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Contribution of the Tatler & Spectator to English Fiction

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I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Ruth Kelso

ENTITLED The Contribution of the Tatler and the Spectator to English Fiction

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Arts

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The Contribution of the Tatler and Spectator to English Fiction.

The names, Tatler and Spectator generally suggest to one Addison and Steele in their best-known, and really finest work, the Sir Roger de Coverley papers. To an unsuspecting investigator of complete editions of the two periodicals there comes a distinct surprise at the great variety and amount of other fiction that they contain. "Fiction" is used here in a rather broad sense, for we shall find later that this part of the Tatler and Spectator contains only the beginnings of what is called fiction today. "Characters," stories, allegories, visions, oriental tales, all go to make up a body of entertaining and amusing reading. Instructive too, Addison would have had us say, for, the purpose of the papers was "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behaviour."

It is this didactic purpose that is everywhere present which would seem responsible for the lack of more work such as that done in the Sir Roger de Coverley papers, and of even better work. Addison says somewhere that were he left to

1In italics this word has the old meaning of character sketch, characterization.
2Dedication to Collected Ed. 1712, IV.
3Sp. 179.
himself he would "rather aim at instructing than diverting," and consequently, fiction is introduced chiefly to attract readers who without it would never seek the solid advice and good, moral preaching that underlies everything in the Tatler and Spectator.

An attempt is made in the discussion that follows to present contributions to fiction of the two periodicals. The allegories, oriental tales, and visions have been disregarded entirely, and only the "characters" and bits of narration, the beginnings of the modern short story and novel, are considered. The clubs of the Tatler and Spectator with Mr. Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator seem to fall into a separate division, and are taken up by themselves; the rest are grouped under characterization and narration.

The Tatler is dominated by one, Isaac Bickerstaff, who assumes the role of astrologer, conjuror, judge and adviser-general of the English nation. He does not hesitate to reveal anything of interest to himself or his family, from his genealogy, the doings of his ancestors, and the matrimonial affairs of his sister to his cat, his dog and his maid. In his younger days he was as gallant a beau as there was about town, but he is now sixty-three, tall, spare and of "a hectic constitution," scarcely a fitting object for love. A letter from a lady, however,

\[1\] Tat. 11; 151; 75; 79; 85; 104; 143; 95.
\[2\] Tat. 34.
professing love, can put him into so good a humor that his boy may break pipes and glasses and receive no more than a merry jest instead of a "knock on the pate as is my custom,"- a good commentary on the significance of the name Bickerstaff.

There is a rollicking good humor, blustering kindliness and strong good sense about this character that makes it attractive, somewhat in the way one fancies Dick Steele was. He seems, however, to be two or three men in one, and the inconsistencies that arise make it hard sometimes to take him seriously, as an actual character. He verges on the burlesque, for instance, when he learns to fence. He has been driven to it by the threats of those whom his "lucubrations" have disturbed, and since he has offended all masters of the art by his treatises against dueling, he has to learn from a book. On the walls of his room he has drawn figures of all sizes from eight feet to three feet two; and to be perfectly fair has chalked out his own dimensions in every figure, so as not to take advantage of another man's width; and since he is very tall as well as spare he stoops or stands erect according to the stature of his adversary. "I must confess," he says, "I have had great success this morning, and have hit every figure...in a mortal part without receiving the least hurt, except a scratch by falling on my face in pushing at one." He is shy about letting people see him at this exer-

¹Tat. 83.
cise because of his flannel waistcoat, and his spectacles which he is forced to keep on, the better to observe the posture of the enemy.\(^1\)

Good as is this ridicule of fencers and their art, some reality and probability in the character of Mr. Bickerstaff is lost by making him act.

An impression of unreality is made by the creation of the familiar, and guardian spirit of Mr. Bickerstaff, Pacolet, and of the magic ring. Pacolet is one of those people who die before their allotted time is out, and who then have to serve people until that time has passed. He appears to Mr. Bickerstaff first as a venerable gentleman, performs various services for him, brings him foreign news, gives him advice, and is always at hand.\(^2\) The magic ring by a turn on the finger renders the wearer invisible, and enables him to observe the follies and foibles of men without himself being seen.\(^3\)

So in one paper the death of Mr. Bickerstaff's father is feelingly related; the little five-year-old, beating on the coffin with his battledore and calling "Papa" out of a vague idea that he is shut up there, is very real; about as real as the man is unreal who, we are told later, left the army through

\(^1\) Tat. 93.
\(^2\) Tat. 15, 1, 64.
\(^3\) Tat. 243.
discontent with the times, and became so wrapped up in the study of the occult sciences that Oliver Cromwell had been buried and taken up again five years before Mr. Bickerstaff heard he was dead.¹

There is an infinite amount of humor in Mr. Bickerstaff's accounts of his doings, and he possesses an individuality of his own; a reality, as long as he remains the humorous, kindly critic and sly satirist. But when his shrewdness turns into conjuring, as he calls it, although he is still a character, he loses his actuality, and one is not left with the feeling that he may meet a Mr. Bickerstaff to-morrow on the street. There is a tendency toward the burlesque in the aversion of the Spectator toward speech, his silence grows a little ridiculous; but after all one feels that it would be quite possible to know a Mr. Spectator.

The club device does not originate with the Tatler. John Dunton used it in 1690 in his Athenian Mercury, and Daniel Defoe in "The Review. The club in the Tatler marks an advance in characterization, and is important in that it sets a kind of fashion for later clubs to follow. It plays no such important part as does the Spectator Club, for it appears late in the paper; and practically only once, and has nothing whatever to do with

¹Tat. 89.
²Tat. 132. In several papers before this a kind of club which gathers at a coffee-house is mentioned. No description is given of the characters, the conversations are dry arguments on literary subjects, as the names of two of the disputants, Mr. Dactile, and Mr. Spondee, suggest.
the publishing of the periodical. This Club originally consisted of fifteen members, but is now reduced to five old men of whom Mr. Bickerstaff makes one. He repairs to the Club every evening, and finds there a soothing influence which is beneficial in preparing him for the night's rest.

