

Coverley Paper by Addison and Steele

Written by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, the de Coverley Paper is the mirror of the eighteenth century's life and manner, both of the city and countryside. Sir Roger, one of the good friends of Addison and Steele, represents the lifestyle of rural England in eighteenth century.

In eighteenth century class conflict becomes one of the major social factors. Sir Roger is a country squire, who has a great relationship with his servants. The servants have been working here for a long time, who are very faithful and love him. He also shows kindness to them and maintains a fatherly relationship. Though he loves his servants, he never gives his used things to them. He thinks that if the servants use his cast off things, then they will suppose them as a landlord, which demonstrates the class distinction.

Eighteenth century is known as 'Age of reason'. Because of the scientific revolution, people are becoming more reasonable. Sir Roger is the symbol of reason according to eighteenth century. There is a haunt beside Sir Roger's house, where the servants of the house don't go because of fear. They can see or feel supernatural things, such as ghost. Then Sir Roger tells his clergyman to stay a night in that haunt to reduce the fear of his servants. Thus Sir Roger proves that there is no ghost and everything is created by weak mind.

Eighteenth century is totally a money oriented society and the major aspect of social conflict. People's pretence about wealth is unfortunately common at that time. They borrow money from others to spend extravagantly. This empty pride only shows dishonor. Someone who has less money should spend money within a limit and also should not feel shame to be poor. But the shame of poverty is a common scene of eighteenth century.

London is a mono centered country in eighteenth century. Everyone want to go to London to survive in a better situation. When a country man goes to London, he tries to imitate the city people, which he actually cannot perform, rather just lose the simplicity of honesty. Thus simplicity is considered a guilt by the cruelty of city life.

The main subject of the Coverley Paper is to satire the society. Though this is the age of enlighten, scientific revolution has occurred and people become educated; social, psychological, political conflict have appeared- all these factors are portrayed by Addison and Steele through wit irony and symbols.

Character of Sir Roger

Sir Roger de Coverley is a fictional Tory character who was created to serve as a farcical squire stereotype of the bygone era by the Whig authors, Addison and Steele. His character is a well mixture of hospitality, humanity, love, helpfulness, disappointment, superstition, singularities, kindness, honesty and goodness. Although the character was created to deride the Tory mannerisms of the bygone era, Addison's satire is very mild, and that makes Sir Roger a rather agreeable character. Sometimes his behaviour seems to be very odd but they proceed from his good sense. He is beloved rather than esteemed by all who know him.

Sir Roger portrayed the antiquated country gentleman stereotype, allowing for *The Spectator* to deride him as a nostalgic relic. The traditional paternalistic attitude of Sir Roger when dealing with his tenants and servants is another example of a country trait that the authors attempted to mock. Instead their efforts resulted in Sir Roger appearing sympathetic and commendable, as the attitude stood in sharp contrast to the new generation of hard-hearted landed aristocrats. Unlike these new landowners, Sir Roger continued to observe traditional forms of country hospitality.

After getting invitation from Sir Roger, the author went to Sir Roger's country house. Here we see that he is very hospitable and did everything possible to make his friend happy, comfortable, free, and undisturbed.

In "Sir Roger at Home", Sir Roger's treatment of his servants is adequately dealt with. He loved each of them and he maintained a friendly relationship with them and inquired after their health and family. His nice behaviour towards them helped them develop such love for him that if they were not employed, they seemed discouraged. The servants in the household of Sir Roger considered themselves quite fortunate to have a master like him. They seemed to enjoy doing whatever he demanded them to do. He believed in the equality of master and servants. It bears the testimony that his treatment to his servants was ideal. Even his pet dog or a retired horse was not left unloved. The love between the master and the servants developed in such a degree that if he simply coughed or showed any infirmity of old age, there appeared tension in the looks of his servants.

To some extent Sir Roger can be considered to be eccentric. In the essay "Sir Roger at Church" his eccentricity is seen in which he exercised his authority. While the healthy living and paternalistic communal relations demonstrated by Sir Roger are portrayed with subtle admiration, his dealings with the local church are highly satirized in "Sir Roger at Church". Mr. Spectator could not suppress a hint of bemusement over Sir Roger's complete authority in the church writing that, 'As Sir Roger is Landlord to the whole congregation; he keeps them in very good order, and will suffer no body to sleep in it besides himself...' The squire routinely caused disruptions such as lengthening the verses of psalms, standing while others were kneeling so as to note any absences and interrupting the sermon to tell people not to disturb the congregation with fidgeting or making noise. Mr. Spectator opined that the worthiness of his character made these behavioural oddities seem like foils rather than blemishes of his good qualities. He also noted that none of the other parishioners were polite or educated enough to recognise the ridiculousness of Sir Roger's behaviour in and authority over the church. These observations of Sir Roger's love of the high-Anglican church in the countryside are essential to the authors' original purpose for creating the character, to mock the seemingly backwards rural Tory.

In summing up, it can be said that despite being a man of great honour, Sir Roger is regarded as a humorist and sometimes eccentric because of possessing some oddities or peculiarities in him. However, the ultimate aim of Addison was not to show his humorous expressions to make up laugh only, rather to make up correct for our follies and absurdities. But the main intention of Mr. Spectator was to correct the society, to reform every corner of life by presenting the character Sir Roger.

