen were unmercifully beaten and their noses slit. Country gentlemen went to the theatre as if in time of war, accompanied by their armed retainers. A bishop's son was said to have been one of the gang, and a baronet was among those who were arrested."(1)

An extravagant style motif common to the men of the upper classes was a large, full-bottomed periwig. The men of quality, wealth, and the professions proudly strutted about in this fashion, a style that had been introduced in the reign of Charles II and was not discontinued in public until about 1720. "Addison, Congreve, and Steele, met, at Button's coffee-house in large, flowing, flaxen, wigs; Booth, Wilks, and Cibber, when full-dressed, wore the same. Till within twenty-five years, our Tamerlanes and Catos had as much hair on their heads as our judges on the bench...I have been told that he (Booth) and Wilks bestowed forty guineas each on the exorbitant thatching of their heads."(2) To sally forth on any night with a wig was a grave risk:

> "Nor is thy flaxen Wig with safety worn;
> High on the shoulder in a Basket borne
> Lurks the Fly-Boy; whose Hand to Rapine bred,
> Plucks off the curling Honours of thy Head."(3)

The thievery of wigs was painless in that little injury, other than

1. Lecky: op. cit., p. 482
2. Davies: DRAMATIC MISCELLANIES, v. III, pp. 81-82
3. Gay: TRIVIA, Book III

the loss of an expensive wig, was suffered by the victims. On the other hand, the dark streets and alleys were filled with lurking and none-too-gentle thieves who were dreaded almost as much as the sailors on shore leave.

> "1 Sailor-- Well, now we have got rid of the Rum Duke, being in a very merry Humour, let us put it to a Vote whether we shall beat the Mayor and the Corporation, and drown the Constable; or shall we ravish all the Women we meet with, and unwindow the Houses?
>
> 2 Sailor-- Let us ravish first."(1)

The unsung heroes of the Augustan age undoubtedly are the much-beaten and cruelly abused members of the Watch. Elkanah Settle delighted his callous audience with the following few lines from his THE CITY-RAMBLE:

> "Rinaldo-- I must beat the Watch, I have long'd for it these three weeks.
>
> Antonio-- We'll beat the Town too..."(2)

Steele echoed the public opinion of the Watch in his LYING LOVER:

> "Young Bookwit-- Hands off, you dirty midnight rascals. Let me go, or--
>
> Constable-- Sir, what were you running so fast for? There's a man killed in the Garden, and you're a fine gentleman, and it must be you-- for good honest people only beat one another--
>
> Latine-- Nay, nay, we are all in a fair way to be fine gentlemen, Mr. Simon and all.
>
> Constable-- Hands off, rascals, you said just now-- do you know what a constable is?
>
> Young Bookwit-- The greatest man in the parish when all the rest are asleep."(3)

The lot of those poor unfortunates, usually from the lowest classes of London society, was to be sympathized with. The fear in which impressment

1. Shadwell: THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, iii:2
2. Settle: THE CITY-RAMBLE, ii:4
3. Steele: THE LYING LOVER, iv:3

was held is expressed in a threat by Sir Jealous Traffick to Whisper in Mrs. Centlivre's THE BUSYBODY:

> "...And let me not catch you no more Puppy-hunting about my Doors, lest I have you press'd into the Service, sirrah."(1)

There have been, and still are, specific sections of London which have had particular significance to scholars. Fleet Street and Paternoster Row have housed the book trade for generations. Billingsgate, not far from the Tower, has given a word to the English language. Here dwelt the coarsest and lowest of London's dwellers. Smithfield, Holborn, St. James, Newgate, and Bedlam are all familiar to us. And no student of Augustan London can fail to recognize Haymarket, Covent Garden, and Drury Lane.

It is, if not a curious matter at least an interesting one, that those sections of the city in the vicinity of the theatres sunk in the regard of the 'decent' and 'moral' citizens. It appears as though the drama contaminated the locality where the play-house was situated. Covent Garden, as the following illustration by Shadwell reveals, was considered one of the most notorious sections of the city during the reign of Anne.

> "Worthy--...But how does all our Deal Angels?
>
> Rovewell-- Why, the few virtuous Women are as proud and insolent as they used to be, and the Whores you left ten Months since, are dead with Rottenness, and young Strums supply the Rooms. This is a monstrous Place for Wickedness! ...You Gentlemen of the Navy are great Encouragers of Sin, and traffic mightily in that Sort of Merchandise; and for your Money, receive as lasting French Diseases here, as any you can meet with in Covent-Garden, or in the Mediterranean."(2)

Shadwell evidently did not have a high opinion of the morals of England's 'sea dogs.' His disdain of Covent Garden, however, may have been pardoned by the patriotic denizens of that section of London for his reference to

1. Centlivre: THE BUSYBODY, ii:3
2. Shadwell: THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, i:1

diseases as French. The coarse immorality of Covent Garden is sententiously vivid in a later scene from the same comedy. Jiltup, one of the "strums" from Covent Garden is speaking to Flip about her sister-in-shame, Jenny:

"Jiltup--...This young Lady and I were bred up Play-fellows together.

Flip-- Not at her Game, I hope.

Jiltup-- Oh! yes, sir; we were such Intimates, two such sworn Friends, that our Delights, our Joys, our very Lives were wound together.

Flip-- Where, where, my pretty Lady-bird, was thy Acquaintance with that Play-fellow?

Jiltup-- At London, sir.

Flip-- What Part of London?

Jiltup-- The Neighbourhood of Covent-Garden.

Flip-- Sink and Sodom!"(1)

The rakish beau of the period and the man-about-town, spent a great deal of time in and about Covent Garden. Steele practically lived there. Of course, there was the theatre, and the taverns. Yet the chief attraction was the 'ladies.'

"We dare not, even to avoid Reproach,
When y'are at White's peep out of a Hackney-Coach
Nor with a Friend at Night, our Fame regarding,
With Glass drawn up, drive about Covent-Garden.
If poor Town-Ladies steal in here, you rail,
Though like chaste Nuns, their modest Looks they veil;
With this Decorum they can hardly gain
To be thought virtuous, even in Drury-Lane."(2)

The lofty scorn which the literati held for the nouveau riche is expressed by Steele in THE TENDER HUSBAND, when Captain Clerimont, after a lengthy conversation with Bridget Tipkin, daughter of a Lombard Street

1. Shadwell: THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, v:2
2. Vanbrugh: THE MISTAKE, epilogue

merchant, says:

> "I am surprised, Madam, at the Delicacy of your Phrase-- Can such expressions come from Lombard Street?"(1)

Lombard Street, during the eighteenth century, was a busy hive of tradesmen, merchants, and private bankers, all waxing prosperous and seeking an entre into the higher bracket in the social strata by fawning subservience to the titled, and by dangling the lure of fat dowries along with their daughters as a means of crashing the select circle of 'lords' and 'sirs.' If anything, the drama of this period is an exceedingly candid pictorialization of the social conditions and sections of London.

1. Steele: THE TENDER HUSBAND, ii:1

IV.

THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE LONDON THEATRE

1.

The Problems of the London Theatres.

"A very good description of the theatre of the time is to be found in a satire called THE PLAY-HOUSE by T.G., Gent.:

> "Near to the ROSE where PUNKS in numbers flock,
> To pick up Cullies to increase the stock;
> A lofty Fabrick does the sight invade,
> And stretches round the Place a pompous Shade;
> Where sudden SHOUTS the Neighbourhood surprize,
> And THUND'RING CLAPS, and Dreadful HISSINGS rise."(1)

Whoever T.G., Gent. may have been, he ably abets the assertion made in the previous chapter that the theatre in Queen Anne's day had, if not a demoralizing, at least a degrading effect upon the vicinity where it was located. If we are to take his description at face value, the theatre of the early eighteenth century compares to the proverbial 'boiler factory' of today.

It behooves us at this point to deviate into the history of the drama. "It must not be presumed, of course, that the audience, suddenly in a few years, changed its entire character, or that even in the last portion of this period the atmosphere of the theatres was of the middle class rather than the aristocratic. If anything, the air of eighteenth century London was more 'fashionable' than it had been before; and only too many of the richer class aped the manners and the vices of the People of Quality. All that can be said is that the body of the spectators was larger than it had been, that the middle class was growing in importance

1. Irving: ibid.

and power, and that the close connection between Court and theatre was for ever shattered."(1)

Although, as Allardyce Nicoll points out, the theatre-goers had increased, the theatres were invariably and constantly in debt. The patronage of the court had ceased; and the theatres at the beginning of this period furiously competed for the patronage of the public. Dorset Gardens was totally abandoned within a year following Anne's accession. The surviving two theatres, Lincoln's Inn Fields and Drury Lane, did not prosper. Apparently the public would not nor could not support both theatres. Various devices were resorted to, notably by the P.T. Barnum of the age, Christopher Rich. One of the devices was the subscription. Cibber speaks of it in his APOLOGY, "While the stage was recovering its former (favor), a more honourable mark of Favour was shewn to it than it has known before or since to have receiv'd. The then Lord Hallifax (2) was not only a patron of the Men of Genius of his time, he had likewise a generous Concern for the Reputation and Prosperity of the Theatre, from whence the most elegant Dramatick Labours of the Learned, was drawn up and addressed to that Noble Lord for his Approbation and Assistance to raise a publick Subscription for Reviving three Plays to have three Tickets for the first Day of each Play for his single Payment of Three Guineas."(3)

The struggle to show a creditable profit by the managers of the theatres became hopeless when, in April 1705, the new Haymarket Theatre was opened. Thomas Betterton, the great actor, who was also the manager of

1. Nicoll: op. cit., p. 8
2. Charles Montagu, one of the Whig Junto, and one of the ablest politicians and satesmen in English history. Pope said, "He was fed with dedications."
3. Cibber: AN APOLOGY FOR THE LIVE OF C.C., v. II, p.4

Lincoln's Inn Fields, gave in. His was a losing fight, and his theatre thereafter gave sporadic performances. Drury Lane managed to keep its doors open to the public by drastic economies, and by the introduction of novelties to amuse the spectators between the acts. Cibber relates how some economies were instituted at Drury Lane, "The Stage has, for many years, 'till of late, groan'd under great Discouragements, which have been very much, if not wholly, owing to the Mismenagement of those who awkwardly govern'd it. Great sums have been ventur'd upon empty Projects and Hopes of immoderate Gains, and when these Hopes fail'd, the Loss has been tyrannically deducted out of the Actor's Sallary."(1) The 'mismenagement' Cibber refers to is the manager, Christopher Rich. Cibber whimsically tells of Rich's method in deducting from the thin salaries of the Thespians. "Not but our good Master was so shy a Tyrant as ever was at the Head of a Theatre; for he gave the Actors more Liberty, and fewer Days Pay, than any of his Predecessors: He would laugh with them over a Bottle, and bite them (2) in their Bargains: He kept them poor, that they might not be able to repel; and sometimes merry, that they might not think of it: All their Articles of Agreement had a Clause in them that he was sure to creep out of viz. their respective Sallaries were to be paid in such manner and proportion as others of the same Company were paid; which in effect made them all when he pleas'd but United Sharers of Loss and himself sole Proprietor of Profits; and this Loss or Profit they only had such verbal Accounts of as he thought proper to give them. 'Tis true, he would sometimes advance them Money (but no more than he knew at most could be due

1. Cibber: op. cit., v. II, p. 47
2. i.e. "cheat"

them) upon their Bonds; upon which, whenever they were mutinous, he would threaten to sue them. This was the Net we danc'd in for several Years: But no wonder we were Dupes, while our Master was a Lawyer."(1)

The huge theatre at Haymarket shortly became managed by Owen Swiney who, in the face of the competition, became bankrupt. Rich sold out his patent in Drury Lane to Wilks, Booth, and Cibber and went over to the Haymarket where he immediately instituted the crowd-getting practices which he had introduced with some small success at Drury Lane. These practices-- but let Cibber tell us about them-- "At the same time the Patentee of Drury Lane went on in his usual method of paying extraordinary Prices to Singers, Dancers, and other exotick Performers, which were constantly deducted out of the sinking Sallaries of his Actors: 'Tis true his actors might not deserve much more than he gave them; yet...it is plain he chose not to be troubled with such as visibly deserv'd more: For it seems he had not purchased his Share of the Patent to mend the Stage, but to make money of it: And to say the Truth, his Sense of every think to be shown there was much upon a Level with the Taste of the Multitude, whose Opinion and whose Money weigh'd with him full as much as that of the best Judges. His point was to please the Majority, who could more easily comprehend any thing they <u>saw</u> than the daintiest things that could be said to them. But in this notion he kept no medium...(and only had)...so hopeful a Project of making the Receipts of the Stage run higher than all the Wit and Force of the best Writers."(2)

Rich was a showman. The stage to him was merely an expedient agency

1. Cibber: op. cit., v.I, p. 252
2. ibid., v. II, p. 6

to be exploited for profit. It is no wonder, then, that the drama began to sink after a valiant attempt to recover some modicum of its past glories. The resultant pandering to the ribald tastes of the Augustan theatre-goers was not wholly due to a moral depravity in the playwrights. Samuel Johnson, writing three decades later, said:

> "Ah, let no censure term our fate our choice,
> The stage but echoes back the public voice;
> The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
> For we that live to please, must please to live."(1)

Cibber reveals Rich's method of pleasing the public. "About the same time...he put in Practice another Project of as new, though not so bold a Nature (as putting elephants on the Stage); which was his introducing a Set of Rope-dancers into the same Theatre; for the first Day of whose Performance he had given out a Play in which I had a material Part: But I was hardy enough to go into the Pit and acquaint the Spectators near me, that I hop'd they could not think it a Mark of me Disrespect to them, if I declin'd acting upon a Stage that was brought to so low a Disgrace as ours was like to be by that Day's Entertainment."(2)

Another thorn in the side of the drama of the early Augustan era was the opera. The actors of the "legitimate" drama feared it as a rival to their efforts. It was popular for a time; its novel core of melodious songs appealed to the tastes of a number of London's fashionable society. Swiney, and later Rich, tried to capitalize on its popularity, but, although it somehow managed to be performed through the period, it did not, however, attain any great degree of success for its promoters. "The difficulties against which the new entertainment had to struggle were very great.

