

The Spectator, #2

By Richard Steele

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THE SPECTATOR

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Ast Alli sex Et plures uno conclamant ore.-- Juv , ^{Juvenal}

THE first of our Society is a Gentleman of Worcestershire, ^{county}, of antient Descent, a Baronet, ^{Baronet}, his Name Sir ROGER DE COVERLY, ^{Roger}. His great Grandfather was Inventor of that famous Country-Dance which is call'd after him, ^{country-dance}. All who know that Shire, ^{shire} are very well acquainted with the Parts and Merits of Sir ROGER. He is a Gentleman that is very singular in his Behaviour but his Singularities proceed from his good Sense, and are Contradictions to the Manners of the World, only as he thinks the World is in the wrong. However, this Humour creates him no Enemies, for he does nothing with Sourness or Obstinacy; and his being unconfined to Modes and Forms, makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town he lives in Soho Square, ^{soho}: It is said, he keeps himself a Batchelour by reason he was crossed in Love by a perverse, ^{batchelour} beautiful Widow of the next County to him. Before this Disappointment, Sir ROGER was what you call a fine Gentleman, had often supped, ^{supped} with my Lord Rochester, ^{Rochester}, and Sir George Etherege, ^{Etherege}, fought a duel upon his first coming to Town, and kick'd Bully Dawson, ^{Dawson} in a publick Coffee-house for calling him Youngster. But being ill used by the above-mentioned Widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and tho his Temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself and never dressed afterwards; he continues to wear a Coat and Doublet, ^{doublet} of the same Cut that were in Fashion at the Time of his Repulse, ^{repulse}, which, in his merry Humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he first wore it. Tis said Sir ROGER grew humble in his Desires after he had forgot this cruel Beauty, insomuch that it is reported he has frequently offended in Point of Chastity with Beggars and Gypsies: but this is look d upon by his Friends rather as Matter of raillery, ⁿ⁰¹⁶ than Truth. He is now in his Fifty-sixth Year, cheerful, gay, and hearty, keeps a good House in both Town and Country; a great Lover of Mankind; but there is such a mirthful Cast in his Behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His Tenants grow rich, his Servants look satisfied, all the young Women profess Love to him, and the young Men are glad of his Company: When he comes into a House he calls the Servants by their Names, and talks all the way Up Stairs to a Visit. I must not omit that Sir ROGER is a Justice of the Quorum, ^{quorum}; that he fills the chair at a Quarter-Session, ^{quarter-session} with great Abilities, and three Months ago, gained universal Applause by explaining a Passage in the Game-Act, ^{game-act}.

The Gentleman next in Esteem and Authority among us, is another Batchelour, who is a Member of the Inner Temple, ^{temple}: a Man of great Probity, ^{probity}, Wit, and Understanding; but he has chosen his Place of Residence rather to obey the Direction of an old humoursome Father, than in pursuit of his own Inclinations. He was plac'd there to study the Laws of the Land, and is the most learned of any of the House in those of the Stage. Aristotle and Longinus are much better understood by him than Littleton or Cooke, ^{littleton-coke}. The Father sends up every Post Questions relating to Marriage-Articles, Leases, and Tenures, in the Neighbourhood; all which Questions he agrees with an Attorney to answer and take care of in the Lump. He is studying the Passions themselves, when he should be inquiring into the Debates among Men which

arise from them. He knows the Argument of each of the Orations of *Demosthenes* , ^{Demosthenes} and *Tully* , ^{Tully} , but not one Case in the Reports of our own Courts. No one ever took him for a Fool, but none, except his intimate Friends, know he has a great deal of Wit. This Turn makes him at once both disinterested and agreeable : As few of his Thoughts are drawn from Business, they are most of them fit for Conversation. His Taste of Books is a little too just for the Age he lives in; he has read all, but approves of very few. His Familiarity with the Customs, Manners, Actions, and Writings of the Ancients, makes him a very delicate Observer of what occurs to him in the present World. He is an excellent Critick, and the Time of the Play is his Hour of Business exactly at five he passes through New Inn, crosses through *Russel Court* , ^{Russel} ; and takes a turn at *Will's*, ^{Wills} till the play begins; he has his shoes rubb'd and his Perriwig power'd at the Barber's as you go into the *Rose*, ^{Rose} . It is for the Good of the Audience when he is at a Play, for the Actors have an Ambition to please him.