The oldest member of the Club is Sir Jeoffrey Notch, who "has been in possession of the right-hand chair time out of mind, and is the only man who has the liberty of stirring the fire." He is a gentleman of ancient family, "ran out his estate in hounds, horses and cock-fighting; for which reason he looks upon himself as an honest worthy gentleman, who has had misfortunes in the world, and calls every thriving man a pitiful upstart."

"Major Matchlock is the next senior, who served in the last civil wars, and has all the battles by heart. He does not think any action in Europe worth talking of since the fight of Marston-Moor; and every night tells us of his having been knocked off his horse at the rising of the London apprentices, for which he is in great esteem among us."

"Honest old Dick Reptile...is a good-natured, indolent man, who speaks little himself, but laughs at our jokes; and brings his young nephew along with him...to show him good company and give him a taste of the world." Whenever this young
fellow laughs at anything, his uncle tells him "after a jocular manner, 'Ay, ay, Jack, you young men think us fools, but we old men know you are.'"

"The greatest wit of the company, next to Mr. Bickerstaff is a Bencher of the neighboring Inn, who in his youth... pretends to have been intimate with Jack Ogle. He has about ten distichs of Hudibras without the book, and never leaves the club till he has applied them all. If any modern wit be mentioned, he shakes his head at the dullness of the present age, and tells a story of Jack Ogle."

"I am esteemed," says Mr. Bickerstaff, "because they see I am respected by others. I am considered as a man of learning but no knowledge of the world; insomuch that the Major sometimes in the height of his military pride calls me the Philosopher, and Sir Jeffrey, no longer ago than last night, upon a dispute what day of the month it was in Holland, pulled his pipe out of his mouth, and cried, 'what does the scholar say to it?'

The Club meets at six, but Mr. Bickerstaff sometimes does not go until half-past seven, by which time the battle of Naseby has been fought by the Major; three distichs spent by the Bencher, and the point arrived where he is waiting to hear a sermon spoken of to get off the one where "a stick" rhymes to

'Tat. 246 contains another reference to Dick Reptile, the only other paper in which the club is mentioned.
"ecclesiastic;" he is just finishing a story, Jack Ogle, as the mention of a red petticoat and cloak reveals. Sir Jefferey then tells the story of the lineage, prowess and last battle of Gantlet, a game cock on which he had lost money. And so the same round is gone each night until Mr. Bickerstaff's maid comes for him with the lantern.

The Club does not appear again, and for all we know may still be rehearsing their distichs from Hudibras, and stories of Jack Ogle, Gantlet and battles fought long ago. If they did die with the end of the Tatler, the old knight, the ex-army officer, and the Bencher live again as types in the pages of the Spectator.

With the beginning of the Spectator, the club grows from a mere bloodless device to a real, living society of individuals, that can speak and move around at will. That is, some of them can; for in this same Club are to be found characters of all degrees of movability, from the delightfully natural Sir Roger to the clergyman, whose designation one scarcely feels justified in capitalizing. Addison and Steele are like the partial parents of a somewhat numerous family, who spare no pains and care on their favorites, to the utter neglect of the others; with the added misfortune in the case of the Club, that, while neglected children do become something or other, the unregarded members of the Club do not even grow.
9.

The Spectator Club is not, like the Tatler Club, an after thought and careless incident. It must have been pretty well developed in the minds of Addison and Steele, before the Spectator made its appearance; for in the first paper, the Spectator, after describing himself, promises in the next to give an account of the gentlemen who are to aid him in the work. The Spectator himself plays so important a part in the club, although he is an exceedingly quiet and reserved sort of gentleman, that we are almost forced to make his acquaintance first in order to become acquainted with the others.

The distinguishing characteristic of the Spectator is his taciturnity. He dreads having to open his mouth, and cannot remember ever having spoken three sentences together. In college he had the reputation of being a man of great learning, if he only chose to show it. He has lived in London for many years as a spectator of mankind, and become by that means "a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part of life." He loves to mingle with throngs, unnoticed by anyone. His silence is a real advantage to him, for his face has grown so expressive that his friends understand him without giving him the trouble to speak; and sometimes amaze strangers by answering his silent questions and remarks.  

1Sp. 1, 69, 4.
In the Club, the Spectator assumes no such commanding position as does Mr. Bickerstaff; there as elsewhere, he drops in whenever he chooses, taking no part in the discussions, but noting all he sees and hears. Once he dropped his notes at the Club, and, because the others made so much fun of them, would not own them. Later he gained possession of the paper, and quietly lighted his pipe with it. His solemn air and gravity aroused further laughter, but no one suspected that the paper was his.

He had great difficulty finding lodgings to his liking, for landladies then as now were loquacious; but succeeded at last in the house of a widow. For five years he and the widow have not exchanged a word. She understands so well what he wants that speech is unnecessary. The children are so well bred that they never speak unless spoken to.

As to the Spectator's personal appearance we know nothing, except that he had a peculiar shortness to his face that gained entrance for him into the Ugly Club of Oxford.

Beside the Spectator there are six members of the Club, each representing a different interest: Sir Roger de Coverley, the country squire; Sir Andrew Freeport, a merchant of great eminence; Will Honeycomb, the beau and man of the town;

1Sp. 46.
2Sp. 12.
3Sp. 32.
Captain Sentry, a retired army officer, nephew and heir of Sir Roger; the Templar, a dilettante lawyer; and the clergymen. The Club is first introduced in a series of portraits. Some of the members we are later permitted to meet and judge of the faithfulness of the picture to the original.