1. Johnson: IRENE, prologue
2. Cibber: op. cit., v. II, p.7

Addison opposed it bitterly in the SPECTATOR.(1) The partisans of the regular drama denounced it as an absurd and mischievous novelty. It had to encounter the strong popular prejudice against foreigners and Papists. It was weakened by perpetual quarrels of composers and singers, and it was supported by a small and capricious circle of fashionable society."(2)

Cibber's comments on this form of entertainment are interesting. His opinions concerning the singers are amusing to us. "There is, too, in the very Species of an Italian Singer such an innate, fantastical Pride and Caprice, that the Government of them (here at least) is almost impracticable. This Distemper, as we were not sufficiently warn'd or apprized of, threw our musical Affairs into Perplexities we knew not easily how to get out of. There is scarcely a sensible Auditor in the Kingdom that has not since that Time had occasions to laugh at the several Instances of it: But what is more rediculous, these costly Canary-Birds have infested the whole Body of our dignified Lovers of Musick with their childish Animosities."(3)

Italian opera did not have a sole monopoly on this species of theatrical entertainment during this period. There were several English operas written and performed-- all dismal failures. Even Addison tried his

1. "When this new-fangled operatic entertainment was brought into conservative Britain from across the sea it became quite the vogue, much to the sorrow of so critical an authority as Addison. It was a sorrow, too, which he expressed in season and out, and so we are not surprised when he announces in the SPECTATOR, his design 'to deliver down to posterity a faithful account of the Italian opera, and of the gradual progress which it has made upon the English stage,' for 'there is no question,' he thinks, 'but our great-grandchildren will be very curious to know the reason why their forefathers used to sit together like an audience of foreigners in their own country, and to hear whole plays acted before them, in a tongue which they did not understand.'" (Robins: ECHOES OF THE PLAYHOUSE, p. 153)

2. Lecky: op. cit., p. 532
3. Cibber: op. cit., v. II, p. 88

versatile literary skill at this form. In March 1707, his opera, ROSAMOND, was presented at Drury Lane. It suffered the same failure as the other English operas. One critic wrote, "ROSAMOND was a dismal failure; barely it struggled through, and mounted the stage, on purpose to frighten all England with its abominable Musick."(1)

The regular drama, during this intense period of competition, became more dissolute while it anachronistically strove to keep a moralizing tone. Cibber refers to the competition of the regular drama and the "spectacles" and also the reasons for the apparent vulgarity of the regular drama. "This, therefore, is that remarkable Period when the Stage, during my Time upon it, was the least reproachable: And it may be worth the publick Observation that One Stage may... very laudably support itself by such Spectacles only as are fit to delight a sensible People; but the equal Prosperity of Two Stages has always been of very short Duration. If therefore the Publick should ever recover into that true Taste of that Time, and stick to it, the Stage must come into it or starve; as, whenever the general Taste is vulgar, the Stage must come down to it to live."(2)

The taste of the audience of Queen Anne's day was vulgar. "The age, as is perfectly evident, still delighted in scenes such as had been displayed by Etherege and Wycherly (3). Obviously there was but little definite change in the morals of the people at large. There was a consciousness in the hearts of all, save the most fanatic, that all the Societies for the Reformation of Manners were but hypocrisy writ large...

1. Nicoll: op. cit., p. 228
2. Cibber: op. cit., v. I, p. 88
3. Etherege(1634-1690) and Wycherly(1640-1715) were two of the intellectually brilliant but morally lax dramatists of the Restoration.

The gallants and the beaux in the pit and boxes, they knew, had not altered. Cynicism in this connection appears repeatedly in the dramas of the time. Mrs. Lovejoy in Baker's THE FINE LADY'S AIRS (Drury Lane, 1708), on being pressed by Sir Harry, gives utterance to thoughts that must have been in the minds of many:

> "Was ever anything so impudent? he's a charming Fellow tho', and two hundred a year is a charming Allowance too.-- But Virtue! Virtue!-- oh! that I had liv'd in good King Somebody's Days."(1)

Drury Lane was closed by order of the Lord Chamberlain in June 1709, because of some grievous offense by Cibber to a member of the aristocracy. Cibber promptly went to the Haymarket Theatre, while William Collier (no relation to Jeremy) succeeded Cibber in the management of Drury Lane, which he held for several years until Cibber returned. While at the Haymarket, Cibber noted a reason or two for the poor attendance at the dramatic presentations there. "There were two different Accidents that drew Numbers from our Audiences before the Season ended; which was another Company permitted to act in Drury-Lane, and the long Trial of Doctor Satcheverell in Westminster Hall... During the Trial of Satcheverell our Audiences were extremely weaken'd by the better Rank of People's attending it; while, at the same time, the lower Sort, who were not equally admitted to that grand Spectacle, as eagerly crowded into Drury-Lane to a new Comedy call'd THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL."(2)

The drama of this age did manage to survive, but it had to cater to the 'lower Sort' that Cibber speaks of in his APOLOGY. Drury Lane, at this time, undoubtedly prospered while Charles Shadwell's THE FAIR QUAKER OF

1. Nicoll: op. cit., pp. 159-160
2. Cibber: op. cit., v. II. pp. 91-94

DEAL was being presented, but one has but to read this play to realize the truth of the assertions that this period was, in general, one of coarse, vulgar tastes. In its efforts to glean a creditable balance of profit, the theatre stooped lower and lower. Jeremy Collier's pen and tongue continued to inveigh passionately against the immorality of the London stage, as did others. However, the blasts of criticism were ineffective-- and the drama continued on its dissolute way, giving its customers what they wanted, for only by doing so could the theatre manage to keep its doors open.

2.

The Augustan Audiences.

The audience at the theatre during the early Augustan age is an interesting study in mob morality. It was, if larger than a theatre audience of the Restoration, not one whit better behaved. The gallery, as a rule-- and it was a rule-- was filled with the lowest segment of London's social strate, the pit with ladies of the town and gallants who used the theatre as a place for assignation. The boxes were filled (if the house was full-- and this, according to the laments of Cibber, was rare) by the people of quality, or the wealthy parvenus and their wives. "There seems to have been a charming absence of self-restraint among the patrons of the drama, between the disturbances so often created in the upper gallery by the servants of the aristocratic visitors, and the talking, walking about the theatre, and general want of consideration among the 'quality' themselves. The 'plain people' in the middle class of life, who were given to neither coquetry, gallantry, not good clothes, and their quiet, studious superiors who went to the play for the play's sake, must have launched many a secret, but nevertheless fervent anathema against the frivolous disturbers of their peace. But democracy was not as potent a factor in the theatre as out of it, and the noisy airs and graces of the women, the staring, the drivelling gossip and impertinence of the men, the flirting with pretty orange-girls (1) and the general arrogance of upper-tendom, went on unchecked."(2)

Riots at the theatre were not uncommon. Gay, young bucks of the higher classes went to the theatre not so much to be entertained by the

1. The duty of the orange-girls was to serve refreshments between the acts.
2. Robins: ECHOES OF THE PLAYHOUSE, p. 86

performance as to amuse themselves by hissing the actors, or hooting the play off the stage. One of the common expressions of the time was "Fire the house!", which meant an ensuing riot and the destruction of scenery, an overturning of seats, anything for the mere "sport" of the thing. The very loose tone of the plays invited this. "The profligacy of the theatre during the generation which followed the Restoration can hardly be exaggerated, and it continued with little abatement during two reigns. The character of the plays was such that few ladies of respectability and position ventured to appear at the first representation of a new comedy, and those whose curiosity triumphed over their delicacy usually came masked-- a custom which at this time became very common and led to grave abuses...In the reign of Anne the reformation was much aided by the prohibition of masks in the theatre."(1)

Cibber in his APOLOGY said this about the spectators, "It is no wonder that young People of Sense (<u>though of low Fortune</u>) should be so rarely found to supply a Succession of good Actors. Why then may we not, in some measure, impute the Scarcity of them to the wanton Inhumanity of those Spectators, who have made it so terribly mean to appear there?"(2)

Judging by the above comments, "fashionable" society during the reign of Anne was not a well-behaved society in the theatre. "Although it improved as time went on, the behaviour of eighteenth century play-goers was apt to be rough and unmannerly, and disapprobation of a performance was shown emphatically and forcibly. Lord Mansfield once laid down the law of hissing. 'Every man,' he declared, 'that is at the playhouse has a

1. Lecky: op. cit., p. 558
2. Cibber: op. cit., v. I, p. 80

right to express his approbation or disapprobation instantaneously, according as he likes either the acting or the piece; that is the right due to the theatre, an unalterable right.'"(1)

The rabble in the galleries did not ease the tribulations of the dramatists, managers, or the actors-- to say nothing of the other spectators. During the period when the theatres were debt-ridden and furiously competing for the patronage of the public, Christopher Rich instituted another practice, or device, in an effort to increase the attendance of the "better" people. "To balance this Misfortune (i.e., the lack of patronage), he was resolv'd at least, to be well with their Domesticks, and therefore cunningly open'd the upper Gallery to them gratis! For before this time no Footman was ever admitted, or had presum'd to come into it, till after the fourth Act was ended: This additional Priviledge (the greatest Plague that ever Play-house had to complain of) he conceiv'd would only incline them to give us a good Word in the respective Families they belong'd to, but would naturally incite them to come all Hands aloft in the Crack of our Applause: And indeed it so far succeeded, that it is often thunder'd from all full Gallery above, while our thin Pit and Boxes below were in the utmost Serenity, this riotous Priviledge, so craftily given, and which from Custom was at last ripen'd into Right, became the most disgraceful Nusance that ever depreciated the Theatre. How often have the most polite Audiences, in the most affecting Scenes of the best Plays, been disturb'd and insulted by the Noise and Clamour of these savage Spectators?"(2)

The gallery was not content to be merely boisterous. Sometimes, as the

1. Turberville: ENGLISH MEN AND MANNERS IN THE 18TH CENTURY, p. 401
2. Cibber: op. cit., v. II, p. 223

following vignette of theatre "decorum" in Queen Anne's time shows, tokens of approval or disapproval-- mostly the latter-- were thrown (or hurled) at the actors.

"Ann Barwick, having occasion'd a Disturbance at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane on Saturday Night last the 5th of February, and being thereupon taken into Custody, Mrs. Tofts (1), in Vindication of her own Innocency, sent a letter to Mr. Rich, Master of the said Theatre, which is as followeth.

> SIR, I was very much surpriz'd that Ann Barwick, who was lately my servant, had committed a Rudeness last night at the Play-house, by throwing of Oranges, and hissing when Mrs. l' Epine the Italian Gentlewoman Sung. I hope no one can think it was in the least with my Privity, as I assure you it was not. I abhor such Practices, and I hope that you will cause her to be prosecuted, that she may be punish'd as she deserves.
>
> I am, Sir, Your Humble Servant,
>
> KATHERINE TOFTS
>
> To Christopher Rich; Esq.; at the
> Theatre Royal, Feb. 6, 1703"(2)

Not all, however, was clamor and riot at the theatres. One could think, from what has already been written, that the play-house was continuously in an uproar, when the truth is that it was not a continual practice. There was some sense of good behavior among the spectators, else the theatres would have closed completely. The audience, on a corporate basis, was none too highly intelligent. The growing numbers of the middle class and the galleries demanded to be entertained. Their tastes were low. "It is not to the Actors, therefore, but to the vitiated and low Taste of the Spectators, that the Corruptions of the Stage (of what kind soever) have

1. Mrs. Tofts was England's outstanding operatic performer. We suspect that she was in "privity" with Ann. Professional jealousy can go to extremes.
2. Ashton: SOCIAL LIFE IN THE REIGN OF ANNE, v. II, p. 6

been owing. If the Publick, by whom they must live, had Spirit enough to discountenance and declare against all the Trash and Fopperies they have been so frequently fond of, the Actors and the Authors, to the best of their Power, must naturally have serv'd their daily Table with sound and wholesome Diet."(1)

The low nature of the drama of the early Augustan age was, in a large measure, conditioned by the taste, or rather lack of taste in the audiences which attended the performances. The tragedies of the period did not, as a rule, have to stoop to the vulgarity of the crowd. This, in particular, is noticeable in the great popularity of Shakespeare. Another factor for the "cleanliness" of the tragedy was the type of audience. Women of quality were present more at tragedies than at comedies. Swift, in his THOUGHTS ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS, wrote, "It is observed that the ladies frequent the tragedies more than the comedies." The reason for this, he added, was "that in tragedy their sex is deified and adored, in comedy exposed and ridiculed."(2) However, the loftier tone and spirit of the tragedy held little appeal to the theatre-going public of the day. That may be one of the reasons for the almost negligible number of tragedies produced during this period.

Burlesque and novelty made its appearance and an instant hit with its appeal to the coarse tastes of the spectators. In fact, burlesque increased rapidly after 1710, keeping pace, as it were, with the degenerating taste for good drama among the play-goers of Queen Anne's London.

Richard Steele had an optimistic outlook; he hoped for a regeneration of the drama by the people themselves, that it was in them "to raise this entertainment to the greatest height."(3)

1. Cibber: op. cit., v. I, p. 112
2. Nicoll: op. cit., p. 24
3. Aitken: RICHARD STEELE, p. xliii.

V.

DRAMATISTS AND THE SOCIAL MORALITY

1.

The Sentimental Drama.

