

THE SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMAN DURING THE REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE

By *J. M. Wyatt*

"In a certain sense all men are historians," says Thomas Carlyle, and although "History discloses itself as in sunbeams, then drops the blanket of centuries, of everlasting night over it and passes on elsewhere," the student of History appreciates the light which falls upon the pages of past life and its activities.

Literature as a branch of History may justly claim a share in the illumination of the past. In this sense Addison is an historian. "As we read the delightful volumes of the *Spectator* the past age returns, the England of our ancestors is revived. The May-pole rises in the Strand again in London; the ladies are thronging to the toy-shops." We are not, however, to study Addison as an historian, but rather his picture of woman, given to us as he sees her at home with her mirror, abroad with her fan.

The description he gives us is not a philosophic one of women in general, but rather of women as he saw them. This necessitates a definition, and with one of the fathers Addison declares women to be "a beautiful, romantic animal that delights in finery." Nature has bestowed upon women so much beauty and charm, they feel that to be splendid is fulfilling the design of their creation, and with womanly sense of duty, especially where duty is pleasant, they set about the delightful task of arranging themselves in the splendor of the earth. To them the sea gives up its wealth, for them, the rocks are ravished of their gems, for them, a hundred climates bring forth their varying products. They thus disguise their natural beauty and by yielding to foreign fopperies, follies and extravagances of dress, destroy all individuality in habit. Taste, modesty and refinement in dress were sacrificed upon the altar of Fashion. Symmetry of figure and natural beauty of countenance were alike destroyed by the adoption of transient fashionable fads. Comfort and convenience were minor considerations to the female mind. To waddle about in the cumbrous expansion of the fashionable petticoat, to have one's forehead marked by a party patch,