Sir Roger de Coverley, the chief member, "is a gentleman that is very singular in his behavior, but his singularities proceed from his good sense and are contradictions to the manners of the world, only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humor creates him no enemies, for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy; and his being unconfined to modes and forms, makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him... It is said he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county... Before this disappointment, he was...a fine gentleman... But being ill-used by the widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that was in fashion at the time of his repulse, which, in his merry humors, he tells us has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it... He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay and hearty, keeps a good house both in town and country; a great lover of

1Sp. 2.
mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast in his behavior that he is rather beloved than esteemed; his tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess love to him, and the young men are glad of his company: when he comes into a house he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way upstairs to a visit."

As he is pictured here, Sir Roger is a simple, kindly, loving and lovable old man; whose sincerity and naturalness often make his actions and words seem queer, because they are unusual. He is not, however, conscious always that he is different from other people; and whenever he appears he seems to have not only the love but the esteem of those around him. There is never a hint given that Sir Roger occasions laughter in ridicule of his old-fashioned dress, or even his actions and manners.

The old knight does have an honest and complete disregard for all outside appearances. He himself is unconventional in dress and manners and behavior; his unconventionality is not affected, and except in dress is unconscious. When he stands up in church, after waking from a short nap, to see that none of the other members of the congregation are indulging in a like luxury; or lengthens out a verse in the Psalms half a minute after the rest are through; or stands up to count the congregation, and see who is missing, while the rest are on their knees, he is
utterly unconscious of any lack of propriety, and "his parish is too polite to see anything ridiculous in his behavior." Many of Sir Roger's unfashionable actions proceed from the warmth and kindliness of heart, as when he shakes hands with the Westminster Abbey guide, and invites him to call and talk over matters at more leisure; and when he orders the waiter at Vauxhall to carry what is left to his wooden-legged boat-man.

In the matter of dress Sir Roger is careless because of his disappointment in love. He is quite ready to laugh at his coat and doublet which have been in and out of fashion twelve times, but since the widow will not look at him, he does not care to change, he seems to have no idea of the queer figure he must cut.

This love affair of the old knight's has colored and affected his whole life. In language that is more his own than what is usually put into his mouth, he tells his story to the Spectator, as they are strolling in a walk near the squire's country home. "It is very hard," the old man said, looking about him with a smile, "that any part of my land should be settled upon one who has used me so ill...and yet I am sure I could not see a sprig of any bough of this whole walk of trees, but I should reflect upon her and her severity. She has the finest hand of any woman in the world. You are to know this was the

\[1\text{Sp. 112.}\]
place wherein I used to muse upon her; and by that custom I can never come into it, but the same tender sentiments revive..., as if I had actually walked with that beautiful creature under these shades... I have even been fool enough to carve her name on the bark of several of these trees:... She has certainly the finest hand of any woman in the world."

It was at the first court session after he was elected sheriff at the age of twenty-three that Sir Roger met the widow. Very proudly he had set out. "You may easily imagine...," he says, "what appearance I made who am pretty tell, rid well, and was very well dressed, at the head of a whole county, with music before me, a feather in my cap, and my horse well-bitted." But like everyone else he was smitten by the beautiful widow, who was a defendant in a dowery case, and therein met his fate. Encouraged by the report that the widow had said Sir Roger de Coverley was the "tamest and most human of all the brutes in the country," he made a call on her; sat in awkward and embarrassed silence for half an hour because he could not answer her fine discourse on love and honor, and finally left, hopelessly and helplessly in love.¹

At first the foxes suffered for the widow's perverseness, as the heads stuck on the west door of his barn testify, but now he alludes to his disappointment only in occasional

¹Sp. 113. Written by Steele.
remarks, and references to her fine hand. At the theater when Andromache's suitor is importuning her, the widow of Hector, Sir Roger whispered to the Spectator he was sure she would not have him, and then with more than ordinary vehemence, "You can't imagine, sir, what it is to have to do with a widow." Then when Pyrrhus threatens to leave her, the knight shook his head and muttered to himself, "Ay, do if you can." The bitterness is gone, however, and he says in concluding his story, "When I reflect on this woman, I do not know whether in the main I am the worse for having loved her: whenever she is recalled to my imagination my youth returns, and I feel a forgotten warmth in my veins. This affliction in my life has streaked all my conduct with a softness of which I should otherwise have been incapable. It is perhaps to this dear image in my heart owing that I am apt to relent, that I easily forgive, and that many desirable things are grown into my temper, which I should not have arrived at by better motives than the thought of being one day hers."

A charming characteristic of the old knight is his simplicity, which shows at one time as surprising credulity, at others as equally surprising shrewdness. He visits Moll White the reputed witch, notes the old broomstick behind the door, and the tabby cat in the chimney corner; warns the old woman, in his

1Sp. 335.
2Sp. 118. Sounds like Steele's voice.
capacity of Justice of the Peace not to hold communication with
the devil, or bother her neighbor's cows; and then relates on the
way home how often he has had to save her from the prosecutions
of the neighbors. So with the gypsies he would like to be severe,
but desists because they might trouble his hen-house. He is out
of patience with their stories of handsome lovers, and beautiful
sweethearts with which they turn the heads of all the young men
and women around; even his old butler wastes half an hour yearly
with one in the pantry, though he knows a fork or spoon will be
missing. But he has his own palm crossed to gratify the curiosity
of the Spectator; and, though he pooh-hoos at the old hag for
telling him there is a widow in his line, and he will not be a
bachelor long, for he is dearer to someone than he knows, yet he
observes to the Spectator that the gypsies have been said to fore-
tell strange things, and is uncommonly cheerful for half an hour
afterward. Later he finds that his pocket has been picked.¹

Sir Roger is shrewd enough sometimes in his j"udg-
ment of people; he perfectly recognizes the arts employed by the
widow to attract and captivate men, and comments with consider-
able insight on the doings, virtues and faults of his ancestors,
though he does end up with the bravery of one who "narrowly es-
caped being killed in the Civil Wars, for he was sent from the

¹Sp. 117.
²Sp. 130.
field with a private message just before a battle."