Allardyce Nicoll, writing of this age, observed that "The influence of Jeremy Collier, along with the influence of the sentimental comedy, created a spirit antagonistic to the production of the fine comedy of the previous age...The dramatists (of the Restoration) were purely intellectual, purely cynical, purely circumscribed within their own narrow circle. In the eighteenth century wars and patriotism came to give men other thoughts. Emotion was creeping into the world of intellect...The gallants were meeting with the citizens and acquiring new ideas. While the immorality was there as of old, the free, untrammelled cynicism had disappeared. There was no dominant tradition, no consuming purpose, to guide the steps of the dramatists in one direction."(1)

The drama, then, of this time was in a state where it had to seek its own milieu. "No one claimed for the stage, in Queen Anne's time, that it was a virtuous profession, or expected actors and actresses to be bound by the principles of average decorum. Their principle was that those who live to please must please to live. That the stage had a mission, or any other object than the amusement of the public, would have been regarded as a priggish paradox. It was not meant for puritans, parsons, or young ladies, nor was it recruited from the upper and middle classes of society."(2) The very nature of the period, the absence of any tangible resources for the subsidy of the theatre, created a species of drama which was purposeless.

1. Nicoll: op. cit., p. 161
2. Paul: op. cit., pp. 187-188

The efforts of the dramatists of the age were directed at one goal--filling the pit and boxes, and in pursuance of this goal, the sentimental drama, the most noticeable characteristic of the era, emerged. Its moralizing appeal, its appeal to the emotions, and its meagerness of intellect gained favor with the public. But to keep this favor, the drama stooped to the tastes of its audience, which Stephen referred to as the most disreputable section of society. It was this influence which was effective in placing the drama into almost a century of purposeless transition, unless we except the bourgeois or domestic tragedy of the mid-eighteenth century which had its roots in the sentimental drama of the early Augustan period. The plots, or the themes of plots were thinner than the attendance. Both, drama and audience, reacted on each other; the drama sunk lower in its moral tone (the moralization in the sentimental comedy was invariable dragged in during the last act after the first four acts had wallowed in immoral innuendo); and the play-goers, children of the time, enjoyed it and demanded more. Why not? "Plays were written with more sentiment than had been employed in Restoration days, and the dialogue was far less sophisticated. On the other hand, the playwrights and producers found more than one way of catering to the vulgar, and what the dialogue lacked in spice was made up for by entr' acte dancers imported from the Continent, or by pretty young actresses dressed in boys' attire. The modern leg-show (though it has evolved considerably since) is of eighteenth century origin."(1)

Drama as literature had passed; it had become a pastime for the spectators, and the playwrights and promoters had become the obedient servants of those who paid their guineas and shillings at the box-office. And as

1. Hughes: THE STORY OF THE THEATRE, p. 191

the social base of the theatre-goers broadened and lowered, the drama of the day did likewise.

Comedy flourished. The great change in it was reflected by the absence of the intellectual callousness of the Restoration. Emotionalism--love, pity, repentance, happy endings-- dominated the drama of the time, being sugarcoated with smut for the lower intellectual standards of the audience. The number of comedies written and acted during this period reveals how the drama had come to adapt itself to the tastes of the multitude. It was an appeal to the fast-growing middle class whose social position had as yet not been assured, but who had the money.

The foremost authors of comedy during this period are: Colley Cibber (1671-1757), "a born man of the theatre. An actor by temperament, a comic poet by accident, he took a perfect measure of the public taste, and he knew his colleagues as he knew the pit and boxes. He could fit himself and them with parts nicely suited to the talent of each. The result is that his plays are no more than delicately poised machines, which run smoothly enough on the stage, but creak horribly in the study."(1) Mrs. Susannah Centlivre (1667?-1723), who "was content to achieve theatrical effectiveness with little hesitation as to methods,"(2) rivalled Cibber not in quality-- both had little in their dramas-- but in quantity. She was one of the most prolific dramatists of the era. Others who are comparatively well known to us are Richard Steele (1672-1729), George Farquhar (1678-1707, Sir John Vanbrugh (1666-1726), and Charles Shadwell (d. 1726).

Tragedies continued to be written, but with the exception of Nicholas Rowe (1674-1719), hardly any able writer of tragedy existed during this

1. CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, v. VIII, p. 200
2. ibid; v. X, p. 81

period. "Rowe may be regarded as the principal representative of tragedy in the 'age of Pope,' but his respectable work shows a fatal degeneration from the gorgeous 'tragedy' of the Elizabethans."(1) Rowe was easily the outstanding writer among the playwrights, and though his tragedies show the influence of the sentimentalism of the time, he, in his literary skill, belongs to an earlier age-- he combined the excellence of literary expression with the drama in an attempt to recapture the lost literary traditions of the drama. Of the other writers of tragedy, and they are only a scattering handful, little can be said. Ambrose Philips (1671-1749), Aaron Hill (1684-1749), John Oldmixon (1673-1742), and two women, Mrs. Trotter, and Mrs. Manley contributed tragedies to the early Augustan stage. Their efforts are of little consequence and it is best, perhaps, that they remain mere names in our thesis. They did not appeal to the audience of Queen Anne's day, but were tolerated to have "their brief hour upon the stage" and be heard no more.

Addison (1672-1719) is the author of the one play which has lived down to the present day, not on the stage or as literature, but as a matter of historical interest. His play CATO was hailed as the greatest tragedy written during the early Augustan period by the sycophantic critics who were conditioned by the political controversies of the time. Although it is called a tragedy, it is nothing more than a limpid imitation of a classical tragedy. Buchan called it an academic essay in Greek tragedy. Stephen had this to say about it, "CATO, as I think no one can deny, is a good specimen of Addison's style, but, except a few proverbial phrases, it is dead."(2) CATO was the most successful drama of the time-- it had a then

1. Dennis: op. cit., p. 104
2. Stephen: op. cit., p. 85

phenomenal run of twenty-nights-- but its success was due less to its intrinsic merit as a play than to the political significance which the Whigs and Tories attached to it.

Perhaps the greatest reason for the lack of good tragedies during this period was the popularity of Shakespeare. Another tragic playwright who was in great favor during this period was the Restoration dramatist, Thomas Otway (1651-1685), whose tragedies, THE ORPHAN and VENICE PRESERV'D, rivalled Shakespeare on the stage, more for the sentimentalism and the patriotism which the play-goers attached to them, than for their merit.

The popularity of Shakespeare can be best judged by the following facts from Allardyce Nicoll's HISTORY OF THE EARLY EIGHTEENTH CENTURY DRAMA. Of a total of 190 total performances at Drury Lane during the season, 1703-1704, there were 65 tragedies presented, and of this number, 20 were by Shakespeare. The following season, at the same theatre, there were 193 performances of which 28 were tragedies, and 20 of them were by Shakespeare. The season, 1708-1709, saw 13 tragedies of Shakespeare's presented out of a total of 38 in a theatre season of 181 total performances at Drury Lane.(1)

This period had a representation of women dramatists. Mrs. Centlivre has already been mentioned. However, a few more words concerning her plays would not be amiss. Her comedies did not parallel the sentimentalism of the time. Rather, her comedies approximated the moral laxity of the Restoration. In this she was not alone; Vanbrugh, Farquhar, and Charles Shadwell wrote comedies where the moral tone was almost negligible. If any was to be noted, it was purely a concession to the strait-laced reformers of the age, notably the Society for the Reformation of Manners. Shadwell,

1. Nicoll: op. cit., p. 56

in particular, is almost uncouthly immoral. Mrs. Centlivre was usually in the van, however, when ribaldry was paying dividends at the theatre. She delighted in intrigue and situation. If one were to judge by the number of plays written by the dramatists of this period, Mrs. Centlivre would easily lead all, including the prolific Cibber. One can with some degree of certainty gauge the tastes of the Augustan audience by the comedies written by Mrs. Centlivre.

Of the other women dramatists of the time, little of interest can be told. Mrs. Manley, Mrs. Trotter, and Mrs. Pix (who wrote comedies), made "up a triumvirate of lady wits who enjoyed a great deal of admiration of the namby-pamby critics, and the indifferences and sometimes the ridicule of those whom heaven had vouch-safed to endow with taste and judgement."(1)

The soppy, cloying sentimentalism of the day can be illustrated in a few lines from Ambrose Philips's (2) THE DISTREST MOTHER, an adaptation of Racine's ANDROMAQUE:

> "Andromaque--If in our author's lines,
> As in the great original she shines,
> Nothing but from barbarity she fears;
> Attend with silence, you'll applaud with tears."(3)

Although most of the dramas of the time did carry a moral (which usually came as an abrupt surprise at the end of the play), very few achieved the studied effect of Rowe in his JANE SHORE, a tragedy that drips with sentiment. The tenderness and the suffering of the heroine undoubtedly evoked

1. Robins: op. cit., p. 102
2. "His (Ambrose Philips's) odes to babes and children earned for him the sobriquet of "Namby-Pamby,' a term which has been incorporated into the English language to designate mawkish sentiment. Namby was the infantine pronunciation of Ambrose, and Pamby was formed by the first letters of Philips's surname and that reduplication of sound which is natural to lisping children." (Dennis: THE AGE OF POPE, p. 99)
3. Philips: THE DISTREST MOTHER, prologue

applause from a tear-bedewed audience. But the moral-- Rowe saved it for the very last speech in the play, in which Belmore, the wronged husband, looks up at the audience after having gazed with crushed despair at the body of his dead Jane Shore, and says:

> "Let those, who view this sad Exemple know,
> What Fate attends the broken Marriage Vow;
> And teach their Children, in succeeding Times,
> No common Vengeance waits upon their Crimes,
> When such severe Repentance could not save
> From Want, from Shame, and an untimely Grave."(1)

1. Rowe: JANE SHORE, v:

2.

The Morality of the Drama.

The moralization in the drama of the age turned the theatre into a school, where sentiments that touched the emotions of the spectators were mouthed by actors who tore "passion into threads" and ranted in a way to make the judicious grieve. Addison notes that the bombast of the actors of this period produced "such sentiments as proceed rather from a swelling than a greatness of mind."(1) And Addison had ample cause for his grievance; his punctilious classicism was offended by the open references to the immoral. "It is," he mourns, "one of the most unaccountable things in our age, that the lewdness of the theatres should be so much complained of, and so little redressed. It is to be hoped, that some time or other we may be at leisure to restrain the licenticusness of the theatre, and make it contribute its assistance to the advancement of morality and to the reformation of the age."(2)

The morality of his age was a curious one. The drama alone was a problem, but it was faced with problems of its own. The competition of the opera has been mentioned in an earlier chapter. There were, however, some other rival entertainments and amusements which appealed to the people. "There were three Bear-gardens in the time of Queen Anne, one in Hockley, Clerkenwell, one in Marybone Fields at the back of Soho Square, and one in Tuttle (Tothill) Fields, Westminster. This was a sport of long-standing popularity among Englishmen."(3)

Another curious insight into the morality of the London citizenry

1. Robins: op. cit., p. 89
2. ibid., p. 93
3. Irving: op. cit., p. 294

during the reign of Anne was a favorite public haunt which offered "entertainment" to its spectators the year round. "One of the features of London life in Gay's time which is apt to shock us with its blatant callousness, is the attitude of people, all the people apparently, toward the insane...All whose nervous organism was in any way abnormal were thrust into the horrors of Bedlam. And Bedlam was one of the sights of the city! It continued to be a favorite promenade until 1770, at which time the revenue was four hundred pounds a year 'from the indiscriminate admission of visitors.'"(1)

Still another favorite haunt of the populace of London, where no admission was charged, was Tyburn where, between 1701 and 1713, two hundred and forty-two persons were hanged.(2) "Nobody thought of the criminal law as a reforming agency. Punishment was mere vengeance, though the fear of the gallows was not found to deter the criminal classes from coining, or sheep-stealing, or highway robbery. Indeed war, and duels, and assassination and smallpox, and the courts of justice seem to have familiarized people's minds with the idea of death until they became almost callous, and almost indifferent."(3)

The social morality of the fashionable people of the time can be summed up in its attitude toward the people of the lowest classes, as Mrs. Centlivre expressly illustrates in THE BEAUX DUEL:

> "Toper-- I should think, Sir William, these honest People that wear no Swords, very harmless, because they carry no Instrument of Mischief about 'em.
>
> Sir William Mode-- Instruments! Their very Hands, their dirty Clothes,

1. Irving: op. cit., p. 296
2. Leadam: HISTORY OF ENGLAND (1702-1760), p. 502
3. Paul: op. cit., p. 302

are Instruments of Mischief."(1)

Steele also expresses this attitude in THE LYING LOVER. The scene is Newgate Prison:

"Storm-- Pray, sir, is that your footman?

Young Bookwit-- He is my friend, sir.

