

a short interval of peace, for more than twenty years; and such a cessation of intercourse with what was then the great centre of literary influence in Europe could not be without its results. No gay Grunmonds or Saint Evremonds were now seen at the court of Whitehall; the Frenchmen who came hither were Protestant refugees, driven forth by the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. One of them, Motteux, completed Utophary's translation of Rabelais; another, Rapin de Thoyras, wrote in his own language a history of England, which afterwards became for Englishmen the standard work on the subject until the days of David Hume. The result of these changed conditions was doubtless to leave our literature more to its own native and insular development, to throw poets like Pope more exclusively upon Spenser and Cowley and Dryden for models, and to foster the development of the simple idiomatic prose of Defoe and Swift. French influence, however, and nearly all for good, is discernible in the essays of Temple (1690-93); and in the later work of Bolingbroke, where, however, there is still more conspicuous evidence of the growing power of political oratory as a factor in prose style. As parliamentary debate, with the introduction of constitutionalism, became more important, the art of it was naturally studied with greater care; while the widening of the audience which had to be appealed to in pamphleteering combined with the gradual spread of rationalism to favour a more curt and familiar and less pedantic style than that which, in the hands of Hooker and Milton and Taylor, had been developed in the pulpit and the college. These probably are the main causes of the steady improvement made at this time in the writing of English prose.

To French influence, we must add, the Revolution period owed its one great literary controversy, for the battle of Boyle and Bentley (1696-99) over the Letters of Phalaris was one of the sequels of the dispute about the ancients and moderns between Perrault and Boileau and Fontenelle (1688-94). Started at first by Temple's unlucky essay, the fray is memorable mainly for having given Swift the subject of one of his earliest satires, and for establishing the fame of the greatest of English scholars. Richard Bentley's is one of the three or four great names which belong peculiarly to the age of the Revolution, or which, in other

words, have won distinction by achievements that belong to the last ten or twelve years of the seventeenth century. The others are Locke, Congreve, and Newton—the last by far the greatest of all, although it belongs largely to a domain that is excluded by the strict bounds of English literature, and even of the English language. The Revolution age is indeed more notable on the scientific side than on the literary, and one can discern in it the progress of that movement which had been begun five and twenty years before by the formation of the Royal Society—not only in the work of men like Ray, the naturalist, and Hooke, the physicist, but also in the fantastic speculations of Dr Thomas Burnet concerning the origin and ultimate fate of the earth.

The literary condition of England at the end of the seventeenth century cannot be understood without a knowledge of the very imperfect dissemination of books, and the other difficulties in the way of reading. There were no great collections of books save at the two universities; even London had no circulating library or book-club, and readers who did not want to purchase had to snatch a glance at the volumes in the booksellers' shops in St Paul's Churchyard. As for private libraries, even the clergy were miserably supplied, while the condition of the gentry is described in Macaulay's statement that 'an esquire passed among his neighbours for a great scholar if Hudibras and Baker's Chronicle, Tarleton's Jests, and the Seven Champions of Christendom lay in his hall window among the fishing rods and rowing pieces.' The republication of books was slow. The last folio of Shakespeare came out in 1685, and was not followed by the first octavo till 1709; while only three editions of *Purcell's Last* appeared between the Revolution and the end of the century; they were all in folio, and had but a small circulation. Magazines, of course, there were none, while the newspapers which sprang up after the liberation of the press were mere news-sheets that did not always displace the antiquated and lingering newsletter. At the best, John Dunton's *Athenian Gazette* (1691) might provide some meagre and frivolous 'answers to correspondents,' and for the rest there were sermons, pamphlets, ballad broad-sheets, and an odd playbook or ponderous romance. The popularising of literature was to come in the next age, with the *Tatler* and the *Spectator*.

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