THE
SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY PAPERS

FROM "THE SPECTATOR"

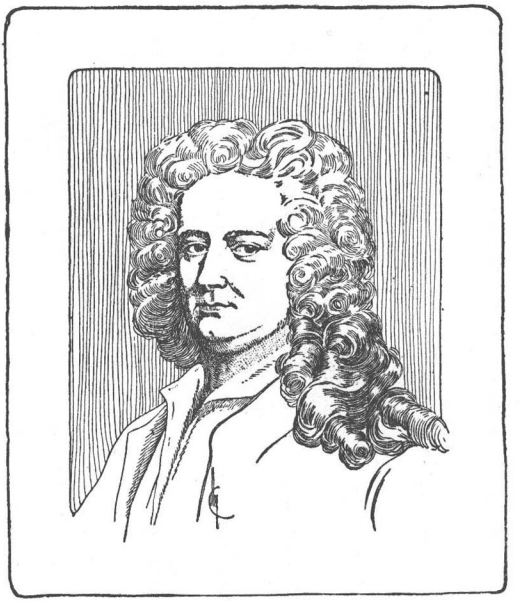
EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY

MARY E. LITCHFIELD

GINN AND COMPANY
BOSTON · NEW YORK · CHICAGO · LONDON
ATLANTA · DALLAS · COLUMBUS · SAN FRANCISCO

323.7

The Athenæum Press
GINN AND COMPANY · PROPRIETORS · BOSTON · U.S.A.



JOSEPH ADDISON

From an old print

PREFACE.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY is not a hero of romance; he is, to all intents and purposes, an actual country gentleman who lived in England in the days of Queen Anne; and the *Introduction* and *Notes* in this volume are intended to help the reader go back in imagination to the early years of the eighteenth century. The *Spectator* has been considered in its relation to contemporary movements in literature and politics, since it is in a peculiar sense the product of the age in which it was written. It is hoped that the student may find in the English of the essays, with its few old forms, an easy and pleasant introduction to the more difficult language of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The text as revised by the authors has been followed, except in the matter of spelling and punctuation. Everything relating to Sir Roger that might properly be included has been given, even to brief notices in articles dealing with outside matters. These chance allusions help to make the hero a living character. Henry Morley's edition of the *Spectator* and the two recent editions by George A. Aitken and by G. Gregory Smith have been frequently consulted. Many of the other books used are referred to in the *Notes* and the *Suggestions*. The *Notes* afford necessary information

in regard to persons, events, and customs. Occasionally old or peculiar forms in language are commented on, but in general a note is inserted only in cases where the meaning is not clear. The translations of the mottoes have been furnished in most instances by Miss Mary H. Buckingham, and valuable help in the way of criticism has been given by others.

BOSTON, December, 1898.

INTRODUCTION.

INTERESTING as they are in themselves, the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers* must as a literary production be regarded as a part of the *Spectator*, the periodical in which they first appeared; so that in trying to form a just estimate of these essays, we must ask what the *Spectator* was, who were its authors, and under what conditions, political and social, it was produced.

I. POLITICAL CONDITIONS.

The first number of the *Spectator* was given to the world in March, 1711; but before considering the period in which this date occurs — the reign of Queen Anne — it may be well to review hastily the chief political events of the fifty years preceding. These events, whatever their special character, serve but to mark the stages in one great movement — the struggle between the two political systems, government by constitutional methods, and government by an absolute monarch.

Fifty years takes us back to the Restoration in England, and to the early portion of the reign of Louis XIV. in France. For the next quarter of a century and more, the English people were jealously guarding their liberties against the encroachments of their sovereign. Charles II. attempted to govern according to his own will, without the interference

of Parliament; and after his death in 1685, his brother, James II., pursued a policy still more despotic.

Meanwhile, on the Continent, the prospect was dark for the cause of constitutional government. France under her able ruler was becoming so powerful that she seemed likely to make herself mistress of a large part of Europe. Her aggressions finally aroused the neighboring states: alliances were formed against her, and a champion was found in the person of William Henry of Nassau, Prince of Orange. As leader of the allied powers the prince waged a long and on the whole a successful struggle against Louis XIV., the representative of absolute monarchy.

Before James II. succeeded to the throne of England, William of Orange had married his daughter Mary; and after James had been reigning for three years, his subjects, goaded beyond endurance by his acts of tyranny, asked William to come over from Holland with an army and defend their liberties.

The people as a whole realized the necessity of this step; they knew that the measure had been resorted to only because all other expedients had failed; and yet, the sentiment of loyalty to the legitimate sovereign was so deeply rooted in their hearts, that comparatively few of them were genuinely glad when the prince and his wife were crowned as William III. and Mary. As time went on, they wearied of the long wars which their sovereign waged against Louis, and felt that he was wasting the substance of England for the benefit of foreign powers. Consequently the average Englishman, especially if he were a Tory, breathed a sigh of relief when in 1702 William died, and Anne, an English princess and a firm upholder of the national church, ascended the throne.