Storm-- Look you, sir, the only time to make use of a friend is in an extremity. Do you not think you could not hang him and save yourself?"(2)

During this era, lewdness and vice paraded under the cloak of oft-mentioned reformation. "The comedies of Cibber, Vanbrugh, Mrs. Centlivre ...and other playwrights of the first half of the century, were full of outspoken allusions to the sexual... The sentimental comedies did not in this respect differ notably from contemporary satiric ones; indeed Richard Steele himself confessed the seeming impossibility of writing plays without salaciousness. (SPECTATOR, No. 51)"(3) Addison agreed with Steele when he stated, "Impossible, no play will take, that is not adapted to the prevailing manners. But to flatter the age is not the way to reform it."(4) Cibber, of course, blamed the spectators. In his APOLOGY he refers to the vulgar taste of the audience when he adds, "In this Light, therefore, all the Abuses of the Stage, all the low, loose, or immoral Supplements to wit ...are so palpably owing to the deprav'd Taste of the Multitude."(5)

Swift, though he had little love for mankind in general, blamed the dramatists. He was the greatest opponent of sentimentalism and the dramatists who, according to him, had defiled the stage. "It is worth observing,"

1. Centlivre: THE BEAUX' DUEL, iv:1
2. Steele: THE LYING LOVER, iv:4
3. Bernbaum: THE DRAMA OF SENSIBILITY, p. 81
4. Robins: op. cit., p. 93
5. Cibber: op. cit., v. I, p. 80

he wrote in 1709, "the distributive justice of the authors, which is constantly applied to the punishment of virtue and the reward of vice; directly opposite to the rules of the best criticks, as well as to the practice of dramatick poets in all other ages and countries...I do not remember that our English poets ever suffered a criminal amour to succeed upon the stage until the reign of Charles II. Ever since that time the alderman is made a cuckold, the deluded virgin is debauched, and adultery and fornication are supposed to be committed behind the scenes as part of the action."(1)

Shadwell in his THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, a play which runs through four acts of the coarsest and the most lewd nature of any drama of the time, ends the play with a moral fifth act which reeks with sentimentalism and humaniterianism. Two "fallen sisters" are speaking to a group of sailors who miraculously have become "moral"--one knows not how-- and are promising that they will mend their lives:

> "Jiltup--...the strongest you can ask, or law can bind; since you have provided so handsomely for us; we are resolved to change our Course of Lives, and live honestly for the Future. What thousands of wretched Creatures, like ourselves, would willingly--
> The follies of their ill-spent Lives recall,
> Turn, and live honest, could they live at all.

To which her sister in sin, Jenny Private, adds:

> "Yes, Female Frailty first made them Sinners, but from Necessity they live and die so.
> To their dark Cells and midnight Revels led,
> Not from their Thirst of Man, but Hunger for his Bread."(2)

The playwrights of the time were not unconscious of the immorality of the stage. Many of them even referred to it. The audacious Mrs. Centlivre boldly referred to it in THE BEAUX' DUEL in a scene where Sir William Mode

1. Lecky: op. cit., p. 579 ff.
2. Shadwell: THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, v:2

exclaims heatedly to Careful:

> "Do you take my Breeding to have been at a Bear-Garden, Sir, or in Bedlam, to endanger my Life for your Daughter? No, let her go, I'd marry an Actress sooner, and have more Hopes of her Virtue."(1)

Although England may have been proud of the military prowess of its soldiers, they, if one is to judge by the allusions to them in the dramas of the time, were little to be proud of from a moral standpoint. Shadwell's example from THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY are interesting, but we can't condemn the entire army from them.

> "Leonora-- He's a satyrical ugly Fellow that writes Lampoons; I was sorry to see you return his Ogle, in a Week's Time, he'll swear he has been intriguing you.
>
> Victoria-- That certainly will secure my Reputation; for you and I know, what a Red Coat says of our Sex, goes for nothing."(2)

A little later in the same act, Captain Wildish asks of Willmot:

> "Wildish-- What was the Reason of your Coming into the Army, Friend?
>
> Willmot-- Why, Sir? Besides, having had a Bastard laid to me, I had committed some Roguery in the Country, was afraid of being hang'd and so listed my self for a Soldier,"(3)

The last act of this comedy shows two condemned criminals speaking to each other:

> "1 Criminal-- Well, Hanging to me is a strange thing, I'm like a Fish out of Water-- and don't know whether I should Repent of my Sins before I'm Condemned or after.
>
> 2 Criminal-- Ah, the sooner you begin the better, for you have a Woundy many to answer for, now thank my Stars, my Conscience is not much troubl'd, I have only the Common Army Sins, of Whoring, Drinking, Thieving, Murder, lie at my Door."(4)

Examples of this "morality" and sentiment are only too numerous in the

1. Centlivre: THE BEAUX' DUEL, iv:1
2. Shadwell: THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY, i:1
3. ibid.
4. ibid., v:1

plays of Queen Anne's time. We could include many more illustrations, but hardly deem it necessary. What, one may ask, does vice parading under the aegis of the theatre reveal of the age? Is the outspoken immorality in the dramas an index of the lax moral condition of London society? Do the plays themselves prove anything to that effect? Our answer cannot be given unequivocally in the affirmative as the theatre was not truly representative of all the classes nor the majority of the citizens of London. And yet, history records that "the two Houses of Convocation, in a representation to the Queen in 1711, dwelt strongly on the immorality of the drama. Swift placed its degraded condition among the foremost causes of corruption of the age, and it is remarkable that although English play-writers borrowed very largely from the French, the English stage was far inferior to that of France in decorum, modesty, and morality."(1) The evidence of history appears to uphold our belief that the drama is a fairly accurate and reliable source for a picture of the times.

Not all the drama of the early Augustan era was immoral. "Addison and Steele, who contributed in so many ways to turn the stream of fashion in the direction of morality, did something at least, to introduce French decorum into the English drama. Both of them wrote plays, which though of no great merit, had their hour of noisy popularity, and were at least scrupulously moral."(2) Steele's THE LYING LOVER, and Addison's CATO had a touch of moral sublimity.

Where sentiment was mired with lewdness in the dramas of the other writers of the era, Addison, as the following passage from a scene in CATO

1. Lecky: op. cit., pp. 538-539
2. ibid.

shows, did not nor would not stoop to the low level of the immoral "moralizers." In this scene, Marcia is bent over the dead body of Sempronius who is dressed in Juba's clothes. Marcia, thinking that the dead Sempronius is Juba, sobs:

"Marcia--...Oh, Juba, Juba!

Juba (aside)-- What means that voice? Did she not call Juba?

Marcia-- He's dead, and never knew how much I loved him!
Lucia, who knows but his poor, bleeding, heart
Amidst its agonies, remember Marcia,
And the last words he utter'd call'd me cruel!
Alas! he knew not, hapless youth, he knew not,
Marcia's whole soul was full of love and Juba!

Juba (aside)-- Where am I? Do I live? or am indeed
What Marcia thinks? All is Elysium round me!"

Juba then comes forward, and Marcia, surprised and delighted, blushes, admits her love, and the scene ends with Juba exulting:

"Let Caesar have the world, if Marcia's mine."(1)

One can just picture the scene: a moral play throughout, scrupulously free from wanton allusions, classically correct, and with a packed house of howling Whigs and Tories-- not to mention the upper gallery-- why, the audience nearly blew the roof off with their wild acclamation. However, the success of the play was due less to its lack of immorality or its propriety as a classically correct tragedy, rather than to the political fervor of the day.

As a mirror of London society, the drama did not only portray some aspects of the immorality of the time, it also served as a "school." The earnest crusade of Richard Steele against dueling found expression in his comedy THE LYING LOVER. In the following excerpt from the play, Young

1. Addison: CATO, iv:?

Bookwit and Latine are discussing Lovemore whom Young Bookwit thinks he killed in a duel:

"Latine-- Did you not expostulate before the action?

Young Bookwit-- He would have don't; but I, flushed with the thoughts of duelling, pressed on-- thus for the empty praise of fools, I'm solidly unhappy.

Latine-- You take it too deeply. Your honour was concerned.

Young Bookwit-- Honour! The horrid application of that sacred word to a revenge against friendship, law, and reason is a damned last shift of the damned envious foe of the human race. The routed fiend projected this, but since the expansive glorious law of Heaven came down-- Forgive."(1)

Elkanah Settle decries the vice of drunkenness. In an inter-scene from his THE CITY-RAMBLE, where the second act had portrayed a coarse, roistering group of drunkards, the Common-Councilman's wife asks her husband:

"Well, how do you like this crew of Madmen?

Common-Councilman-- Oh, well enough; Drunkenness is its own Looking-Glass. And the very Picture of Sin is half enough to convert the Sinner. I find no Fault in the Representation of that Vice upon the Stage."(2)

This play of Settle's was an earnest effort to justify the drama as a school for reforming society's faults and vices, which other dramatists held as a purpose in the prologues of their plays, but forgot the moment the first act began until remorse or a troubled conscience suddenly recalled their purpose in the final act.

Cibber and Mrs. Centlivre both wrote plays ostensibly to expose the folly of gambling. (Cibber, in this connection, did not practice what he preached-- but then he seldom did.) "There were gaming houses for those

1. Steele: THE LYING LOVER, v:1
2. Settle: THE CITY-RAMBLE, inter-act ii-iii

who liked them, and no attempt was made to check a vice which public lotteries under the sanction of the Legislature directly encouraged. The expenses of the war were provided by loans, taxes, and lotteries. But betting, though common enough, was in those days the pursuit of idlers rather than as it afterwards became, the relaxation of statesmen... As to shutting up those tables which existed, it would have had to be done by the army."(1) Oddly, Mrs. Centlivre's THE GAMESTER contains one of the finest pronunciamentos of any play which we were privileged to read. Valere, speaking to his servant, Hector, says:

> "...Where is the Immorality of Gaming-- Now I think there can be nothing more moral-- It unites Men of all Ranks, the Lord and the Peasant-- the Haughty Dutchess, and the City Dame-- the Marquis and the Footman, all without Distinction play together.
> And sure that life can ne'er offensive prove
> That teacheth Men such peaceful Ways of Love."(2)

1. Paul: op. cit., p. 270
2. Centlivre: THE GAMESTER, iii:1

VI.

THE SOCIAL ASPECTS OF DRAMATIC SATIRE

1.

The Drama and Society.

If one of the characteristics of the early Augustan drama was moralization and emotional uplift through the sentimentalism of such dramatists as Cibber, Rowe, and Steele, the approach of this reformistic spirit was, to say the least, quaint. "The business of comedy," Vanbrugh wrote in vindication of THE RELAPSE after the attack against the immorality of the stage by Jeremy Collier, "is to show people what they should do by representing them upon the stage doing what they should not do...What I have done is in general a discouragement of vice and folly. I am sure I intended it, and I hope I have performed it."(1) Vanbrugh, for example, hardly can be accused of writing sentimental drama; the drama to him was a weapon for lashing the society of his time. His actual purpose, contrary to what he had written in defence of THE RELAPSE, was stated in the prologue to THE PROVOKED WIFE, which, though not of this period (it was written in 1697), appropriately asserts his position in the drama of the day:

> "'Tis the intent and business of the stage
> To copy out the follies of the age,
> To hold to every man a faithful glass
> And show him of what species he's an ass."(2)

Other playwrights followed Vanbrugh, and social satire became an expressive core in the dramas of this period. Cibber, in the prologue to THE CARELESS HUSBAND, states the position of the new comedy:

> "Of all the Vices of the Age,

1. Bernbaum: op. cit., p. 9
2. ibid.

And Shoals of Fools expos'd upon the Stage,
How few are lash'd that call for Satire's Rage!
What can you think to see our Plays so full
Of madmen, of Coxcombs, and the drivelling Fool?
Of Cits, of Sharpers, Rakes, and roaring Bullies
Of Cheats, of Cuckolds, Aldermen and Cullies?
Wou'd not one swear, 'twere taken for a Rule,
That Satire's Rod in the Dramatick School,
Was only meant for the incorrigible Fool?
As if too Vice and Folly were confin'd
To the vile Scum of human Kind,
Creatures a Muse should scorn: such abject Trash
Deserves not Satire's but a Hangman's Lash.
...For Satire ne'er was meant to make wild Monsters tame.
No, Sirs--
We'd rather think the Persons fit for Plays,
Are those whose Birth and Education says,
They've every Help that should improve Mankind
Yet still lives Slaves to a vile tainted Mind;
...For Follies sprout like Weeds, highest in Fruitful Ground."(1)

Cibber's prologue is an interesting commentary of the regard the "better" people had for the "scum of human Kind." However, true to his purpose, Cibber's comedies became pictures of society in none too favorable a light. Was Cibber sincere in his expressed purpose to reform and moralize? We rather doubt this. The writers of the period, regardless of what form their literary effusions took, wrote what there was a market for. And society, then as now, found a great deal of satisfaction in seeing itself lampooned. The writers fed this satisfaction by catering to the tastes and humor of its reading public and, of course, the play-goers.

The lower classes were seldom satirized; they were, rather, bitterly and scurrilously assailed, as you may gather from Cibber's prologue. It was the complacent group, the fashionable people, and the rising middle class who bore the brunt of the satirical jibes of the dramatists of this period. One is apt to ask why was it that the drama, which was supported

1. Cibber: THE CARELESS HUSBAND, prologue

(if at all) by this class, should laugh at it? Several reasons immediately present themselves: first, this class was, as a rule, not as intellectually alert as the aristocracy or the literary group; secondly, and by far the greater reason, the middle class egotistically felt that it had achieved social status and distinction when it saw itself--the "fashionable" society of the age--distorted and derided on the stage.

The drama of this period is filled with barbs directed at the people of "quality" who came to the theatre for amusement, entertainment, and because it was the proper thing to do. The middle class of the Queen Anne period had a propensity for aping the aristocracy. An example from the works of Mrs. Centlivre follows:

> "Alpiew-- The Park is pleasantest in the Morning, the Air is very sweet.
>
> Lady Reveller-- I don't think so; the sweetness of the Park is at Eleven, when the Beau-Monde make their Tour there; 'tis an unpolish'd Curiosity to walk when only Birds can see me."(1)

In another comedy, Mrs. Centlivre's Marplot says:

> "A Monkey! Dear Madam, let me see it; I can tame a Monkey as the best of them all. Oh how I love the little Miniatures of Man."(2)

Steele, in his THE TENDER HUSBAND, satirizes the middle class and, in particular, the reading of romances by its ladies. "The rest of the piece describes the love affairs of Biddy Tipkin, a banker's niece, acted by the charming Mrs. Oldfield--whose head has been so completely filled with the romances which she has read that she begs to be called Parthenissa."(3) An example of the romance-reading influence is given to us by Steele.

"Captain Clerimont-- The pleasantest Part of the History will be after

1. Centlivre: THE BASSET-TABLE, i:1
2. Centlivre: THE BUSYBODY, iv:5
3. Aitken: op. cit., p. xxv

Marriage.