The Person of next Consideration is Sir ANDREW FREEPORT, a Merchant of great Eminence in the City of London: A Person of indefatigable, ^{indefatigable} industry, strong Reason, and great Experience, his Notions of Trade are noble and generous, and (as every rich Man has usually some sly Way of Jesting, which would make no great Figure were he not a rich Man) he calls the Sea the *British* Common. He is acquainted with Commerce in all its Parts, and will tell you that it is a stupid and barbarous Way to extend Dominion by Arms; for true Power is to be got by Arts and industry. He will often argue, that if this Part of our Trade were well cultivated, we should gain from one Nation; and if another, from another. I have heard him prove that Diligence makes more lasting Acquisition than Valour, and that Sloth has ruin'd more Nations than the Sword. He abounds in several frugal Maxims, amongst which the greatest Favourite is, *A Penny saved is a Penny got* . A General Trader of good Sense is pleasanter Company than a general Scholar; and Sir ANDREW having a natural unaffected Eloquence, the Perspicuity, ^{perspicuity} of his Discourse gives the same Pleasure that Wit would in another Man. He has made his Fortunes himself; and says that *England* may be richer than other Kingdoms, by as plain Methods as he himself is richer than other Men; tho at the same Time I can say this of him, that there is not a Point in the Compass, but blows home a Ship in which he is an Owner, ^{ship} .

Next to Sir ANDREW in the Club-room sits Captain SENTRY, a Gentleman of great Courage, good Understanding, but Invincible Modesty. He is one of those that deserve very well, but are very awkward at putting their Talents within the Observation of such as should take notice of them. He was some Years a Captain, and behaved himself with great Gallantry, ^{gallantry} in several Engagements, and at several Sieges; but having a small Estate of his own, and being next Heir to Sir ROGER, he has quitted a Way of Life in which no Man can rise suitably to his Merit, who is not something of a Courtier, as well as a Soldier. I have heard him often lament, that in a Profession where Merit is placed in so conspicuous, ^{conspicuous} a View, Impudence, ^{impudence} should get the better of Modesty. When he has talked to this Purpose, I never heard him make a sour Expression, but frankly confess that he left the World, because he was not fit for it. A strict Honesty and an even regular Behaviour, are in themselves Obstacles to him that must press through Crowds who endeavour at the same End with himself; the Favour of a Commander. He will, however, in this Way of Talk, excuse Generals, for not disposing according to Men's Desert, or enquiring into it: For, says he, that great Man who has a Mind to help me, has as many to break through to come at me, as I have to come at him : Therefore he will conclude, that the Man who would make a Figure, especially in a military Way, must get over all false Modesty, and assist his Patron against the Importunity, ^{importunity} of other Pretenders,

by a proper Assurance in his own Vindication. He says it is a civil Cowardice to be backward in asserting what you ought to expect, as it is a military Fear to be slow in attacking when it is your Duty. With this Candour, ^{candour} does the Gentleman speak of himself and others. The same Frankness runs through all his Conversation. The military Part of his Life has furnished him with many Adventures, in the Relation of which he is very agreeable to the Company; for he is never over-bearing, though accustomed to command Men in the utmost Degree below him; nor ever too obsequious, ^{obsequious}, from an Habit of obeying Men highly above him.

But that our Society may not appear a Set of Humorists, ^{humorists} unacquainted with the Gallantries and Pleasures of the Age, we have among us the gallant Will. HONEYCOMB, a Gentleman who, according to his Years, should be in the Decline of his Life, but having ever been very careful of his Person, and always had a very easy Fortune, Time has made but very little Impression, either by Wrinkles on his Forehead, or Traces in his Brain. His Person is well turned, ^{well-turned}, and of a good Height. He is very ready at that sort of Discourse with which Men usually entertain Women. He has all his Life dressed very well, and remembers Habits as others do Men. He can smile when one speaks to him, and laughs easily. He knows the History of every Mode, and can inform you from which of the *French* King's Wenches our Wives and Daughters had this Manner of curling their hair, that Way of placing their Hoods; whose Frailty was covered by such a Sort of Petticoat, and whose Vanity to show her Foot made that Part of the Dress so short in such a Year. In a Word, all his Conversation and Knowledge has been in the female World: As other Men of his Age will take Notice to you what such a Minister said upon such and such an Occasion, he will tell you when the Duke of *Monmouth* danced at Court such a Woman was then smitten, another was taken with him at the Head of his Troop in the Park. In all these important Relations, he has ever about the same Time received a kind Glance, or a Blow of a Fan, from some celebrated Beauty, Mother of the present Lord such-a-one. If you speak of a young Commoner that said a lively thing in the House, he starts up, He has good Blood in his Veins, Tom *Mirabell* begot, ^{begot} him, the Rogue, ^{rogue} cheated me in that Affair; that young Fellow's Mother used me more like a Dog than any Woman I ever made Advances to. This Way of Talking of his, very much enlivens the Conversation among us of a more sedate Turn; and I find there is not one of the Company but myself, who rarely speak at all, but speaks of him as of that Sort of Man, who is usually called a well-bred fine Gentleman. To conclude his Character, where Women are not concerned, he is an honest worthy Man.

