

Pope, the other great satirist of modern times, is chiefly distinguished as such by "The Dunciad." It is a fine model of fierce, sweeping, powerful satire, in which he annihilates his hordes of literary enemies. In the latter part of the poem he gives a sketch of the gradual decline and corruption of taste and learning in Europe, in which he finely displays his talents. The plot of the poem is the Iliad of the Dunces. Pope represents the throne of Dulness left vacant by the death of Shadwell, and the various aspirants to the succession as engaging in a series of trials like the Olympic games of old, to determine who should inherit it. The palm of stupidity was given to Theobald, Pope's successful rival in editing Shakespeare. In the "Imitations of Horace" he fits the topics of the Roman poet to the persons and vice of his own day. One of the best instances of his sparkling wit and raillery is "The Rape of the Lock." It is considered by some the very best of his works both in plan and execution.

Besides these two more permanent satirists, there were many others whose works show the satiric element less distinctly; Moore, Burns, Cowper, Churchill and Johnson were some worthy of special mention.

In France the best satiric poet was Boileau. His distinguishing work in this line is a series of twelve satires. In these he ventures to castigate the leaders of the world of letters. Malice has no place in his satire; he follows the type of Horace, always pleasant and gay, never cruel. He laughs at his contemporaries, nothing more. His "Poetic Art" is also enlivened with touches of didactic satire.

With one or two notable exceptions nothing of especial importance to literature has been produced in the satiric strain during this century. Byron gave vent to his rage against an unfavorable criticism in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," in which he assailed not only the critics who had censured him but almost all the literary men of his day. He might have been the greatest of satirists had his mind lent itself to a calm and disinterested observation of life, but his morbid sensitiveness and low cynicism led

him into passionate and intemperate invective against what was good as well as what was evil in his day and thus deprives his work of the praise that is due to his noble style and diction. In our own country, James Russell Lowell has produced almost the only instance of American satiric poetry. During the Mexican War he was very much opposed to the war policy. In the "Bigelow Papers" he assumes the Yankee dialect, and by his sparkling native wit gives expression to his own sentiments in very persuasive yet inoffensive language. He represents perhaps as high a moral level as has ever been attained by satire.

It may be remarked that the really good pieces of satiric poetry are comparatively few, but it must be remembered that not a small proportion of the best satiric expression has not been put into verse, especially in modern times, and although satiric poetry has declined, it is not because of the decline of the satire element, but because of the general decline of poetry that it has fallen into disuse. Thus few masterpieces of satiric poetry have appeared in these later days, nevertheless, the spirit of satire has in no age been so generally diffused as in the present century, only instead of the stately verse of a Horace or a Pope, it now uses as its vehicle the comedy and the caricature. Originally employed as a scourge of general evil, it has now become the weapon of all contention and controversy. Satire is the natural accompaniment of freedom of speech, but when common to all it is likely to be perfected by few; and consequently in our day the office of the studied satire and much more the satiric poem has been usurped by the press, assailing the vices of the day as they arise. Satiric poetry, although now a thing of history is nevertheless a branch of literature by no means to be neglected. Not only does it furnish some of the grandest monuments of the didactic order of poetry, but transmits to us the finest models of keen, poignant wit and the originality and robust vigor of true satiric genius.

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