Bridget Tipkin-- No! I never yet read of a Knight that enter'd Tilt or Tournament after Wedlock--'tis not to be expected-- When the Husband begins, the Hero ends; the generous Passion for Adventures is consum'd in Nuptial Torch: I don't know how it is, but Mars and Hymen never hit it."(1)

The growing prosperity of this class brought in its wake many practices hitherto associated only with the higher class. Divorce, for example, was quite rare, and still is among the people in the lower social brackets. However, to the middle class of Queen Anne's time, divorce was no longer a "luxury" to be indulged in only by the people of quality. The little heated debate between Farquhar's Mirabel and his Oriana is illustrative of this:

"Mirabel-- I'll keep as many Mistresses as I have Coach-horses.

Oriana-- And I'll keep as many Gallants as you have Grooms.

Mirabel-- But, sweet Madam, there is such a thing as Divorce.

Oriana-- But, sweet Sir, there is such a thing as Alimony, so divorce on, and spare not."(2)

The distaste that the playwrights had for those of the "fashionable" who attended the drama's rival for the patronage of the London theatre-goers --the opera--is voiced by Shadwell in his THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY:

"Victoria-- Pray, Sir, what new entertaining Musick have you in England?

Major Young Fox-- As to new Songs, Madam, there is an Abundance of them, that have very little Wit in them, set to most excellent Italian Tunes: Every Body that goes to the Opera, beats Time, tho' not one in a Hundred knows when to do it, and their understanding of the Language, makes 'em ignorant of the Business; so, between the Tune, and the Words, they go away as unedified, as a Libertine from a Presbyterian meeting."(3)

Steele's THE TENDER HUSBAND was a deliberate piece of raillery at the

1. Steele: THE TENDER HUSBAND, iv:4
2. Farquhar: THE INCONSTANT, iv:4
3. Shadwell: THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY, ii:1

middle class. His prologue is a masterpiece of audacity.

> "...But now our British Theatre can boast
> Drolls of all Kinds, a vast unthinking Host!
> Fruitful of Folly and Vice, it shows
> Cuckolds, and Cits, and Bawds, and Pimps, Beaus:
> Rough country Squires are found in every Shire,
> Of every fashion gentle Fops appear;
> And Punks of different Characters we meet,
> As frequent on the Stage as in the Pit."(1)

The match-made marriages so common during this period received some attention by writers and dramatists. "Marriages of a more lawful kind were generally conducted on business principles. Young women were expected to accept the husband selected for them by their parents or guardians, and the main object considered was to gain a good settlement."(2) We find a reference to these marriages in Cibber's THE DOUBLE GALLANT:

> "Lady Sadlife-- But, consider, Sir, what a perpetual Discord must a forced Marriage produce.
>
> Sir Wilful-- Discord! pshaw, pshaw! One Man makes as good a Husband as another. A month's Marriage will set all to rights, I warrant you. You know the old Saying, lying together makes Pigs love."(3)

Ever since the attack against the immorality of the stage by Collier, the hostility between the reformers and the dramatists had increased. "Oldmixon, in his HISTORY, accurately astimated the effect of Collier's attack. 'Neither the actors nor the poets,' he wrote, 'much regarded it. There was a little upon them at first, but it wore off, and this attempt to reform them was the sport of what wit they had in their plays, prologues, and epilogues.'"(4) Whenever possible, the dramatists of the time never failed to heap scorn and abuse on the self-elected guardians of the public morals.

1. Steele: THE TENDER HUSBAND, prologue
2. Dennis: op. cit., p. 12
3. Cibber: THE DOUBLE GALLANT, v:2
4. CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE, v. VIII, p. 191 ff.

Rowe refers to them in his epilogue to TAMERLANE:

> "...Time was, when busy Faces were a Jest,
> When Wit and Pleasure were in most request;
> When cheerful Theatres with Crowds were grac'd:
> But those good Days of Poetry are past;
> Now sour Reformers, in an empty Pit,
> With Table-Books, as at a Lecture, sit,
> To take Notes and give Evidence 'gainst Wit..."(1)

In an age of accusation and counter-accusation, Rowe, to judge by his epilogue, blames the reformers for the empty theatres. Vanbrugh is not as gentle as Rowe in his reference to the reform society:

> "You dread reformers of an impious Age,
> You awful cat-a-nine tails to the stage,
> This once be just, and in our cause engage.
> To gain your favour, we your rules obey,
> And treat you with a moral piece to-day;
> So moral, we're afraid 'twill damn the play."(2)

Mrs. Centlivre burlesques the Society for the Reformation of Manners in THE STOLEN HEIRESS, when Don Sancho goes through a series of ludicrous contortions:

> "Don Sancho--Evermore, Sir, when you see a Man wear his Hat thus (pulling it on both Sides), he's a Projector, a Projector, Sir, or a Member of the Society for the Reformation of Manners."(3)

This understandable antagonism between the dramatists and the reformers went on throughout the period, providing pleasure, laughs, and cat-calls at the mere mention of the word reform.

The critics who pass judgment on the effectiveness or the merits of a play were as popular with the dramatists of the Augustan age as they are with the playwrights of today.

> "Our Author fears the Criticks of the Stage,
> Who, like Barbarians, spare nor Sex, not Age;

1. Rowe: TAMERLANE, epilogue
2. Vanbrugh: THE FALSE FRIEND, prologue
3. Centlivre: THE STOLEN HEIRESS, ii:1

She trembles at those Censors in the Pit,
Who think good Nature shews a Want of Wit:
Such Malice, O! What Muse can undergo it?
To save themselves, they always damn the Poet.
Our Author flies from such a partial Jury,
As wary Lovers from the Nymphs of Drury."(1)

Society, the reformers, and the critics were not the only groups to be satirized on the stage; the professions came in for their share. In a scene from A GOTHAM ELECTION, the book-sellers of London are exposed to some good-natured ridicule by Mrs. Centlivre.

"Mallet--"...My third son is a Bookseller, a notable Fellow, he lives in London; he is a Kind of Wit too, they say, and makes Verses: Then he has an admirable Knack at quacking Titles. Perhaps you may know what that is, Sir; but for my Part, I do not, I confess, understand it; but they tell me he gets an old good for nothing Book, he claps a new Title to it, and sells of the whole Impression in a Week."(2)

The profession of law did not escape the swinging lash of satire from the stage. Charles Johnson, in THE SUCCESSFUL PYRATE, one of the most sparkling and witty comedies of the period, has Boreal say:

"Lawyer's Tongues have made more Beggars than Luxury or Dice. Nature produces nothing that is immortal but a Chancery-Suit. How many noble Estates have I known ground to Death between the Millstones of the Law, while an old Dunce in a Carf pores thro' his false Eyes,to discover whether the good or bad Success of the poor Subject's Cause depends upon the doubtful Tittle of an i or a deficient to an l."(3)

1. Centlivre: THE WONDER, prologue
2. Centlivre: A GOTHAM ELECTION, i:2
3. Johnson: THE SUCCESSFUL PYRATE, ii:1

2.

The Religious Faiths and the Drama.

The church in the London of Queen Anne was relegated to a minor though not inconsequential position. The people still attended services, but the fervor which had convulsed England in the seventeenth century was gone. The upper middle class in the majority, as well as the greater portion of the aristocracy, were adherents to the Established Church. Attendance, then, of many of the people of quality and fashion was due less, it seems, to conviction than to habit. And, of course, there was the Occasional Conformity Act of 1711. "The law itself was calculated to excite contempt for the most solemn of religious services. 'I was early,' Swift writes to Stella, 'with the Secretary (Bolingbroke), but he was gone to his devotions and to receive the sacrament. Several rakes did the same. It was not for piety, but for employment, according to Act of Parliament.'"(1) Nevertheless, in no drama that we were privileged to read, have we noticed any obvious satire directed at the Church. The other religious denominations, on the other hand, came in for more than an ordinary amount of satire.

> "In the good old days of ghostly ignorance,
> How did cathedrals rise and zeal advance!
> The merry monks said orisons at ease,
> Large were their meals, and light their penances.
> Pardons for sins were purchased with estates,
> And none but rogues in rags died reprobates.
> And now the pious pageantry's no more
> And stages thrive as churches did before."(2)

While the fashionable society was being caricatured by the dramatists of the day, the non-conformist denominations to the Church of England were likewise used as butts for dramatic satire--at times bordering on the

1. Dennis: op. cit., p. 9
2. Lecky: op. cit., p. 539

vicious--with the hearty approbation of the frivolous habitues of the drama. Quite naturally, the Catholics bore the brunt of "satire's rod," because patriotic and "liberty-loving" England was fighting despotic and Catholic France. In the following brief scene from THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM, Farquhar gives expression to the patriotism of the English and their hatred of Catholic France:

> "Foigard-- Save you, Master Scrub!
>
> Scrub-- Sir, I won't be saved your Way--I hate a Priest, I abhor the French, and I defy the Devil. Sir, I am a bold Briton, and will spill the last Drop of my Blood to keep out Popery and Slavery."(1)

Two more passages from the same play illustrate Farquhar's apparent animus toward the Roman Catholics, and, of course, his appreciation of the attitude of his audience:

> "Boniface--O Sir, he's a Priest, and Chaplain to the Frech Officers in Town.
>
> Aimwell--Is he a Frenchman?
>
> Boniface--Yes, Sir, born at Brussels.
>
> Gibbet (a rogue and a highwayman)--A Frenchman, and a Priest! I won't be seen in his Company, Sir; I have a Value for my Reputation, Sir."(2)

The following is from another scene in the same play. Archer and Scrub are discussing Gipsey, Scrub's heart-beat:

> "Archer--And this Priest, I'm afraid, has converted the Affections of your Gipsey.
>
> Scrub--Converted! aye, and perverted, my dear Friend, for I'm afraid he has made her a Whore and a Papist."(3)

Nor was Vanbrugh more felicitous in his regard toward the Catholics:

> "Brass--...She has e'en determined to turn Papist, and bid the World

1. Farquhar: THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM, iv:1
2. ibid., iii:2
3. ibid., iii:3

adieu for life.

Gripe--O terrible! a Papist?"(1)

And our ubiquitous Mrs. Centlivre adds her views on the Roman Catholics in THE WONDER, where Colonel Briton says to Frederick:

> "...Ah, Frederick, your Priests are wicked Rogues; they immure Beauty for their own proper use, and show it only to the Laity to create Desires; and inflame Accompts, that they may purchase Pardons at a dearer Rate."(2)

In a GOTHAM ELECTION, Mrs. Centlivre combines anti-Catholicism with politics and patriotism:

> "Lucy-- I do believe the Design you speak of; a Nunnery! Heaven! I shudder at the thought.
>
> Friendly-- Ay; where swarms of Nuns and Priests daily curse your Country, by Bell, Book, and Candle, where you must pray for its Destruction too.
>
> Lucy-- No! Had I been trapan'd to that cursed Place, tho' but a poor defenceless Maid alone; yet I'd have shown 'em a true British Soul, and dy'd before I wou'd have chang'd my Faith."(3)

Steele ably sowed some insidious propaganda against the Italian opera singers by an appeal to the religious prejudices of his audience in the epilogue to THE TENDER HUSBAND:

> Britons, who constant War, with factious Rage,
> For Liberty against each other wage, (4)
> From foreign Insults save this English Stage.
> No more th' Italians squalling Tribe admit,
> In tongues unknown; 'tis Popery in Wit.
> The Songs (their selves confess) from Rome they bring,
> And 'tis high Mass, for aught you know, they sing."(5)

The self-denial and gloomy restraint typical of the Methodists of the

1. Vanbrugh: THE CONFEDERACY, iv:1
2. Centlivre: THE WONDER, i:1
3. Centlivre: A GOTHAM ELECTION, i:6
4. Steele refers to the political differences concerning the War which preceded the summer elections of 1705, when the pro-War Whigs succeeded in power.
5. Steele: THE TENDER HUSBAND, epilogue

day is caught by Farquhar in THE RECRUITING OFFICER:

"Captain Plume--What ails thee, Man? no Inundation nor Earthquakes in Wales, I hope! Has your Father rose from the Dead, and resumed his Estate?

Worthy--No.

Plume--Then you are married, surely?

Worthy--No.

Plume--Then you are mad, or turning Methodist?"(1)

Nor do the Quakers escape the witty jests of the drama. In the brief scene that follows, from Mrs. Centlivre's THE BEAUX' DUEL, Toper and Careful are discussing Mrs. Plotwell, a woman whose reputation is a mite shady, although Careful does not know it. Mrs. Plotwell is disguised as a Quaker.

"Careful--I protest, I like her exceedingly (referring to Mrs. Plotwell), she seems cut out on purpose for me; her plain Way of Living will improve my Estate, and her Morals will hamper my Daughter. I like a religious Woman.

Toper--You can't be better match'd, if she has not too much; Yesterday I carried her to wait on a Relation of ours that has a Parrot, and whilst I was discoursing about some private Business, she converted the Bird, and now it talks of nothing but the Light of the Spirit, and the Inward Man."(2)

The Presbyterians are pricked at in a comedy of Cibber's, THE DOUBLE GALLANT, in a scene which shows one of the means by which the fashionable "beau monde" amused itself:

"Atall--...Now, what I beg of thee, dear Clerimont, is this: Mrs. Juno, as I told you, having done me the Honour of a civil Visit or two at my Lodgings, I must needs borrow thine to entertain Mrs. Venus in; for if the rival Goddesses should meet and clash, you know there would be the Devil to do between them.