With the accession of Anne came the supremacy of Marlborough, and the continuation under his leadership of the

struggle against France; but before the *Spectator* had finished its first year, the great general and the able but unscrupulous statesman was deprived of all his offices, and the control of English affairs passed into other hands.

II. SOCIAL CONDITIONS RESULTING FROM POLITICAL EVENTS.

It was not strange that persons living in the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century failed to detect in these movements going on about them the forces that were making for freedom and civilization. The Revolution of 1688 was the result of currents and counter currents of popular feeling. A great system of constitutional government was being worked out under William and Mary, and their successor, Anne; but in general the process took the form of a scramble for power on the part of politicians, few of whom seemed actuated by noble and disinterested motives.

Strife, animosity, bitter party feeling, — these characterized the period in which the *Spectator* saw the light. Repressive legislation no longer checked free discussion, and free discussion meant active intellectual life, the exercise of the critical faculties, and in many instances, slander and scurrilous abuse. The Tories attacked the Whigs; the adherents of the Established Church, the Dissenters; the moderate Tories, the Nonjurors; and all united against the Catholics.

The Tories believed in the divine right of kings and in the supremacy of the Established Church; the Whigs stood in the main for the rights of the people, and advocated toleration toward Dissenters. The country gentry were, almost to a man, Tories; the city men, — merchants, tradesmen, and professional men, — were Whigs; the great nobles were

divided between the two parties. The clergy of the Established Church belonged as a matter of course to the Tory party, which was often called the Church party, while the Dissenters and their ministers were Whigs. The Church of England man had not yet forgotten the hateful years of Puritan supremacy, and the Dissenter recalled with bitterness the acts of retaliation and the return to license that characterized the reigns of the later Stuarts. Nothing but the sense of a common peril could overcome these long-cherished animosities; and as Anne's reign was drawing to a close, all who believed in government by constitutional methods saw danger in the fact that a Stuart might again rule over England — for the legitimate heir to the throne was James Stuart, the son of James II.

Religious and political divisions meant, of course, social divisions; and it is necessary to lay particular stress upon this state of affairs, because the important work accomplished by the writers of the *Spectator* was owing in great part to these peculiar conditions.

III. THE WRITERS OF THE SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY PAPERS.

Nothing better illustrates the life of the literary men of Queen Anne's reign than a brief sketch of the writers of the *Sir Roger de Coverley Papers:* Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and Eustace Budgell.[1]

ADDISON.

Few English writers have been so fortunate in their natural gifts and in the circumstances and events of their lives as Joseph Addison. He was born in his father's rectory at

[1] Tickell has not been included, since his paper relating to Sir Roger (No. 410) has been necessarily omitted.

Milston, near Amesbury, Wilts, on the first day of May, 1672. Steele, who as a schoolmate of Addison's was a welcome guest in the quiet home, says of the rector (then Dean of Lichfield): "His method was to make it the only pretension in his children to his favor, to be kind to each other. It was an unspeakable pleasure to visit or sit at a meal in that family." The two boys first met at the Charterhouse School in London, and there began the friendship that was to lead in later years to such important results.

At the age of fifteen Addison entered Oxford, where, beside his degree, he gained a probationary fellowship, and afterwards a fellowship. His Latin poems and his knowledge of Latin literature gave him a reputation for classical learning that extended to the literary circles of London, and brought him into connection with Dryden, an old man, but still the acknowledged leader of the literary set.

While connected with the university he attracted the attention of certain political leaders. A poetical address entitled *A Poem to His Majesty*, composed in 1695, and a Latin poem on the Peace of Ryswick, written two years later, gave evidence that the author might be useful to the party then in power — the Whigs. In order that he might fit himself for diplomatic employments by foreign travel, Charles Montague — afterwards Earl of Halifax — obtained for him, through Somers, the Lord-keeper, a pension of £300 a year; and in 1699 he left England, not to return until 1703. Steele affirms that his friend, when a young man, had some idea of entering the Church, and that his change of purpose was due to the influence of Montague.

Addison, on account of his keen powers of observation and his genuine interest in human nature, was well fitted to benefit by foreign travel. During his stay on the continent he visited most of the countries of Western Europe, an intelligent observer of social and political institutions and a

devoted student of literature. His intellect was quickened by intercourse with able and cultivated men, among whom may probably be included the famous French writers, Malebranche and Boileau.

Unfortunately the Whigs were out of office when he returned to England, and for a year he was given no position. However, his personal charm and his literary abilities were constantly gaining him new friends, and it was at this time that he became a member of the famous Kit-Cat Club, to which all the great Whigs belonged. Steele was also a member of the club, and his intimacy with his former companion was now renewed.

