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## SOCIAL LIFE IN THE REIGN OF QUEEN ANNE.\*

THIS set of social pictures is an interesting and valuable addition to the materials for a history of the reign of Anne. It is strange, considering the extreme attractiveness of the subject, that a good history of that period has not yet been written. While Macaulay lived, the theme was appropriated to his pen. That he did not live to handle it was deemed an immense calamity, yet it may have been a literary blessing in disguise. His work, amazingly brilliant as it is, and wonderful as is the art of conducting a narrative displayed in it, is not history, as all who know the history are aware. It is a splendid Whig epic, of which William is the hero; and the character of the hero, like everything else, is marred by rhetorical exaggeration. Point, picturesqueness, antithesis are perpetually sought at the expense of fidelity, and some-

times in disregard of plain fact. Macaulay was devoid of philosophy; he never thinks of assigning his period to its place in general history; hardly ever does he even refer to anything beyond the four corners of his canvas. Hence his want of proportion and balance. Since his death the subject has been waiting for some one who could treat it worthily. Lord Stanhope tried, but the result was a mere abortion. The qualities which made his former work very pleasant reading, though not a masterpiece, seemed to have utterly deserted him. Mr. Burton had given us a history of Scotland which, albeit not brilliant, was deservedly esteemed as a sober, trustworthy, and judicial narrative. His "History of the Reign of Anne" is sober with a vengeance, and saving some display of Scottish feeling, judicial; but it can hardly be called a narrative at all. It is rather a series of dissertations on successive portions of the history, without a previous knowledge of which it would not be

\* A Review: from the New York Nation, of "Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne," taken from Original Sources by John Ashton, author of "Chapbooks of the Eighteenth Century," etc. London: Hazell & Windus, New York: Scribner & Welford.