Clerimont--Well, Sir, my Lodgings are at your Service:--but you must be very private and very sober, I can tell you; for my Landlady's a

1. Farquhar: THE RECRUITING OFFICER, i:1
2. Centlivre: THE BEAUX' DUEL, iii:4

> Presbyterian; if she suspect your Design; you're blown up, depend upon't."(1)

The Jews as a religious group were not severely taken to task by the drama. However, the "Shylock" tradition had become firmly established in the minds of the people of England, and whatever references we have to the Jews in the dramas of this period, are concerned with their tight business methods. As a class, or a racial group, the Jews were ill-tolerated by the English, and the dramas of the time are filled with examples of the low esteem in which the Jews were held. Mrs. Centlivre appears to be the most frequent "jibe-caster" at the Jews. In THE BUSYBODY, Charles Gripe says to Sir Francis:

> "Nay, then I pity you; for the Jew, my Father, will no more part with her and Thirty-Thousand Pounds than he would acquire to keep me from starving."(2)

And again, in the same play, Marplot speaks to Miranda:

> "Yes, Madam! and you like a cruel hard-hearted Jew value it no more."(3)

Still another example of Mrs. Centlivre's anti-Semitism (if one cares to call it that) is to be noted in THE GAMESTER. Valere, his father Sir Thomas, and Valere's servant, Hector, are together:

> "Valere--Money, Sir, is an Ingredient absolutely necessary in a Lover: a Hundred Guineas would accomplish my Design.
>
> Hector (aside)--As I guess'd.
>
> Sir Thomas--At your old Trick again-- No, no; I have been too often cozen'd with your fair Promises.
>
> Valere--Try me this Time; lend me but Fifty.
>
> Sir Thomas--No.

1. Cibber: THE DOUBLE GALLANT, ii:1
2. Centlivre: THE BUSYBODY, i:1
3. ibid., iii:5

Valere--Twenty.

Sir Thomas--No.

Valere--Ten.

Sir Thomas--No.

Hector--Hard-hearted Jew."(1)

The dramatic satire was not confined to the faults and foibles of society nor to barbed and caustic jibes at religious denominations other than the Church of England. In the sphere of politics, the drama of Queen Anne's day had a wide and broad field, and did not fail to avail itself of the opportunity to contribute its share to the political turmoils of the time. But we shall come to that presently.

1. Centlivre: THE GAMESTER, i:1

VII.

THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE DRAMA

1.

The Drama and Politics.

The period, 1702 to 1715, was a time when the relationship between the literary and political classes was closer than it had ever been before. It was a characteristic of the time. The days of royal or noble patronage to letters had passed, and the writers had to adapt themselves to the new order. "Grub Street" had come to stay. The more Fortunate of the literary profession received recognition and political sinecures for services to either the Whig or Tory factions. One idealist--we have forgotten his name--stated that the Age of Anne was a golden age for writers; that literary merit received recognition and reward by state patronage. The best intellects in the literary profession were being subsidized by the political parties, and as a result political pamphleteering beckoned to writers. Patronage by the aristocracy still existed, but this aid to the hard-pressed men of letters was merely an evaporating trickle. Literary skill was no longer (if it ever had been) a means to wealth. However, with the growing prosperity of the nation, more money was being spent for books; the reading public was growing.

The drama suffered more severely than any other form of literature because it also lost the patronage of the court, and also because of the disfavor it engendered during the Restoration when it became an innocuous echo of the profligacy of Charles II's court. The attack against its immoral and profane nature did but sink it deeper into distaste with the vast majority of London's citizenry.

However, the drama made a half-hearted bid for the subsidy of the

court. It failed because Anne did not care for it. The success of the writers as malleable tools in the hands of the political factions prompted the dramatists to vie for subsidies and recognition from the Whigs or the Tories. Their efforts were unavailing; the dramatists, as a rule, lacked the intellectual depth of those writers who turned to the pamphlet or the journal.

Nevertheless, the drama of the period, living in an age when London and England were convulsed with growing pains, has left many interesting glances into the history of the period which, hitherto, have been all but ignored by scholars.

The theme of pride in England, in Queen Anne, and in the political heritage of Englishmen is ever present in the dedications, prologues, and epilogues of the dramas of the age. Queen Anne, for example, is eulogized by William Taverner:

> "A vertuous Queen with her bright glorious Court,
> Shall give the Muse her Theme, and shall the Muse support.
> A Queen will every Heart and Tongue inspire,
> And vertuous Lays Tune every generous Lyre.
> The Pride of Nature is the British Fair;
> We aim at Angels when we copy Her."(1)

Unfortunately for the hopes of Taverner, Anne was not disposed to support the Muse, although she did not disparage the efforts of the Muse to pick whatever threads of inspiration it could from her or her "glorious" court.

Perhaps the best illustration of the identification of English patriotism with Queen Anne is to be found in the following humorous scene from Farquhar's THE RECRUITING OFFICER:

1. Taverner: THE FAITHFUL BRIDE OF GRANADA, epilogue

(Enter Sergeant Kite, Thomas Appletree, and Costar Pearmain--all drunk.)

Sergeant Kite--Hey, Boys! Thus we soldiers live! drink, sing, dance and play,-- 'tis impossible to tell how we live; we are all Princes,--why--why, you are a King,-- you an Emperor, and I'm a Prince;-- now an't we?

Thomas--No, Sergeant, I'll be no Emperor.

Kite--No?

Thomas--I'll be a Justice of the Peace.

Kite--A Justice of the Peace, Man?

Thomas--Ay, wouns, will I.

Kite--Done; you are a Justice of the Peace, and you (to Costar) are a King. And I'm a Duke, a rum Duke, an't I?

Costar--Ay, but I'll be no King.

Kite--What then?

Costar--I'll ba a Queen.

Kite--A Queen?

Costar--Aye, of England; that's greater than any King of them all.

Kite--Bravely said, Faith! Huzza for the Queen..."(1)

When in January 1707, the Act of Union, uniting Scotland and England was ratified, Farquhar, sick with an illness which was soon to culminate in his death, wrote a laudatory prologue in his excellent comedy, THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM(2), which opened at the Haymarket in March, 1707.

1. Farquhar: THE RECRUITING OFFICER, ii:3
2. "The latter was written under peculiar circumstances that contrasted in a pathetic way with the triumphant reception accorded it. The comedy was the product of six miserable weeks of worry and poverty, during which Farquhar lay dying of a lingering illness, wondering how the members of his family were to be fed, and seeing no happier prospect before them than starvation. These were the circumstances under which one of the most felicitous plays of the last century was conceived and developed, the author even then predicting that he would not live to see the end of its run." (Robins: op. cit., p. 99)

"But now, when Faction sleeps and Sloth is fled,
And all our Youth in active Fields are bred;
When thro' Great Britain's fair extensive Round,
The Trumps of Fame and the Notes of Union sound;
When Anne's Scepter points the Laws their Course,
And her example gives her Precepts Force:
There scarce is Room for Satire: All our Lays
Must be our Songs of Triumph or of Praise..."(1)

In an earlier age, Farquhar would have been amply repaid for his encomiums and patriotism. As it was, he received nothing but the admiration of his fellows and the appreciation of scholars at a much later date. Shortly after the presentation of his play, Farquhar died penniless, leaving a wife and several children to the benevolent charity of the friends he had left behind.

An example of the British pride in themselves and their institutions is gleaned from Mrs. Centlivre:

"Colonel Fainwell-Pardon me, Sir Philip, this Island has two things superior to all nations under the Sun.

Sir Philip--Ay! what are they?

Fainwell--The Ladies, and the Laws."(2)

In another drama, Mrs. Centlivre continues this strain--this time from a pro-Whig view-point:

"Friendly--May I not hope some Share in your Esteem?

Lucy--No, whining, Love, I'm not to be caught that Way;-- This Day I am of Age, and I chuse you for my Guardian,-- and if you can bring me unquestionable Proofs of your being an honest Man;-- that you have always been a Lover of your Country;-- a true Asserter of her Laws and Privileges; and that you'd spend every Shilling of my Portion, in Defence of Liberty and Property, against Perkin (3) and the Pope, I'll sign, seal, and deliver myself into your Hands the next Hour."(4)

1. Farquhar: THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM, prologue
2. Centlivre: A BOLD STROKE FOR A WIFE, ii:1
3. The son of James II, who is known to us as the "Old Pretender."
4. Centlivre: A GOTHAM ELECTION, i:6

Shadwell voices the pride of Englishmen in their nation when his Brigadier Bloodmore, in THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY, says:

> "...The honest Englishman makes Friendship with all Mankind, never supports the Villian of his Country, and always stands by the honest man, be he Turk, Jew, or Infidel."(1)

The Dutch, however, did not agree with Shadwell. They were quite sure that the Englishmen failed to support them when, quite unknown to the Dutch, the English were negotiating a peace with France. Yet, Shadwell's words sounded well to English ears.

One of the results attending the War of the Spanish Succession was the expanding commercial intercourse between the Netherlands and England. We had previously mentioned how the export of English broadcloth rose because of the demands of the Netherlands market. Reciprocally, England imported lace from the Netherlands-- the Mechlin quality being perhaps the best known. There was a duty on this commodity, yet the customs reports did not show a marked rise in the import of lace, although much of it was to be seen in England. After each successive campaign, the soldiers returning to England brought reams of it. Farquhar thought that the practice merited a comment from the stage. Melinda, speaking to her maid, Lucy, in THE RECRUITING OFFICER, casually remarks:

> "Ay, Flanders Lace is a constant Present from the Officers to their Women. They every Year bring over a Cargo of Lace, to cheat the (Queen) of (her) duty, and (her) subjects of their Honesty."(2)

One of the abuses in the government, especially in the Admiralty during this period, was the selling of commissions. Shadwell brings this matter to our attention in THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL:

1. Shadwell: THE HUMOURS OF THE ARMY, i:2
2. Farquhar: THE RECRUITING OFFICER, iii:2

"Rovewell--What is your Conversation? (asking some Beaus whose commissions were bought)

Mizen--We imitate the Ladies as near as we can, and therefore scandalize every Body: we laugh at the ridiculous Management of the Navy-Board; pry into the Rogueries of the Victualling Office; and tell the names of Clerks who were ten Years ago barefoot, and are now Twenty-Thousand Pound men."(1)

and again in the same comedy:

"Lieutenant Easy--If the Colonels of our Corps don't hinder this rascally Imposition upon us (referring to his ship commander who had worked his way up from cabin-boy), nobody will buy Commissions of them."(2)

Another grave political abuse in England during this period was the practice of buying a seat in Parliament. This abuse was not characteristic of this period alone. In fact, political corruption of this nature, and the rotten borough chicanery lasted into the nineteenth century. Farquhar mentions this unconcernedly in THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM. Evidently it was a common thing in his day.

"Boniface--(calling his daughter) Cherry! Daughter Cherry!

Cherry--(enters) D'ye call, Father?

Boniface--Aye, Child, you must lay by this Box for the Gentleman; 'tis full of Money.

Cherry--Money! all that Money! why, sure, Father, the Gentleman comes to be chosen Parliament-Man. How is he?"(3)

Mrs. Centlivre pours some good-natured yet biting derision at the "office-buyers" in her A COTHAM ELECTION:

"Friendly--...Well, Landlord, and how will Elections go with you in Gotham?
Scoredouble--Here has been such roasting of Oxen, Such Veasting, and such Caballing, as you ne're saw the like! Here's one Squire

1. Shadwell: THE FAIR QUAKER OF DEAL, i:1
2. ibid., ii:1
3. Farquhar: THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM, i:1

> Tickup, a Londoner, I think puts up for one;--he's over Head and Ears in Debt, they say, and so has a Mind to get above the Law and pay no Body.
>
> Friendly--That's one Way, indeed, to serve himself; but he that has not Honesty enough to pay his own Debts, may easily be brought to give up the Debts of the Nation."(1)

The bitter political jousting of the Whigs and Tories seemed to reach the apex in 1709. This was the year in which Dr. Henry Satcheverell gave oracular vehemence to the sermon which insured the inclusion of his name in textbooks of English history for students to trip over at examination time. Satcheverell was not popular, but his sermon was. Mrs. Centlivre had considered him of sufficient importance some time before he catapulted into a political issue. In the epilogue to THE BUSYBODY, we find this reference to him:

> "...One busy Don ill-tim'd high Tenets preaches,
> Another yearly shows himself in Speeches;
> Some Sniv'ling Cits would have a Peace for Spite
> To starve those Warriors who so bravely fight;..."(2)

One can plainly see where the political sympathies of Mrs. Centlivre lay. During this time, the Whigs were in office, and the growing opposition to the long war which was becoming increasingly costly, was led by strong Tories. Satcheverell, Tory and High Churchman, would have perhaps passed unnoticed but for the intensity of the political struggle between the Whigs and the Tories. His sermon, preached on November 5, 1709, at St. Paul's, lashed the Whig administration, inveighed against the tolerance to the Dissenters, and exhorted his listeners to rise to the defense of the Church. The Ministry considered his sermon seditious and impeached him. His trial was a spectacle which drew great throngs to Westminster.

1. Centlivre: A GOTHAM ELECTION, i:1
2. Centlivre: THE BUSYBODY, epilogue

After the trial that lasted for three weeks, Satcheverell was found guilty. His sentence was very light, but its mitigation was of no avail to Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer, who realized too late that the impeachment of Satcheverell had been an error. Shortly thereafter the Whig Ministry was dismissed and the Tories cam back in power.

The trial of Satcheverell, and the steps leading to it provided the drama with fertile material. One of the most interesting passages concerning the tempest Satcheverell raised is to be observed in the excellent comedy by Charles Johnson, THE SUCCESSFUL PYRATE:

> "Piracquo--Sedition is on Foot, my Boy; the Fruit is just ready to gather, there's a new Model of government up in every Shop.
>
> DeSale--I am glad to hear it, Piracquo-- 'tis difficult indeed to breed Faction in a Country, where there is no Religion for Pretence."(1)

How did the drama of Augustan London react to the vaster drama being played by the warring nations on the battlefields of Europe? The plays of the time are filled with allusions to the War of the Spanish Succession. Cibber, in the epilogue to SHE WOU'D AND SHE WOU'D NOT, expresses the exulting pride of the English in the military and naval forces of the nation.