Addison's active political life began in 1706, when, as a reward for his poem, *The Campaign*, written to celebrate the battle of Blenheim, he was made an undersecretary of state. When he entered upon his new duties he was thirty-four years old, and from this time until a few weeks before his death, he was an influence for good in the affairs of the nation.

On losing his first position he was appointed, in 1708, secretary to Wharton, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and was also made keeper of the records in Birmingham Tower, Dublin. In the meantime he had accompanied Halifax on a complimentary mission, to invest the Elector of Hanover with the order of the Garter. At the age of thirty-six he entered Parliament, and remained a member during the rest of his life, though on account of diffidence he made no speeches. Swift remarked, when speaking of his reëlection in 1710, — "If he had a mind to be chosen king, he would hardly be refused."

With the fall of the Whigs in 1710, Addison lost his secretaryship. In a letter to a friend, written in 1711, he said that within twelve months he had lost a place of £2000 a year and an estate in the Indies of £14,000. The accession of George I., which restored the Whigs to power, brought

him again into political life. Several positions of trust were given him; and finally, in 1717, — a year after his marriage with the Countess of Warwick, — he was made one of the secretaries of state. In eleven months he retired on account of ill health, with a pension of £1500 a year.

Although hampered by physical weakness he still kept up his interest in political affairs, and in 1719 he entered actively into the controversy over the Peerage Bill. His strong feeling in regard to the bill resulted in a circumstance that must always cause pain to the readers of the *Spectator*, namely, his estrangement from his old friend Steele. The latter from conscientious motives voted, in opposition to his party, against a bill which, historians now believe, would have been most pernicious in its effects. Addison died so soon after the controversy that there was no opportunity for a reconciliation.

As we look through the volumes containing the works of Addison, we realize that his interest did not lie wholly in state matters. Two years after his return from the continent, he published his *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy*, and the following year, in 1705, his opera, *Rosamond*, was brought out. This, by the way, was an unsuccessful venture. When Steele began his *Tatler*, in 1709, Addison became a frequent contributor, and his work in the *Spectator*, which followed in 1711, was of still greater importance. His fame as a writer rests chiefly upon the essays in these two periodicals. He contributed articles to the *Guardian*, the successor of the *Spectator*, and in June, 1714, he began without Steele a new series of the *Spectator*, which was published three times a week until December. His three periodicals — the *Whig Examiner*, the *Freeholder*, and the *Old Whig* — were political papers.

Great contemporary fame came to Addison from his play of *Cato*, acted at Drury Lane in April, 1713. This drama,

which was written according to French canons, contained such fine phrases about liberty that it was claimed by both Whigs and Tories. Pope wrote an eloquent prologue, and Swift, after a long period of estrangement, attended a rehearsal. A comedy, *The Drummer*, acted in 1715, was unsuccessful. This work marks the close of Addison's purely literary activity, his later writings being political in character.

After his retirement from office in 1718, his health continued to fail, and he died on the 17th of June, 1719. The same spirit that had made him so attractive while he was in the full enjoyment of his powers characterized him to the very end. Even when he was on his deathbed, his chief concern was for others rather than for himself. Believing that he had once, in connection with some almost forgotten matter, injured Gay, he sent for him and begged his forgiveness; and calling for his stepson Warwick just before his end, he said, — "See in what peace a Christian can die."

STEELE.

Richard Steele — properly Sir Richard Steele — has been better loved and oftener misrepresented than almost any other English writer. The temptation to paint him as the exact opposite of Addison, has in most cases proved too strong to enable his biographers to deal fairly with his character. Thackeray's fascinating account in his *English Humourists*, the most popular sketch of Steele, while correct in certain details, is on the whole misleading. One who desires to form a just estimate of this interesting man should read Mr. Aitken's careful biography or the short but sympathetic "life" by Mr. Austin Dobson.

Steele was born in Dublin in March, 1672. He was, consequently, something less than two months older than Addison. Of his family little is known. Unfortunately

he lost both parents at an early age: his father, who was a solicitor, died when he was about five years old, and his mother not long after. In later years he speaks of his mother as "a very beautiful woman, of a noble spirit." In his uncle, Henry Gascoigne, secretary to the Duke of Ormond, the boy found a kind guardian. At the age of twelve he was sent to the Charterhouse School in London; and two years later, on Addison's arrival, the friendship between the two boys began.

Steele entered Oxford when seventeen, but did not finish his course there. Mr. Aitken remarks: "Steele left Oxford without taking a degree, which was not at all unusual at the time, but we are told that he took with him the love of the whole society."

Having a desire to try the life of a soldier, he enlisted in 1694 as a private in the Duke of Ormond's regiment of Guards, and remained in the army for twelve years. In 1700 he became Captain Steele.