The Battle of the Books – Summary

The Battle of the Books by Jonathan Swift contains a satirical account of the controversy that had been going on for some time in England with regard to the comparative merits of the ancient authors and modern authors.

Summary

Swift gives the origin of the dispute between the two parties of books in the very beginning in allegorical terms. He regards the ancient authors and the modern authors as the occupants of two summits of a mountain called Paranssus (which was sacred to Apollo and the Muses), the summit occupied by the Ancients being higher than the one occupied by the Moderns. A feeling of jealousy leads the Moderns to challenge the right of the Ancients to occupy the higher summit. The quarrel between the occupants of the two summits, says Swift, then spread to the books lying on the shelves of St. James's Library.

Before describing the actual battle fought by the books, Swift takes the opportunity to attack Richard Bentley who was the keeper of the aforesaid library and a champion of the Ancients, Swift satirizes Bentley for his discourtesy towards those who wanted to borrow books or manuscripts from the library and for his inability to think clearly or to keep the library books in a proper order.

Swift then turns to the books themselves and the dispute which was taking place between them. One of the Ancients, says Swift, had tried to settle the matter by arbitration but had failed in his effort to assuage the tempers. This ancient author had pointed out that the writers belonging to his side were really wiser than those of the modern times and that they were entitled to greater respect because of their antiquity. But the Moderns did not accept this argument and went so far as to claim that of the two parties the Moderns were the more ancient.

Swift then proceeds to describe an important event which occurred at this juncture. A bee, finding a hole in a broken window-pane of the library, came inside and landed upon a spider's cobweb. This invasion by the bee led to a dispute between the two (the spider and the bee). The spider spoke to the bee in a contemptuous tone, pointing out that while he himself owned an impressive palace (namely, his cobweb) the bee had no property or substance at all except a pair of wings and a drone-pipe. The bee in reply said that heaven had given to him the power to fly and the power to sing, and that he visited all the flowers and the blossoms of the field and the garden, gathering the required materials for his use. The bee also alleged that the spider's palace, while exhibiting "method and art", was absolutely devoid of "duration and matter". The bee went on to say that all that the spider produced was poison while the bee produced honey and wax.

Aesop now speaks and states that whatever the bee had said in favour of himself could be applied to the ancient authors and that whatever the bee had alleged against the spider could be applied to the Moderns. According to Aesop, the Moderns have no real grounds for boasting of their genius or their inventions because, even if they possess method and skill, they have only produced works which will soon be forgotten because the materials of which those works are made have come out of the authors themselves and are therefore no better than dirt. The Moderns cannot claim to any genuine productions of real value. Much in their work can be described as mere wrangling and satire which maybe compared to the spider's poison. As for the Ancients, they have their imaginative flights and their language. The Ancients collected their materials from every corner of Nature and they have produced works full of honey and wax which have contributed to mankind two of the noblest things, which are sweetness and light.

Swift then goes on to mention the books which took part in the battle. However, instead of naming the books by their titles, he names the authors of the books which took part in the fight. When the two armies of warriors had thus got ready for the battle, Fame, who had at one time an important position in the library, flew up straight to the chief god, Jupiter, and gave him a faithful account of what was happening below on the earth. Jupiter immediately called a meeting of the gods and goddesses in order to decide upon a course of action. However, there being a difference of opinion among the god sand goddesses, Jupiter privately consulted the Book of Fate and gave appropriate orders to his agents to go down to the library and manipulate events in accordance with those orders.

Momus, the god of jealous mockery, who at the conference of the gods and goddesses had taken the side of the Moderns, now enlisted the support of a goddess known as Criticism. This goddess was very malignant and she lent her full support to the Moderns.

Swift then goes on to describe the battle itself. He tells us that the first to start the offensive was Paracelus who attacked Galen with a javelin but who was himself wounded by Galen's counterattack. Then Aristotle shot an arrow at Bacon, but Bacon escaped being injured and the arrow hit and killed another modern philosopher whose name was Descartes. Now it was Homer's turn to launch an attack upon the modern epic poets. Next came Virgil, another ancient epic poet. He found himself face to face with the modern poet, Dryden who also had attempted epic poetry (by writing a translation of Virgil's Aeneid). Dryden, however, acknowledged Virgil's superiority to himself as an epic poet, and sought a compromise with the enemy.

Yet another ancient epic poet, by the name of Lucan, now attacked two Moderns who also had attempted epic poetry. These Moderns were Richard Blackmore and Thomas Creech. Then the ancient poet, Pindar, the famous writer of Odes came forward and killed such modern writers of Pindaric Odes as John Oldham and Afra Behn, and Abraham Cowley. Then comes the last episode in The Battle of the Books. The central figures in this last episode are Bentley and Wotton (who were the champions of the Moderns), and Temple and Boyle (the champions of the Ancients). Swift pours all his scorn and ridicule upon Bentley and Wotton. These moderns see Phalaris and Aesop lying fast asleep in the distance, but they do not have the courage to attack them. Wotton even fails in his attempt to quench his thirst at the spring known as Helicon. The two friends then encounter Charles Boyle who attacks them with a lance and kills both of them at one stroke. According to Swift's satirical account, then, Temple and Boyle had been victorious in their support of the Ancients as against Bentley and Wotton who had opposed the Ancients and given all their support to the Moderns.