Attract Notice by the Copiousness of His Talk...

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Attract Notice by the Copiousness of His Talk...

In an issue of Samuel Johnson’s “The Idler” one of the articles is about a man returning to his home town. There he encounters a visit with his family that is unsatisfying. Most of his complaints are due to lack of proper conversation, or at least, the type of conversation he desires. What this man, Gelaleddin, wants is to display himself and his knowledge in front of his family. They do not indulge him; neither do the people in the general public.

No one seems to agree with Gelaleddin’s idea of fun, but why not? Conversation seems to be a staple of entertainment at various visits. People enjoy talking about the latest gossip, current events, themselves, etc. Perhaps this Mr. Gelaleddin is a basis for the character of Mr. Collins, wordy and self-important. In Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, there are many encounters with Mr. Collins and his inability to entertain anyone during a visit. Specifically, his visit with the Bennet family is abysmal. He is under the impression that his topics of modesty, morality, and Lady Catherine de Bourgh are overwhelmingly exciting. "Mr. Collins was eloquent in her praise. The subject elevated him to more than usual solemnity of manner, and with a most important aspect he protested that he had never in his life witnessed such behavior in a person of rank – such affability and condescension, as he has himself experienced from Lady Catherine" (Austen 103). This is only the first mention of Mr. Collins fawning over Lady Catherine; every following instance is in the same fashion, which becomes severely dull to the Bennets before the second volume of the novel. Neither of the men in these excerpts really knows how to entertain someone through conversation. During a visit where conversation, and maybe some tea, is the only pastime, they may want to try sticking with some other current events. In Austen’s novel most of the characters resort to gossip. For example, Elizabeth talking to Wickham about Darcy, Mrs. Bennet talking to Lady Lucas about Mr. Bingley, or Mrs. Bennet talking in general about who has how much money. The novel and Samuel Johnson’s “The Idler” show some similarities of the wrong ways to entertain during a visit.

Posted by Anna Jobert at 6:47 AM

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