

lingering decline of the development which had marked former decades. Until after the opening of the new century we have to do mainly with the old men, or at least the old forms of art. Dryden remains the great central figure, and indeed it is only in this period, after his dismissal from the Laureateship and the decay of his worldly prosperity, that he attains his acknowledged place as the first dictator of English letters. Much of the best of his poetical work—the translation of Virgil, *Alexander's Feast*, and the *Fables*—as well as five of his plays, was produced after the Revolution. These plays are generally grouped among examples of the 'Restoration drama,' and this classification of them, as well as of the other plays of the same period, is accurate enough so far as concerns their intrinsic character. Yet it is noteworthy that much of the Restoration drama is really post-Revolution in its date. All the plays of Congreve and Vanbrugh were produced after 1689, and so were many of Southerne's and Shadwell's, while Farquhar came still later, and did his best work in the days of Queen Anne. Yet it was all essentially a bequest of the Restoration period, and, in spite of its brilliance, the drama after the Revolution was really on the decline. Doubtless it suffered from the loss of court patronage, and the substitution of an alien monarch, who cared nothing about literature, for a race of artistic amateurs like the Stuarts. Its grossness also grew offensive to the taste of the nation, or rather of the town, which was slowly recovering from the Restoration debauch. Jeremy Collier's famous *Short View* (1697) has been often regarded as the death blow of the later Stuart drama; but in truth it was rather a sign of the prevalent tendency than itself that tendency's cause.

The poetry of the age, however, bore far more evident marks of decline than its drama. The veteran Dryden, as has been said, was the solitary great poet, and the only hopeful new man was Matthew Prior, who followed up his clever parody of the *Hind and the Panther* with occasional verses like those on the death of Queen Mary and the recapture of Namur. Shadwell and Nahum Tate were the Laureates, and Sir Richard Blackmore, the court physician, began to dose the public with the first of his six slumbrous epics in 1695. Garth's *Dispensary* appeared in 1699. Pope all the

while was a child in his father's home in London, and Addison was writing negligible trifles at Oxford, with a whole decade and more between him and the *Campaign*. Nothing foreshadowed the Augustan age. Never perhaps in all our history have the prospects of English poetry been darker than in the interval when Dryden was making way for Pope.

The attention of Englishmen, indeed, was given to other things than pure literature in the years when the British Constitution and the Protestant Succession were first on their trial. The discussion of the problems involved in the settlement of Church and State necessarily produced a shoal of tracts and pamphlets, which seldom rose to the level of literature, and have left us nothing of permanent interest save the treatises on Toleration and Government (1689-92) by Locke. The questions of toleration and comprehension exercised the pens of the clergy, as also did the Nonjuring schism, which had as one of its consequences the keen Trinitarian controversy (1692) between Sherlock and South. These two divines, along with Stillingfleet, Tillotson, Patrick, and others, are to be numbered among the ornaments of the Revolution Church; but in reality the great days of the Anglican pulpit were over. The old questions were becoming exhausted; the polemic battle with Rome was virtually fought out; and it is significant of the drift of the time that the reign of William saw the appearance of Toland (1696) and Tindal, and the beginning of that 'Deistical' movement which was to be so potent, in one development or another, in the next century. Significant is it, too, that the one great philosophical work of the time, Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding* (1690), is held to mark the starting-point of that century's characteristic speculation. The national mind, indeed, was beginning to transcend those speculative limits which had been imposed by the great conflict between Romanism and Protestantism a century and a half before. The inevitable results of the civil and religious struggle of the last sixty years were beginning to be felt. Something like a foreshadowing of the 'Broad Church' movement is seen in the career and work of Gilbert Burnet, who, however, did better service by his *History of his Own Time* than by his narrative of the Reformation in England or his exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles.

Unquestionably, one of the reforms by which