His military duties do not seem to have interfered with his development as a writer; for his first promotion was due to a patriotic poem, *The Procession*, composed just after the death of Queen Mary, in 1695, and dedicated to Lord Cutts. He was rewarded by an ensign's commission in that lord's regiment, and soon after became his secretary. His *Christian Hero*, a little book published in 1701, was designed, he afterwards informs his readers, to "fix upon his own mind a strong impression of virtue and religion in opposition to a stronger propensity towards unwarrantable pleasures." Mr. Aitken justly remarks: "We must remember that the standard of morality was low even among those who considered themselves on a higher moral level than Steele, and that his ideal was far above that of most of his contemporaries." Finding that his friends failed to understand his attitude in the *Christian Hero*, and that they were inclined to accuse him of

posing as a moralist, he produced not long after a comedy, *The Funeral*, which was intended to "enliven his character." His third play, *The Tender Husband*, acted after Addison's return from the continent, was dedicated to his friend, who, besides writing the prologue, contributed "many applauded strokes." The author says: "My purpose in this application is only to show the esteem I have for you, and that I look upon my intimacy with you as one of the most valuable enjoyments of my life."

Immediately after the production of his play Steele married, but his wife died in a little over a year. In 1707 he married as a second wife a Welsh lady, Mary Scurlock, the "Dear Prue" to whom he wrote so many interesting notes and letters. Before his second marriage he left the army, and the following year, in 1707, he was made Gazetteer, at a salary of £300 a year (less a tax of £45). As the *Gazette* was the official organ of the government, the position — which he held for several years — must have required tact and judgment.

The fact that Steele was a sincere patriot rather than a successful politician is illustrated by his experience as a member of Parliament. He gave up several lucrative positions in order to become a member, but was expelled from the House of Commons — a Tory house — before the end of his first year. The publication of his *Crisis*, and a bitter attack by Swift, were the causes that led to this result. When the Whigs came into power on the accession of George I., he again entered Parliament, and the following year he was knighted. His manly stand in the controversy over the Peerage Bill in 1719 resulted in the loss of the patent which constituted him manager of Drury Lane Theatre. This circumstance marks the close of his political career.

It is chiefly because of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* that Steele occupies an important place in English literature.

After the *Spectator* was discontinued he published the *Guardian*, which was followed by the *Englishman*, a political paper. Later still came two short-lived periodicals, — the *Lover* and the *Reader*, — and a compilation entitled *The Ladies Library*. The best of his political pamphlets was his *Apology for Himself and His Writings*. *The Conscious Lovers*, his most successful play, was produced in 1722; this was his latest literary effort.

Steele had always found it difficult to meet his expenses, and his closing years, which were spent in Carmarthenshire, Wales, were troubled by money difficulties and ill health. Before the end, however, his debts had all been paid.

His biographer says: "The last glimpse we have of him comes from the actor Benjamin Victor, who had sought from him an introduction to Walpole: 'I was told he retained his cheerful sweetness of temper to the last, and would often be carried out on a summer's evening, when the country lads and lasses were assembled at their rural sports, and with his pencil, give an order on his agent, the mercer, for a new gown to the best dancer.'" He died in September, 1729.

BUDGELL.

Of Eustace Budgell little need be said, since his work is of small importance. Through the influence of Addison, who was his cousin, he obtained several positions of trust; but in later years his character deteriorated, and finally, in 1737, he drowned himself in the Thames. As a writer he was an imitator of Addison, and besides other works, he wrote a number of papers for the *Spectator*.

IV. JOURNALISM AND PARTY LITERATURE.

The facts just stated make us realize that the life of the literary man of the so-called "Augustan Age" in England was a life of political and social importance. Almost every writer of note — for Pope must be excepted — was at some time during his career the mouthpiece of a party. Swift, the most truly original genius of them all, was always a stanch defender of the national church and, except during the first few years of his public life, a zealous Tory. Defoe, now known chiefly as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, was an indefatigable pamphleteer and journalist, on the side of the Liberals. The age of Queen Anne was preëminently an age of party literature: besides party pamphlets and newspapers there were party poems, party sermons, party plays; and in the case of Addison's *Cato*, a play claimed by both Whigs and Tories at once.

This literary activity could not have existed had it not been for the recently acquired liberty of the press. In 1695 Parliament failed to appoint the usual licenser, without whose leave no book or newspaper might be published. Before this, the discussion of public matters had been left for the most part to those who were sufficiently daring or sufficiently unprincipled to disregard the law. Since the press was no longer fettered, the best intellects were free to express themselves on all matters of general interest, and party leaders eagerly sought the services of writers who could gain the ear of the people. The writer on political subjects had at that time an unusual advantage over the orator, when it came to influencing public opinion, because speeches made in Parliament were not, as now, printed and circulated.