Our old friend is not lacking in humor of a heavy English sort. He can laugh at his clothes, which may be out of style until they are in again, for all he cares; and he rallies the Spectator on spending more time with the poultry than with him. In the main, however, he is unconsciously humorous, or rather unintentionally so, as when asked to decide the merits of a dispute, he deliberates and then answers judicially "There is much to be said on both sides." He said once that he thought his passion for the widow had had some whimsical effect on his brain, "for I frequently find that in my most serious discourse I let fall some comical familiarity of speech or odd phrase that makes the company laugh."

Sir Roger has a small share of natural vanity, based not now on his appearance, but on his position in the county. In matters pertaining to book-learning, however, he has not the slightest bit of pride. He is afraid of being insulted with Latin and Greek at his own table, so he makes the lack of such learning one of the required accomplishments of his new chaplain. A funny little side-light is thrown on his own accomplishments by his saying Hector was a brave man, he remembered reading his

1Sp. 109.
2Sp. 122.
3Sp. 118.
4Sp. 106.
life at school in the back of the dictionary.  

The trait that makes Sir Roger so loved and welcomed wherever he goes is his kindliness, his genuine interest in others. His friends in the city like to have him with them, but it is in his country home, among his rustic neighbors Sir Roger is truly himself, seems most at home. His servants are so overjoyed at his return from the city that some weep, and all press about him to do some service for him, while he inquires kindly into their affairs. They have all grown old in his service: his valet-de-chambre might be taken for his brother, his butler is grey-headed, his groom, one of the gravest of men, and his coachman has the looks of a privy-councilor. His good sense along with his benevolence and good-nature make him an exemplary master. Children press around him; and the beggar knows that though he will chide for not finding work, he will end by giving a sixpence.

Sir Roger is, of course, a Tory, but one of a very mild type. In town his disputes with Sir Andrew Freeport the Whig at the Club amount to no more than diverting railery. In the country he is somewhat stronger, and will put up with hard beds and poor fare on his journeys, rather than patronize a Whig

1^ Sp. 335.
2^ Sp. 107.
3^ Sp. 269, 410.
4^ Sp. 106.
inn; - he says it is necessary for the keeping up of his interest. He read Baker's *Chronicle* and wanted to visit Westminster Abbey. There he was much impressed by the figures and monuments of the kings; discoursed at length upon some of them; and when he was shown the body of one whose silver head had been stolen, he said, "Some Whig, I'll warrant you. You ought to lock up your kings better; they will carry off the body too, if you don't take care."

And then there comes to the Club one morning a letter from the butler, announcing the death of Sir Roger. He had caught cold at the county Assizes, where he had insisted on going to aid a poor widow and her children. When he returned he first alarmed his family by not being able to enjoy his customary sirloin. He gradually grew worse, and though he seemed to rally slightly when a kind message came from the widow, he sank again, and passed peacefully away. His chaplain said he made a good end. He remembered everyone in his will, even the perverse widow. Captain Sentry, the heir has taken charge and seems a "courteous man, though he does not say much."

This letter is one of the best papers in the whole series; it accomplishes its effect so well. Addison tries at first to assume a style suiting a butler; one mistake in grammar

\[1\] Sp. 126, 329, 269. Compare the character of the fox-hunter in the *Freeholder*, 22, 44.

\[2\] Sp. 517.
is as far as he gets. The simply told story, however, is truly affecting; but alas for man's shifting sense of humor, the letter is signed with the type name of the butler, Edward Biscuit.

To point out all the excellencies of this best sustained and most complete characterization would take too long. Sir Roger is made to live for us, through almost every art that story-telling man is master of. We see him through the eyes of the Spectator, through our own eyes, even catch a glimpse of him through the widow's, and his own. We seem to meet him in every possible relation to those about him, and under many different circumstances. This varied acquaintance gives one the impression of having known him a long time; friendly to everyone he meets, he seems to make friends with the reader. Of his personal appearance each one is left to form his own picture; all we are told is that he was tall and smooth-faced. We do not even know the cut of those old-fashioned clothes of his, but somehow the omission of such details seems scarcely a lack. The sudden announcement of Sir Roger's death is rather shocking, and would be more so, if in many subtle ways he had not seemed to grow old. There is one great lack that one feels, Sir Roger does not talk enough. This art of letting people in story-land speak for themselves is one that Addison even less than Steele was master of.

1Sp. 113, 122, 331.
Sir Andrew Freeport, the wealthy merchant acts as a foil to Sir Roger in that he is as deeply dyed a Whig as the knight is a Tory. He is "a person of indefatigable industry, strong reason and great experience." His favorite maxim is "A penny saved is a penny got." He was never defendant in a lawsuit, for no one ever had cause to complain of his dealings. We are told he divides his time almost equally between the town and country; in the Club he is often seen in good humor, but he has an air of care too in his looks; in the country, however, he is always unbent and such a companion as even the Spectator could desire. But we never see him in the country, and seldom anywhere else. He talks in the Club a few times, smiles at the Spectator over the busy crowd in the Exchange, but he seems alive only once, when he receives the book of collected acts of Parliament from Sir Roger after the good old man's death. At the sight of the passages marked in the knight's handwriting, Sir Andrew, "who would have been merry at such an incident on another occasion, burst into tears and put the book into his pocket." When all the rest of the club is dispersed, and it is necessary to get rid of Sir Andrew, he suddenly resolves to retire to the country and there spend the remainder of his life in a shrewd business-like

1Sp. 2.
2Sp. 82.
3Sp. 69.
4Sp. 517.
philanthropy.

