

the years just preceding his assuming the imperial purple. Virgil and Horace stamped their age, as Addison and Pope and perhaps a few others did theirs. It was a great change that had come over the mind and manners of the times. In one respect there was a decided improvement. As regards the life of a nation, its life in all for which it is important to live, there was a great advance. From the date of the revolution of 1688 the nation would never again be held in the leading strings in which it was formerly bound: it could never be governed by one imperial mind, or any more resign its own right of self-government. The power of Parliaments was forever inaugurated, and could never henceforth be disowned. It was the rule of ministries, of cabinets, of parties. Men were now restored to their sober senses: they now thought and acted not in a sphere out of themselves, and beyond themselves, or in scenes in which they were not their own masters, or the guides of their own actions, in which they were carried along by a superior destiny, or by influences descending from a higher region. They were emphatically their own masters, the controllers of their own destinies: they could control the imperial will, rule parliaments by majorities. They could not be imprisoned, fined, and pilloried, at the will of a tyrant, or that tyrant's minions. It was now the war of opinion—"the battle of books"—the conflict of pamphlets and pamphleteers. Men had leisure to observe, and record what they observed: they had liberty to think, and put on record their thoughts. Thought now possessed an every-day character. Private and individual interests had room to be considered or canvassed. The domestic circle had now an importance which it did not possess before: it was now a power in the land. Domestic incidents and manners were more interesting than jousts and tournaments: the monarch and his nobility did not alone act on the stage of events, while every other class was but an appendage, or a circumstance to heighten the effect of their doings. The individual was now of consideration, and his actions were not only of interest to himself, but were interesting to the nation. What Addison said of the manners, might, *mutatis mutandis*, be said of the literature of the age: "the fashionable world is grown free and easy, our manners sit more loose upon us. Nothing is so modish as an agreeable negligence." Men did not walk on stilts, nor act in masquerade. The doublet and coat of mail had given place to plain clothes, though the sword was still worn at the side. Politics had supplanted arms, or war was not waged for points of honour, or ambition purely, but for commercial interest or national advantage. It was a national life now, not the life of a monarch and his court. Clubs and Coffee-houses flourished: literary coteries were established, and some of them had a famous career. It was there that literary schemes were hatched, and literary topics descanted on, which formerly, for the most part, were originated in the individual brain, and were the topic of converse as chance minds met in brilliant encounter. It was the age of poets about town, as it was that of men about town. Wits and beaux moved over the scene and interchanged the civilities of the day. Ladies of fashion held court in a fashion of their own: they were the