> "But now a joyful Motive bids us speak;
> For while our Arms return with Conquest home,
> While Children prattle Vigo (2) and the Doom,
> Is't fit the Mouth of all mankind, the Stage, be dumb?
> While the proud Spaniard read our Annals o'er,
> And on the Leaves in Lazy Safety pore,
> Essex and Raleigh thunder on their Shor;
> Again their Donships start and mend their Speed,
> With the same Fear of their Forefathers Dead.
> While Amadis de Gaul (3) laments in vain,
> And wishes his young Quixote (4) out of Spain:

1. Johnson: THE SUCCESSFUL PYRATE, iii:1
2. A great naval battle on October 8%, 1702, off the northwest coast of Spain in which the English fleet under Rooke defeated the Spanish.
3. The reference is to Louis XIV of France.
4. Philip V, King of Spain and grandson of Louis XIV.

> While foreign Forts are but beheld and seiz'd,
> While English Hearts tumultously are pleas'd,
> Shall we, whose sole Subsistence purely flows
> From Minds in Joy or undisturb'd Repose,
> Shall we behold each Face with Pleasure glow,
> Unthankful to the Arms that made it so?"(1)

In THE CARELESS HUSBAND, Cibber refers to Louis XIV and his disregard for the Partition Treaties, a perfidy in the eyes of all patriotic Englishmen:

> "Detty Modish—Don't you hear people say, the King of France owes most of his Conquests to the breaking of his word."(2)

At the beginning of the War, little love was held by the English for the Dutch, and vice versa. The Anglo-Dutch wars of the Cromwellian and the Charles II eras were still fresh in the minds of the people of both countries. At this time, however, they were allies with a common enemy. The disrespect and scorn felt by the English for their Dutch allies is expressed by Farquhar in THE INCONSTANT:

> "Mirabel (speaking to Duretete)— A Dutch woman's too compact; nay everything among them is so; a Dutch man is thick, a Dutch woman is squat, a Dutch horse is round; a Dutch dog is short, a Dutch ship is broad-bottomed; and, in short, one would swear the whole product of the Country were cast in the same Mold with their Cheeses."(3)

This contemptuous attitude toward the Dutch did not last too long, although if the Duke of Marlborough had widely publicized the obstructionist tactics of the Dutch deputies during his campaign in the low countries, Farquhar, it is safe to assume, would have been a bit more sharp.

The glory of Blenheim was celebrated in song, story, and the drama throughout the year following Marborough's great victory. The Duke was

1. Cibber: SHE WOU'D AND SHE WOU'D NOT, epilogue
2. Cibber: THE CARELESS HUSBAND, iii:1
3. Farquhar: THE INCONSTANT, i:2

at the height of his popularity. Steele in THE TENDER HUSBAND refers to Marlborough's smashing victory in a scene where Captain Clerimont says to Pounce:

> "That's true--but the General makes such Haste to finish the War that we Red Coats may be soon out of fashion."(1)

Again in the same play, Bridget Tipkin voices the sincere admiration of Steele for Marlborough--the Duke was the hero of Steele's heart--when she says to Clerimont:

> "I shall never forget your General--He has put all my ancient Heroes out of countenance; he has pulled down Cyrus and Alexander, as much as Louis le Grand."(2)

Farquhar's epilogue in THE RECRUITING OFFICER has the best reference, by far, to the victorious arms of England. It is, with due humility on out part, a "gem of purest ray serene" in the extravagant tones of its proud patriotism.

> "Beat the Grenadier's March--raw, raw, raw.--Gentlemen, this Piece of Music, called an Overture to Battle, was composed by a famous Italian master, and was performed with wonderful success at the great operas of Vigo, Schellenbergh (3), and Blenheim (4), it came off with the applause of all Europe, excepting France: The French found it too rough for their delicatesse."(5)

The complacence of the English in themselves, and their pride in the consciousness of English greatness which was assured after the war, is expressed by Mrs. Centlivre in THE WONDER:

1. Steele: THE TENDER HUSBAND, i:1
2. ibid.
3. The citadel guarding and defending Donauworth which Marlborough successfully stormed and captured on July 2, 1704
4. This battle, fought on August 13, 1704, immortalized Marlborough when he ably led and directed the troops of England and the Alliance in a disastrous rout of the French army under Marshall Tallard.
5. Farquhar: THE RECRUITING OFFICER, epilogue

"Frederick--My Lord, the English are by nature, what the ancient Romans were by Discipline, courageous, bold, hardy, and in love with Liberty. Liberty is the Idol of the English whose banner all the Nation enlists; give but the word for Liberty, and straight more armed Legions would appear than France and Philip keep in constant pay."(1)

1. Centlivre: THE WONDER, i:1

2.

Cato.

The drama of the early Augustan age, apart from its contribution to the historical development of the English stage, has left one play that remains identified with the age of Anne, while the enormous amount of all the other dramas of the period have become forgotten in the passage of years. Now only an interested scholar pores through musty archives seeking more knowledge of the drama of that time, its literary quality, or its significance to the history of the age.

The one play which has remained out of the mass of dramas which were written and produced during this time is Addison's CATO.

CATO is not a representative drama of the early Augustan stage; it is representative only of Addison. Its success and consequent niche in history is due less to its literary merit (although there is a fine quality to its blank verse), rather than to the significance which was attached to it by the political parties of the time. As a drama, it was a political event. Cibber, referring to it in his APOLOGY, had this to say about it, "When the Tragedy of Cato was first acted (Drury Lane, April, 14, 1713), let us call to mind the noble Spirit of Patriotism which the Play infus'd into the Breasts of a free People that crowded to it; with what effecting Force was that most elevated of Human Virtues recommended? Even the false Pretenders to it felt an unwilling Conviction, and made it a Point of Honour to be foremost in their Approbation; and this, too, at a time when the fermented Nation had their different Views of Government. Yet the sublime Sentiments of Liberty in that venerable Character rais'd in every sensible Hearer such conscious Admiration, such compell'd Assent to the Conduct of

suffering Virtue, as even demanded two almost irreconcitiable Parties to embrace and join in equal Applause to it."(1) To which Pope added "Amen" when he wrote concerning the unanimity of the parties at the play:

> "Envy itself is dumb, in wonder lost,
> And factions strive who shall applaud him most."

Pope was not too sincere in his praise of the drama. It was dull, full of platitudes and epigrams that had little point from a literary critic's viewpoint. "Addison has proved that he could draw a life-like character in his representation of Sir Roger de Coverley, but the dramatis personae, who act a part, or are supposed to act one, in Cato, are mere dummies, made to express fine sentiments. There is no flesh and blood in them, and owing to the dramatist's regard for unity of place, the play is full of absurdities. Yet Cato was received with immense applause. It was regarded from a political aspect, and both Whig and Tory strove to turn the drama to party account. 'The humorous and violent claps of the Whig party,' Pope writes, 'on the one side of the theatre, were echoed back by the Tories on the other; while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head.'"(2) However, Pope wrote the prologue to CATO, and as the theme of the play provided him with ample scope for his literary gymnastics, it was only quite natural that almost each line of his prologue was seized upon by a full theatre of partisan Tories and Whigs for any allusions to the political tempestuousity of the day. The Whigs soared into dizzying heights during the prologue which, among other things, mentioned points dear to the Whigs--amid the hisses of the Tories. One, of course, was the

1. Cibber: op. cit., v. II, p. 26
2. Dennis: op. cit., p. 129

reference to the Italian opera. And all true Whigs were bitterly opposed to the opera which they had invariably denounced as Popish and French-- of all things! "England for the English" was their concept of patriotism. The Tories, meanwhile, had sat through the prologue and jeered. They were not one whit less English than the Whigs. "The ideal of the country party, which ruled the roost from 1710 to 1714, was that good old England should eat English beef, drink English ale, and live on English corn."(1) Their turn came when the play began. "Although," writes Cibber, "Cato seems plainly written upon what are called Whig principles, yet the Torys of that time had Sense enough not to take it as the least Reflection upon their Administration; but on the contrary, they seem'd to brandish and vaunt their Approbation of every Sentiment in favour of Liberty, which, by a publick Act of their Generosity, was carried so high, that one Day, while the Play was acting, they collected fifty Guineas in the Boxes (2), and made a Present of them to Booth, with this compliment--For his honest Opposition to a perpetual Dictator (3), and his dying so bravely in the Cause of Liberty."(4)

To our dispassionate view, we think that the greater entertainment

1. Paul: op. cit., p. 266
2. "After a fortnight of this entertainment, a Whig Lord wrote to his private friends recording of his conversation with the Tory Lord Chancellor's son: 'I asked him how he liked our play. "Your play! my Lord, 'tis ours," says he; "at least you will allow Cato to belong to us, by reason Mr. Booth is one of us." Very good, quoth I, take him in God's name: you purchased him at the rate of fifty-four guineas.'" (Trevelyan: ENGLAND UNDER QUEEN ANNE, v. III, pp. 252-3
3. The "Dictator" referred to was the Duke of Marlborough, who had demanded the Captain-Generalship for life from Queen Anne to insure that high office to be above party bickerings. This was refused; the people had not forgotten the example of Oliver Cromwell.
4. Cibber: op. cit., v. II, p. 130

was to be noted not on the stage as Cato mouthed declamatory reams of verse, but rather the puerile antics of the partisan spectators who, not in an amiable mood as Cibber states, but in boisterous contention filled the theatre for twenty successive nights--a record "run" for the period.

The success of CATO, the, is to be viewed from a political standpoint. "The party that had won the war (Whigs) and the party that had dictated the peace (Tories) were both there in force to do honour to the bard. The tragedy was in the fashion of the time and was acclaimed as the greatest of Addison's works: to posterity it seems one of his feeblest, in spite of a few passages of real dignity not unworthy of the man who had written 'The spacious firmament on high.'"(1)

1. Trevelyan: op. cit., v. III, p. 251

VIII.

CONCLUSION

The study of the history of England, and particularly a period that is so well known to scholars, through the medium of the drama has provided many an interesting light into the social morality of the people of that age. The study of history on a broad and general basis may be likened to a tour along a wide, quaint avenue. Now and then, one may glimpse an interesting little lane that leads one off this wide avenue and carries one to an old antique shop or garden. In our case, it was a theatre. We found our little theatre in Queen Anne's London.

A not too quaint idea occurred to us that perhaps we could be able to view an age in England's glorious history, which has long appealed to us, by careful attendance upon the drama of that day. We have been pleasantly surprised.

The drama during the reign of Anne, though not all-inclusive of all the phases and aspects of a society, has, at least, a comparatively reliable picture of certain aspects that are fragmentary at best. For example, we have made absolutely no mention of that very important aspect of all societies in all ages--education. In a few of the dramas which we were privileged to read, there were some allusions to education, but all were of an uncomplimentary nature, not to education itself, but to the pedantry of the times. Cibber, in one of his plays, refers to a teacher as "an ignorant, Canting, Hypocritical Pedant."(1) Scholars were the butts of good-natured jests, as the following excerpt from one of Steele's plays reveals:

> "Victoria----...Oh! and there's another thing--a scholar (speaking to Penelope about Bookwit) makes the best husband in the world.

1. Cibber: INJUR'D LOVE (Nicoll: op. cit., p. 186)

Penelope--Because they are the most knowing?

Victoria--No, because they are the least knowing."(1)

Another aspect of society that is of major concern to all ages and all peoples--health--usually finds the dramatist of the early Augustan period referring to the physician as a rascal or knave. The profession of medicine has come a long way since Queen Anne's day. Vanbrugh reveals something of the medical practices of the time:

"Toledo--Let me see;--a Dollar you say? But suppose I'm wounded?

Lopez--Why, you shall be put to no extraordinary Charge upon that: I have been prentice to a Barber, and will be your Surgeon myself."(2)

Evidently the curative quality of "bleeding" a patient was still highly regarded. Another allusion by the same playwright is to be noted in his comedy, THE CONFEDERACY:

"Brass (to Clarissa)--Madam, you see Master's a little --- touched, that's all. Twenty Ounces of Blood let loose, would set all right again."(3)

Interesting as many of the phases of the social life in London in the reign of Queen Anne are to us, we could not of necessity include more than we already have. And even so, we feel that little has been told.

The outstanding fact which we have gathered in our study of this period is the apparently low moral standard of the fashionable society. Drama upon drama is filled with allusions to the sexual; John Gay, in his first full play which was presented during this period, THE WIFE OF BATH, dips into the past literature of England, and portrays Chaucer in a comedy that is almost coarse in its implications of lewdness. We do not know whether the society of this age was offended at the audacity of Gay, but the fact

1. Steele: THE LYING LOVER, ii:1
2. Vanbrugh: THE MISTAKE, v:1
3. Vanbrugh: THE CONFEDERACY, v:2

in the dramatic history of this period is that Gay's play was a failure. However, to imagine that the tastes of the audience were insulted by the allusions to the immoral is to take an overly-optimistic view of the theatre-goers of the time. We have been only too well told of the vulgar tastes of the Augustan spectators. We read Gay's comedy and found it no less effective than most of Cibber's. What, then, but the supposition that the early Augustan audience disliked seeing one of its greatest names in the glorious heritage of its literature desecrated, can explain the abysmal failure of THE WIFE OF BATH? We are inclined to take a more kindly view of London's fashionable society because of our suspicion that they rejected Gay's play for the reason mentioned.