The only other character of the Club that is at all well developed is Will Honeycomb, the man of the town. He is a gentleman "who according to his years should be in the decline of his life, but having ever been very careful of his person, and always had an easy fortune, time has made but very little impression either by wrinkles on his forehead, or traces on his brain. His person is well turned, of a good height. He is very ready at that sort of discourse with which men entertain women. He has all his life dressed very well, and remembers habits as others do men. He can smile when one speaks to him and laughs easily... All his conversation and knowledge has been in the female world."

Will Honeycomb is very proud of what learning he possesses, and is always seeking to show it off. When taxed, however with misspelled words in some old love letters of his, that he exhibited to the Club, he retorts with some heat "that he never liked pedantry in spelling, and that he spelt like a gentleman and not a scholar."

The best paper on Will Honeycomb is the story of his absentmindedness, when he skipped his watch into the Thames

1Sp. 541.
2Sp. 2.
3Sp. 343.
4Sp. 105.
in place of the pebble he held in his hand, and carefully put the stone into his pocket. The action is so natural one can almost see him do it.

Will's use in the Spectator is as oracle with regard to woman's world, and as scapegoat to bear the blame for all the little flings at feminine follies and foibles that Mr. Spectator is inclined to make. He chaperones this silent gentleman whenever he wishes to visit the fair sex, and acts as his mouthpiece. Late in the periodical it seems to have occurred to Addison and Steele to introduce letters from the beau. Two very entertaining specimens appear, which he addresses to "Dear Spec," (one hardly knows how he dares be so familiar with such a dignified gentleman) and signs, "Thine, sleeping and waking, Will Honeycomb." The Spectator apologizes for Will's railery on marriage in the first letter, and Will ends the second with "whatever thou mayst think of it, prythee do not make any of thy queer apologies for this letter, as thou didst for my last. The women love a gay, lively fellow, and are never angry at the raileries of one who is their known admirer. I am always bitter upon them, but well with them."

Will is given a black eye over his relations with

1Sp. 77. This is in imitation of La Bruyère's absent-minded minded.
2Sp. 45, 57, 79, 278.
3Sp. 499, 511.
women, and one has the unmistakable impression that in his younger days he was a sorry rake; at best he was never anything but a trifler and dilettante. He tried all his life to marry an heiress, but for some reason never succeeded. Finally when it comes time to dispose of the gallant Will, because the Spectator is nearing its end, a letter comes from him, beginning with, "My worthy Friend," and ending with "William Honeycomb," which tells of his visit to his country estate, his falling in love with the buxom daughter of one of his tenants, and his marriage and reform, into a sober country gentleman.¹

It is always gratifying to our moral sense to have bad, or trifling men forsake the evil of their ways; and in real life, perhaps, we would have been sincerely glad, if such news had come from some Will Honeycomb of our acquaintance. Here, however, the Spectator was in too much of a hurry to get rid of Will. He could not justify killing him,—such butterfly creatures are not made to die; so he buried him alive, after cutting off his wings. For a really artistic finish he should have taken more thought, and left him deathless, still flitting about among the ladies. It is almost too much of a strain on the imagination to think of William Honeycomb, benedict.

Of the three remaining characters of the Club,

¹Sp. 530.
Captain Sentry possesses the most interest because of his connection with Sir Roger. He is a "gentleman of great courage and understanding but invincible modesty," such invincible modesty that he retired from the army because he could not put himself forward. "He is a man of good sense," says the Spectator, "but dry conversation," and verily he is in the few monologues he is permitted on military courage, magnanimity and so on. He is so serious that, though Sir Roger's servants found him courteous and kind, they must have missed some of the cheer and good nature the old knight radiated. Captain Sentry goes out in a letter written from Coverley hall, in which he announces his determination to follow in the footsteps of the old knight.

In Steele's description of the Club, he places the Templar second in importance and then practically neglects him afterward. He is a bachelor, a member of the Inner Temple, "a man of great probity, wit and understanding; but he has chosen his place of residence rather to obey the direction of his old humorsome father than in pursuit of his own inclinations. He was placed there to study the law of the land, and is the most learned of any of the house in those of the stage"... He is an excellent critic and the time of the play is his hour of business.

1Sp. 1.
2Sp. 197.
3Sp. 152, 350.
4Sp. 544.
5Sp. 2.
His name is used a few times in slight references to him, or to put into his mouth reflections on the drama. He is killed off from the Club by sending him to his neglected law studies.\(^1\)

The clergyman, Steele says in the beginning, hardly can be called a member of the Club, he attends so seldom. He is "a very philosophic man of general learning, great sanctity of life and the most exact breeding," who is afflicted with ill health. When he does visit the Club, however, he "adds to every man a new enjoyment of himself." He contributes two essays on religious subjects, the second in a letter saying he is dying; and so his feeble existence is snuffed out.\(^2\)

So with Sir Roger and the clergyman dead, Captain Sentry out in the country, Will Honeycomb and the Templar re-formed, the Spectator Club dies. If it were not for Sir Roger de Coverley, and perhaps Will Honeycomb, it would have possessed no more life than those that had gone before. In fact it exists in individuals not as a club, for though mention is often made of the Club, and many of the speeches of its members are made in it, only three times does it actually sit in session before us.\(^3\)

The report of these meetings is so charming we wish we might have had more. After the really life-like and natural character-

\(^1\)Sp. 541.
\(^2\)Sp. 196, 513.
\(^3\)Sp. 34, 174, 359.
ization of Sir Roger, and Will Honeycomb to some extent, the stiff, fairly uninteresting portraits of the others are a cause of wonder, why could not all have been good. Addison and Steele seem to have caught an inkling of the value of objective characterization, of letting their people talk and walk about, but it must have been only an inkling, else they would not have resorted so many times to the other kind, both in drawing the Club members and the other characters in the two periodicals. In the case of the Club, they must have fallen in love with Sir Roger, and liked to be with him; the others they used for the most part as mouth-pieces to deliver their own sentiments on various matters.