I cannot tell whether I am to account him whom I am next to Speak of, as one of our Company; for he visits us but seldom, but when he does, it adds to every Man else a new Enjoyment of himself. He is a Clergyman, a very philosophick Man, of general Learning, great Sanctity of Life, and the most exact good Breeding. He has the Misfortune to be of a very weak Constitution, and consequently cannot accept of such Cares and Business as Preferements, ^{preferments} in his Function would Oblige him to: He is therefore among Divines what a Chamber-Counsellor, ^{counsellor} is among Lawyers. The Probity of his Mind, and the Integrity of his Life, create him Followers, as being eloquent or loud advances others. He seldom introduces the Subject he speaks upon; but we are so far gone in Years, that he observes when he is among us, an Earnestness to have him fall on some divine Topick, which he always treats with much Authority, as one who has no Interests in this World, as one who is hastening to the Object of all his Wishes, and conceives Hope from his Decays and Infirmities, ^{infirmities}. These are my ordinary Companions.

R.^r

Footnotes

Juvenal "Half a dozen or more shout with one voice." Juvenal, from *Satire VII*

county A county in the center of the United Kingdom, about 130 miles from London.

Baronet A title given to the lowest ranking in the hereditary order: lower than a baron.

Roger Steele took the name from the country dance when he invented this character, claiming that the dance was named after the character's grandfather rather than the other way around. Sir Roger de Coverly became perhaps the most famous and to some extent beloved of the characters of the "Spectator club" outlined in this issue, representing the type of an eccentric but benign country gentleman.

country-dance Roger de Coverly is the name of an English and Scottish country dance. The dance, in title and step, refer to a fox and the process of the fox running in and out of hiding while being hunted. Source: Wikipedia

shire County

soho A garden square built in the late 1670s in Soho, London. Soho Square was considered one of the most fashionable places to stay in London at the time. Source: Wikipedia

batchelour Irrational, fickle, or illogical.

supped dined

Rochester John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, an English poet and courtier of Charles II's Restoration court. He was one of the "Merry Gang" of courtiers who were known for blending a life of intellectual pursuit with frequent alcohol and sex. As a writer he was described by some of his colleagues as one of the best English satirists, best known for his "A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind." (Source: Wikipedia)

Etherege English dramatist most famously known for his 1677 comedy, *The Man of Mode*, whose title character Dorimant is a libertine who might have been modeled on Rochester. All of the figures named here had become notorious examples of the kind of licentiousness that people in Steele's era associated with the court culture of a few decades earlier.

Dawson Bully Dawson was a infamous gambler in London during the time of Charles II. His name became synonymous with a drunkard and a fool. Source: Wikipedia

doublet A tight-fitting short jacket, which could come with or without sleeves. Fashionable in the 1600s, but very much out of style by Steele's time.

repulse Rejection.

raillery Good-humored banter. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

quorum Like many such country gentlemen, Sir Roger is a local justice of the peace; a justice of the "quorum" was one considered to be especially experienced and familiar with the law.

quarter-session- Most courts in England at this time met once per quarter, or four times a year.

game-act- The Game Act of 1671 put significant restrictions on hunting, such that hunting of pheasants, rabbits, partridges and other small game could only be hunted by property owners. Up until that point, it had been legal for just about anyone to hunt small game, and was considered something of a right for poor people to supplement their diets by hunting. With the Game-Act, that was defined as poaching, and landowners could prosecute people who did not own property who hunted on their land.

temple- That is, he is a lawyer; the Inner Temple is one of the Inns of Court, the headquarters of the legal profession in London.

probity- Integrity or honesty. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

littleton-coke- Thomas de Littleton and Sir Edward Coke, two of the most important commentators and theorists of English law. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

Demosthenes- An ancient Greek orator.

Tully- The Roman orator Cicero.

Russel- Russell Court is in Covent Garden, in the theater district.

Wills- A well-known coffee-shop in the Covent-Garden neighborhood.

Rose- A tavern then located on Brydges Street, next to the Drury Lane Theatre.

indefatigable- Unable of being tired; tireless. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

perspicuity- Clarity

ship- That is, Sir Andrew is a very succesful trader, who has an ownership stake in ships that are trading aall over the world

gallantry- Bravery, courage. Source: Oxford English Dictionary. It is worth noting here that Steele had a career as a soldier before he turned to playwriting and journalism

conspicuous- Clearly visible. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

impudence- Insolence or Shamelessness. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

importunity- The irritating persistence of demanding or making requests. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

candour- frankness

obsequious Submissive. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

humorists Steele is referring to the ancient theory of "humours," which imagined that personality was determined by the balance of humours or fluids in the body. Here, the suggestion is that the club so far consists of a series of quirky eccentrics.

well-turned Attractive and well formed. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

begot Produced, gave to. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

rogue A vagrant or scoundrel. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

preference Preference or advantage. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

counsellor A private advisor. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

infirmities Weaknesses, lack of power. Source: Oxford English Dictionary

r Steele signed many of his contributions with the letter R for Richard.