The shocking immorality of the drama did not continue into the next phase of the Augustan period. We find evidences that the latter years of Queen Anne's reign were marked by a less receptive attitude in the playgoers to drama that tried to pass vice off as wit. It may well be that the success of Addison with his CATO had much to do with cooling the public taste. "The furious diatribe of Collier was not half so effective in promoting virtue, which certainly needed promotion in 1711 and 1712, as Addison's quiet scorn of every thing base, vulgar and profane. He never reached, nor attempted to reach the lower orders. He scarcely realized their existence, and probably thought that the clergy must deal with them. His aim was to make goodness and piety modish, to turn the laugh against the other side."(1) However, as our studies do not extend into the years following the death of Anne, we cannot be dogmatic as to when the bad taste in the drama became a bad taste to the audience. We do know that

1. Paul: op. cit., p. 199

the following two or three decades after CATO had taken the town by storm, the domestic tragedy with its touching humanitarian appeal featured the drama of that period. Try and find humanitarianism in a comedy of Mrs. Centlivre's or Colley Cibber's.

Real drama on the high plane which had brought English letters to the heights of literature vanished during this age. Rowe valiantly attempted to carry on the literary traditions of the English stage, but his was a losing struggle. In January 1703, Rowe's THE FAIR PENITENT was presented at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre with a cast that included the greatest names on the English stage of that time. Betterton, whose name is still revered among scholars of the drama, played the part of Horatio, Mrs. Barry played Calista, while the dashing Powell was Lothario, a name that is now part of our language. At the same time, Thomas Baker's comedy, TUNBRIDGE WALKS, was presented at the rival theatre on Drury Lane. Baker's comedy was one of the most salacious in the early years of Anne's reign. And yet Rowe's tragedy, in spite of his great literary craft, or the great actors in the cast, found itself running a poor second to the smutty comedy at Drury Lane in drawing the attendance of play-goers.

The tragedies of this period, excepting Rowe's, were insipidly weak. The greatest tragedies on the London stage during this time were those of Shakespeare; and even he began to squirm his hallowed bones in his grave at Stratford-on-Avon when the mediocre playwright, Cibber, began to adapt and change his plays. We have previously mentioned something about the writers of tragedy during this era; one fact, however, was not mentioned, and that was the practice of the playwrights in making adaptations from earlier and successful writers. "Vanbrugh was in the habit, a habit which did not die with him, of adapting plays from the French, and his most successful piece,

The Confederacy, was derived from Dancourt's Bourgeioses a la Mode."(1) Ambrose Philips, Aaron Hill, and the women dramatists lacked facile minds but not facile pens in adapting dramas from the French or Spanish. Cibber was the prime offender. His adaptations of Shakespeare were poor, but more than that, his adaptations of the tragedies of the continental writers were horrid. To us at this time, Cibber's tragedies are melodramatic farces. One of his "tragedies," XIMENA, ends happily! The father of Carlos, killed in an earlier scene, comes forward at the end of the fifth act alive, with the result that in this "tragedy," no one was killed; the villian promised to marry the girl he had wronged, and the hero won his loved one! This is an example of an adaptation by one of the successful playwrights of the time. It is not to be wondered that the spectators flocked to the theatres and dramas that gave them honest smut.

The close connection between politics and literature during this period has been spoken of several times in our thesis. Concerning this connection, Elton writes, "The historic scene on the first night of Cato (1713) would be enough to show, what can be overwhelmingly proved, how this propensity implied the strictest alliance of letters to party. Congreve, whose real work was over before 1700, was almost the only leading writer to whom Cato could be dedicated with a show of neutrality. The literary life could scarcely be lived at all away from London, from politics, from theological dispute, and hardly any great author is to be found working in solitude. Every writer of the time shows how the city atmosphere told upon literature itself, determining its poetical forms, envenoming its spirit, yet giving it masculinity and finished pugilistic science; how expression became

1. Paul: op. cit., p. 187

prosaic and prose perfect; and how this balance of forces, denying to letters some of their primary inspiration but perfecting them within a certain scope, delicately poised, for about a quarter of a century, and was then, by elements both political and spiritual, disturbed."(1) Dennis emphasizes the influence of London itself. "In the so-called 'Augustan age' this influence would have been felt more strongly than in ours, since the range of men of letters was generally restricted to what was called the Town, they wrote for the critics in coffee-houses, for the noblemen from whom they expected patronage, and for the political party they were pledged to support."(2) The drama for manifold reasons was disregarded in the generous allocation of money, or for good positions for the dramatists under the government. Addison, Steele, and Rowe (3) held some good positions under the government at diverse times. However, it was less their dramas than their other literary works which secured for them political sinecures. From the evidence in the very nature of the plays themselves, the dispensers of political patronage were not exactly fools! The drama had to shift for itself; it introduced a lowering moral tone with each successive performance, keeping pace and sometimes outrunning the dissoluteness of the habitues of the theatres. Nevertheless, the political factor was present, if only to gather the crumbs which the political pamphleteers dropped. Ward says that during this time "elements of political and religious partisanship (in the drama) exercised no important influence upon the progress of English comedy as a literary species, though as a matter of fact, their admission...(rendered) its mirth coarser and (infused) an extraneous

1. Elton: THE AUGUSTAN AGES, p. 290
2. Dennis: op. cit., p. 10
3. Rowe was for three years the under-secretary to the Commissioner of the Peace during this period. (Dennis: op. cit., p. 6)

element of cruelty of purpose."(1) In general, the drama was but one facet which reflected the literary expression of the time. "Speaking broadly, and allowing for exceptions, the literary merits of the Queen Anne time are due less to invention, fancy, and wit, to a genius for satire exhibited in verse and prose, to a regard for correctness of form and to the sensitive avoidance of extremes. The poets of the period are for the most part without enthusiasm, without passion, and without the 'fine madness' which, as Drayton says, should possess a poet's brain."(2)

We have noted that in our study of the religious satire of the period through the drama, the political elements were not, as a rule, always present or apparent except in the case of the Roman Catholics. The most interesting feature, disregarding the literary, political, and religious aspects was the audience. As a study in the mob morality of the period, we have considered the bourgeois gallery at the theatre, but it was by no means representative of the lowest classes. The significance of the social aspects of the Augustan drama is to be measured by the audiences of the era as much as by the plays themselves. This was a factor of secondary importance when we first began our study, but it proved to be of major value.

In conclusion, this thesis, attempting to correlate the history and literature of the period from one direct source, has been by nature an experiment. We hope that it will some day develop into a fuller and more complete treatment of the history of Queen Anne's period from its humble origin as an interesting idea.

1. Ward: op. cit., v. III, p. 505
2. Dennis: op. cit., p. 5

DIGEST OF THE THESIS

The drama during the reign of Anne was a natural outgrowth of the Restoration drama. It had, however, inherited the animosity of the more upright elements in the society of London who had come to regard it as merely the plaything of the court. The lax morality of the court during the reign of Charles II had been reflected in the dramas of his time. When Charles II died, the drama continued on its dissolute ways, pleasing a small and witty audience which had been a servile appendage to the court of the Restoration. After the accession of William III, a different tone developed in the plays; the playwrights had noticeably stooped down to the class which was openly hostile to them at first, but which, with the growing prosperity of England, was finding itself sought after because of its economic power. Gradually a change became manifest in the drama; it ceased portraying sublime and exalted characters or exhibiting buffoons for dramatic wit and ridicule, and began to woo the patronage of this class--the middle class of London. The attendant coarseness of the drama was not only due to its being heir to the dissoluteness of the Restoration, but also to the lower intellectual mentality of its new spectators.

Consequently, the immorality in the plays of the period offended many and angered more. Discontent and disapprobation grew until it resulted in a violent blast against the immorality of the stage by Jeremy Collier. The drama after Collier's attack did not reform; it made a gesture toward reformation. This gesture resulted in the growth of sentimentalism. Sentimentalism made an instant appeal to its newer auditors, and under the guise of teaching morality by exposing the vices of society, the playwrights paraded more immorality to the people who demanded still more.

Satire paralleled sentimentalism in the drama of this era. It was a whip that was unsparingly used on religion, politics, the city itself, and --strangely enough--the spectators who were, by and large, of the middle class. The stage became a mirror upon which society trod, gazing down every now and then to catch a humorous and sometimes vicious reflection of itself, distorted yet frankly amusing.

The plays of the time brought attention to the faults of society, the unsavory conditions of certain sections of the city, and the moral degradation of the age. This attention, focused as it was at the bad rather than the good elements of London's social life, had a deteriorating effect upon its spectators, rather than a reformistic one. But the drama of the time was not concerned with social betterment; it wanted to amuse, entertain, and profit.

This age found the drama undergoing many trying misfortunes. There were too few play-goers to support more than one theatre adequately, and, to add to its tribulations, the opera made its appearance at this time to plague the regular drama as a rival for the patronage of the public. Somehow, with various novel and bizarre introductions to the stage by the promoters, the drama managed to exist, continually pandering to the low tastes of its spectators to keep itself out of debt--which seemingly was a hopeless venture.

The stage was intensely English and patriotic during this period when England was fighting France. The plays were jingoistic, parading the might and the glory of English arms, of English heroes, and of the supremacy of England and its institutions over the rest of the world. The prologues and epilogues of the plays were nothing more, in most instances, than

exultant paeans of praise. It was only after the Peace of Utrecht (1713) that the English drama became a toy for the political parties, and that was short-lived when the Hanoverian dynasty ascended the throne of England. CATO, the outstanding political drama of the period, has remained the outstanding drama of this era.

In general, the drama of the early Augustan period was isolated from the main stream of English letters. The best minds in the literary profession had turned their efforts to other channels of literary effort. Swift, Defoe, Pope, Prior, and a host of others turned to prose or poetry. The journal and the political pamphlet were the outstanding literary forms of the age, and the writers of talent used them to express themselves, the tenets of the political factions which had subsidized their intellects, and only in rare instances did they venture into the drama. The outstanding journalists who enjoyed some degree of success in the drama were Addison and Steele.

The most significant fact of the age was that the thought of the public of this time was conditioned by the writers of the journals who met in coffee-houses, mingled with all ranks of society, gained and spread ideas while the drama ranted innocuously, having lost its once great favor with the public of England. The drama became no longer an integral part of the literature of England--henceforth, it became but a fragmentary contributor to the vaster concept of English history and civilization through the medium of literature.

APPENDIX

The Social Aspects of the Augustan Drama, 1702-1715

I. List of Dramas,

Playwrights,

Date and Place of Performance.

II. Bibliography:

History,

Literature,

General Works on the Drama,

Special Works in the Drama.

I.

LIST OF DRAMAS

Dramatist	Play	Type	Performed at:	Date
Addison, Joseph (1672-1719)				
	Cato	Tragedy	Drury Lane	Apr. 1713
Centlivre, Mrs. Susannah (1667?-1723)				
	The Beaux' Duel	Comedy	Lincoln's Inn Fds.	June 1702
	" Stolen Heiress	"	" " "	Dec. 1702
	" Gamester	"	" " "	Jan. 1705
	" Basset-Table	"	Drury Lane	Nov. 1705
	" Busybody	"	" "	May 1709
	Marplot in Lisbon	"	" "	Dec. 1710
	The Perplex'd Lovers	"	" "	Jan. 1711
	" Wonder	"	" "	Apr. 1714
	A Gotham Election	Farce		1715
	A Bold Stroke for a Wife	Comedy		Feb. 1717
Cibber, Colley (1671-1757)				
	She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not	Comedy	Drury Lane	Nov. 1702
	The Careless Husband	"	" "	Dec. 1704
	Perollo and Izadorra	Tragedy	" "	Dec. 1705
	The Comical Lovers	Comedy	Haymarket	Feb. 1707
	" Lady's Last Stake	"	"	Dec. 1707
	" Double Gallant	"	"	Nov. 1711
	Ximena	Tragedy	Drury Lane	Nov. 1712
Farquhar, George (1678-1707)				
	The Inconstant	Comedy	Drury Lane	Feb. 1703
	" Recruiting Officer	"	" "	Apr. 1706
	" Beaux' Stratagem	"	Haymarket	Mar. 1707
Gay, John (1685-1732)				
	The Wife of Bath	Comedy	Drury Lane	May 1713
Johnson, Charles (fl. 1715)				
	The Successful Pyrate	Comedy	Drury Lane	Nov. 1712
Norris, Henry (fl. 1710)				
	The Royal Merchant	Comedy	Drury Lane	June 1705

Dramatist	Play	Type	Performed at:	Date
Philips, Ambrose (1671-1749)				
	The Distrest Mother	Tragedy	Drury Lane	Mar. 1711
Rowe, Nicholas (1674-1719)				
	Tamerlane	Tragedy	Lincoln's Inn Fds.	Dec. 1702
	The Fair Penitent	"	" " "	Jan. 1703
	" Tragedy of Jane Shore	"	Drury Lane	Feb. 1713
Settle, Elkanah (1648-1723)				
	The City-Ramble	Comedy	Drury Lane	Aug. 1711
Shadwell, Charles (d. 1726)				
	The Fair Quaker of Deal	Comedy	Drury Lane	Feb. 1709
	" Humours of the Army	"	" "	Jan. 1712
Steele, Richard (1672-1729)				
	The Lying Lover	Comedy	Drury Lane	Dec. 1703
	" Tender Husband	"	" "	Apr. 1705
Taverner, William (fl. 1710)				
	The Faithful Bride of Granada	Comedy	Drury Lane	May 1704
	" Maid the Mistress	"	" "	June 1708
Trotter, Mrs. Catherine (fl. 1706)				
	Revolution in Sweden	Tragedy	Lincoln's Inn Fds.	Feb. 1706
Vanbrugh, Sir John (1666-1726)				
	The False Friend	Comedy	Haymarket	Feb. 1702
	" Country-house	Farce	Drury Lane	June 1705
	" Confederacy	Comedy	Haymarket	Oct. 1705
	" Mistake	"	"	Dec. 1705
Walker, William (fl. 1705)				
	Marry or Do Worse	Comedy	Lincoln's Inn Fds.	Nov. 1703

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