Any analysis of methods of characterization has been purposely left out of the foregoing discussion in order to have free opportunity to present chiefly Sir Roger and to show how really good the best part of the Spectator is. There is a large amount of fiction beside that concerned with the Clubs and Mr. Bickerstaff and the Spectator, in which the same methods are used, and in some cases the same skill. The purpose of the following discussion is to present this material in an analysis of methods employed throughout the whole.

Characterization in both the Tatler and the Spectator reaches a high state of development, and marks a great ad-
vance over anything that has gone before. Old models are not entirely thrown aside for the new and better ones; we find the character formally analysed and duly catalogued under a type-name, side by side with the character shown in action, or in conversation with others of its kind, possessing a more or less individual name. That there was some consciousness of the superiority of the latter sort of characterization might be inferred from the much smaller number of type-characters than of individualized characters.

The "character" of a biter serves very well as an illustration of the least animated form of type-character. "A biter is one who tells you a thing you have reason to disbelieve in itself, and perhaps has given you before he bit you, no reason to disbelieve it for his saying it; and if you give him credit, laughs in your face and triumphs that he has deceived you. In a word, a biter is one who thinks you a fool because you do not think him a knave."

The type-character is not wholly without animation, however; witness this one of a devotee. "A devotee is one of those who disparage religion by their indiscreet and unreasonable introduction of the mention of virtue on all occasions... She is never herself but at church; there she displays her virtue, and is so fervent in her devotions, that... she frequently

1Sp. 504; A new Coxcomb, Tat. 57; Wags, Tat. 184; others in Tat. 88, 141, 205; Sp. 47, 198, 288, 536.
prays herself out of breath. While other young ladies in the house are dancing...she reads aloud in her closet. She says all love is ridiculous except it be celestial... If at any time she sees a man warm in his addresses to his mistress, she will lift up her eyes to heaven, and cry, 'What nonsense is that fool talking! Will the bell never ring for prayers?'

A favorite method of labeling these type-characters is by some peculiarity of expression and carriage, or dress. You may know the critic by "an elevated eye, a dogmatical brow, and a positive voice," "a cane upon the fifth button shall from henceforth be the type of a Dapper; red-heeled shoes and a hat hung upon one side of the head shall signify a Smart;...an upper lip covered with snuff denote a coffee-house Statesman."

As if feeling the inadequateness of the general, purely subjective way of characterizing people, the authors of the Tatler and the Spectator, more often than not, illustrate the type with a particular instance. After the "character of the critic, Sir Timothy Tittle is introduced as a perfect specimen. He is individualized somewhat more than usual by making him appear in person on a visit to a lady with whom he is in love. He comes into the room "puffing and blowing." It finally appears from his disjointed exclamations that he is much exasperated and

1Sp. 354.
2Tat. 165.
3Tat. 96.
out of breath because of the merry chase he has been led in
reading a comedy that disregarded unity of place. The lady af-

firms that she can laugh at those comedies he condemns, but never
at those he approves; and Sir Timothy goes away so disgusted that
he never returns.

There is a fairly large class of characters with
names of their own that are no more life-like than the old type
form. Sombrius might just as well be named, a religious man. He
is "one of these sons of sorrow who think themselves obliged to
be sad and disconsolate. He looks on a sudden fit of laughter as
a breach of his baptismal vow. An innocent jest startles him like
blasphemy... He...sighs at the conclusion of a merry story; and
grows devout when the rest of the company grow pleasant."

So far the "characters" have done little more than
those that came before them. All are founded on essays about ab-
stract qualities or modes of behavior. The essay and character,
however, are more carefully blended, the character actually
seeming a part of the essay. Even the natural, individualized
"characters" are introduced to point a moral, or illustrate a

1 Tat. 185. Other examples are in Tat. 21, 24, 27, 29, 52;
Sp. 53, 175, 187, 228, 311.

2 Sp. 494. Suggested by the Spectator Club, there are
many other Clubs described, usually in letters. These descrip-
tions are series of "characters" with but little attempt at in-
dividualization. The Widows' Club Sp. 561, 573, and the Club of
Lovers, Sp. 30, are the most interesting. Others are described
in Sp. 9, 17, 43, 72, 217, 324, 372. On the same order are the
"characters" of various beauties, Sp. 144, and the "characters"
in Tat. 38.
quality. If no essay accompanies them, as in Aesop's Fables the
lesson is drawn at the end. Most of the Sir Roger de Coverley
papers have their accompanying piece of moralizing. It seems to
have been almost impossible to tell a story, or describe a per-
son, for the sake only of the story or the description.

The character of Sir Timothy Tittle, that was
quoted above, is a fair illustration of another class of "char-
acters" in the Tatler and the Spectator, in which the person
moves about and talks to other people. This sort of objective
characterization is frequently employed, and often skillfully
managed, so skillfully indeed that one is forced to wonder at the
lapses back into the old artificial analysis of traits.

The favorite point of view from which characters
are considered in both the Tatler and Spectator is the personal,
in which the author relates a visit he has made, or a chance
meeting with an acquaintance, or even takes the reader with him
out on the street and into the drawing-room. Sometimes there is
very slight connection between the author and the person who is
described; there may be no more of the personal element than
"Acasto, my good acquaintance," "My friend and merry companion
Daniel;" but that little hint of acquaintance goes far toward
lending reality to the character. When the impersonal point of
view is taken, the "character" is usually credited to a letter-

1Sp. 386, Tat. 66.
writer, so that even here the delusion is kept up, somebody else knows the person. Rather frequently, too, the writer describes himself, a use of the autobiographical method. All the time we must remember, too, that Mr. Bickerstaff and Mr. Spectator are themselves creations of the brain, the authors by proxy, as it were. They are triumphs of skillful characterization in that without question we accept their word for the existence of their friends and acquaintances.

There are three chief ways of describing characters, by showing them in action, or in conversation, or in relationship to others. In the case of Will Wimble, Sir Roger's country friend, a fourth method is used, the report of others. This paper on Will Wimble is the best of its kind, because it presents from three different standpoints, first his letter to Sir Roger, and later his own remarks, second the account of Sir Roger given before Will appears, and third the account of the Spectator himself. Each different view corroborates and fills out the others. In almost the same way is Sir Roger's chaplain described. The Spectator relates his impressions of him, Sir Roger then tells of his relations with the old clergyman, of his giving him all the best printed sermons, one for every Sunday in the year, and then the chaplain comes up with the very book in his hand. In comprehen-

1Sp. 503, 515, 596, 96, 362, 450.
2Sp. 108, 106. Other characters described from more than one standpoint are in Tat. 10, 158, 160, 166.
siveness of outline these two papers surpass all the others; but they are lacking in vividness of detail, neither Will Wimble nor the chaplain are allowed to speak in their own persons.

As a rule, when dialogue is introduced, it does not sound natural, the characters are not speaking in their own language. Usually the speeches are too long, and assume the style of a short essay, or at best rather prosy exposition or exhortation. One of the best little bits of dialogue for showing off character in a short, hit-the-mark style is this which took place in a coffee-house. Mr. Dactile remarks in the course of a long harangue on "turning things into ridicule" that "risibility being the effect of reason, a man ought to be expelled from sober company who laughs without it."

"Ha! ha!" says Will Truby, who sits by, "Will any man pretend to give me laws when I should laugh, or tell me what I should laugh at?"

"Look ye," answers Humphrey Slyboots, "you are mightily mistaken; you may, if you please, make what noise you will and nobody can hinder an English gentleman from putting his face into what posture he thinks fit; but take my word for it, that motion which you now make with your mouth open, and the agitation of your stomach, which you relieve by holding your sides

"Tat. 91, 107; Sp. 11.
"One can see Matthew Arnold nodding, "He talks like a free-born Englishman."
is not laughter: laughter is a more weighty thing than you imagine; and I'll tell you a secret, you never did laugh in your life; and truly I am afraid you never will, except you take care to be cured of those convulsive fits."

Truby left us, and when he had got two yards from us, "Well," said he, "you are strange fellows," and was immediately taken with another fit.

This is a little heavy, and too prolonged perhaps to suit our modern ideas of repartee, but character portrayal could not be much better; the account that Mr. Bickerstaff gives afterwards of the Truby and Slyboots families is unnecessary.

More natural, but of slighter import is Nathaniel Henroost's dispute with his wife, or rather, her dispute with him. She is afraid he has married her for her beauty, not her good sense; so, he says, "she is eternally forming an argument of debate to which I very indolently answer, "Thou art mighty pretty."

To this she answers,

"All the world but you think I have as much sense as yourself." I repeat to her,

"Indeed you are pretty." She then loses all patience, stamps and throws down everything about her.

"Fy, my dear," say I, "how can a woman of your sense fall into such an intemperate rage?" This is an argument that

'Tat. 63. See also nos. 6 & 40.
never fails.

"Indeed my dear," says she, "you make me mad sometimes, so you do, with the silly way you have of treating me like a pretty idiot."

The portrayal of character in action is sometimes very skillful. Some country gentlemen send word to Mr. Bickerstaff that they will come the next morning to consult him on a matter of business. Punctually at nine a knock is heard at the door; a long silence ensues, broken at last by "Sir I beg your pardon;" "I think I know better;" and "Nay, good Sir Giles." Mr. Bickerstaff looks out of the window; all the good company with their hats off and arms spread are offering the door to each other. They at last file up, Sir Harry Quickset, Sir Giles Wheelbarrow, Thomas Rentfree Esq., Justice of the Quorum, Andrew Windmill Esq., and Mr. Nicholas Doubt of the Inner Temple. They are seated finally with due solemnity and order; refuse to drink tea in the morning; and propose adjourning to a public-house where they may order what they like to drink and talk more at ease. A little confusion is caused by a maid carrying up coal, occasions a blockade, because Sir Harry found himself in the midst, and no one else could move until he did. They stand this way for sometime, until a loud noise is heard in the street, and at the suggestion of fire, all break away and run pell-mell downstairs.

1Sp. 176. Tat. 155.
2Tat. 86.
The blustering fox-hunter sings in Lady Dainty's parlor, sets the dog to barking, the ladies to laughing, and drowns them all out. As he goes he catches his spur in a lady's dress, and knocks over a china cabinet with his whip. On the whole, however, although very many of the people introduced are able to move around, to walk, and to come into a room, their actions, except in sketches, which are rather incomplete stories than "characters," do not have much significance. There are not many that really do more than one might expect of a man with the full use of his limbs.

Until La Bruyère's Caractères there had been made no attempt to group people, to exhibit them through their relations with each other. La Bruyère does this slightly, and Addison and Steele are very much more skillful at it. The character of Jack Sippet reminds one of the Frenchman's Theodictus. Jack, who is a very insignificant fellow, always comes late to dinner in order to draw attention to himself, and thus cut some figure. "He takes his place after having discomposed everybody, and desires there may be no more ceremony;" then he falls to lamenting that he has had to disappoint so many other places better than the one he chose. One of the best pieces of characterization by this method is a little account of a visit Mr. Bickerstaff made on a woman of sense. He was having a very agreeable conversation

¹Tat. 37. See also Sp. 38, 485.
²Sp. 448.
with her, when in came Lydia "a finished coquette." Mr. Bickerstaff went on talking to Belvidera, conscious all the while that Lydia was doing her best to attract her attention. Finally he looked at her with a sort of surprise, as if he had not observed her before because of the bad light in which she sat. She could not conceal her joy at her victory. Castabella then entered, a prude. Belvidera gave him a glance to intimate that the newcomer was worth remarking as a curiosity of her kind; and when they were again seated, he stole looks at the two, as if comparing their perfections. The conversation turned on prudes and coquettes, and each of the fair visitors was interested because the other was on exhibition.

A method of characterization that seems worthy of notice in itself, because it is so frequently employed, is that of contrast. It is a favorite trick of Addison and Steele to pair off opposite characters, and balance them, one against the other. In the straining after this balance, however, any vividness that might be gained by contrast is lost because of a certain artificial effect that is produced. "Plumbeus is of a saturnine and sullen complexion; Levis of a mercurial and airy disposition... Plumbeus is ever egregiously fine, and talking something like wit; Levis is ever extremely grave, and with a silly face repeating maxims." "The beauty of Clarissa is soft, that of Chloe is pierc-

¹Tat. 126.
²Tat. 246.
ing... Clarissa looks languishing; Chloe killing... The admirers of Chloe are eternally gay and well-pleased; those of Clarissa melancholy and thoughtful. These comparisons do not make the people stand out as individuals, they are confusing, rather than otherwise.

Narration constitutes a very small part of the fiction in the Tatler and the Spectator; and, what is of more importance, contributes little or nothing to the development of plot and background. What seems clearly to be of narrative rather than descriptive interest consists for the most part of anecdotes, little incidents of a biographical nature. This biographical tendency seems to be the thing that prevents the selection of material and its skillful arrangement, which are necessary for the modern short story and novel. In many of the stories, histories as they are frequently called, there is material for a plot. In some the attempt to reach a climax, to work out some end is well enough done to create some surprise or interest. Action of the biographical sort, however, is necessarily slow; events do not move very swiftly, sometimes seem not to move at all. There is one good exception to this statement in the account Sam Trusty

1Tat. 4. Others of the same kind. Tat. 14, 24, 61, 126, 211; Sp. 15, 33, 75, 114, 404. Rather more effective comparisons are to be found in Sp. 422, 490, 192.

2Sp. 80, 166; Tat. 23, 45, 60, 213.

3Tat. 123; Sp. 198, 398 & 164 Theodosius and Constantia, which mentions letters passed between the hero and heroine: A novel of the same name later is made up of these letters.

4Tat. 36, 94; Sp. 150, 325.
gives of his visit to an old lady, who possesses a dog, a parrot, a monkey and a squirrel. The dog barks and sets the others to chattering and screeching, the parrot tweaks Sam's leg with his beak, the monkey throws his wig in the fire, and the squirrel bites his finger. When poor San rushes out in dismay, he steps into a pail of water and rolls with it to the bottom of the stairs.

There is practically no use of background, even of a nature of the mechanical, worked-by-a-string variety. The one instance that is worth noting as background that is really a part of the story is in the tale of the Cornish lovers. The fond husband has been away on a sea-voyage, and has sent word that he is on the way home. One evening just before he was expected, his wife and her sister were walking by the sea, and "stood on the shore together in a perfect tranquility, observing the setting of the sun, the calm face of the deep, and the silent heaving of the waves, which gently rolled towards them and broke at their feet." Then a dark form is washed ashore, which proves to be the body of the husband.

The skill of Addison and Steele is exhibited chiefly in their characterization. As in the case of Sir Roger, they often mingle description and narration, but the interest is in the former rather than in the latter. Neither writer, however, seems to realize fully the power at his command, and both fall

¹Tat. 266. Some of Steele's rollicking humor, no doubt.
²Tat. 32.
back on the old forms throughout the Tatler and the Spectator. Through Mr. Bickerstaff and the Spectator the authors like best to view their characters from the personal standpoint, a natural means of lending reality to fictitious persons. Many other little tricks are resorted to for gaining reality. A correspondent writes he has seen Sir Roger at the play, and is much interested in him. Tom Folio's pedantry is made fun of; his letter of protest is printed soon after. The remarkable will of a virtuoso is published; later the widow writes, describing her husband, and asking how to dispose of his effects; and so on indefinitely.

In dialogue Addison and Steele's characters are seldom themselves. Addison particularly cannot get out of himself, and talk like someone else. Once when he introduces a letter from a real servant, he has to re-write it in polite language, the sort he would use. In action the characters are more life-like, they have learned in several cases to move at will, not like the monkey on a stick, who can go only when the string is pulled, and then has no choice as to which part he may move.

Some attention is given to dress and personal appearance, but not much of the sort that distinguishes one person from another. Most of the names even do not seem to belong to the persons to whom they are applied; there is too much fondness either for the type-name, such as Biscuit, Wheelbarrow, Sentry, and the
Latin and Greek words that are similarly significant, Sombrius, Levis, with some that are only generally applicable, Clarissa, Philander, Dulcissia, Endosia.

And now it is time to leave off picking flaws, which unfortunately anyone that even pretends to be a critic must take into account. This work of Addison and Steele, however much it may come short of reaching perfection according to modern ideas, does stand the one great test of all literature; it does entertain, amuse, and, yes, Mr. Addison, instruct, though not, perhaps, in the way originally intended; it proves that we are not very much different from our brothers and sisters of the eighteenth century.