

**On the Perverse Widow and Sir Roger's Disappointment in Love -  
Richard Steele**

In the essay *Of the Club*, Steele has given a brief description of the members of the club. Describing Sir Roger he says that the knight had been a dandy in his youth but had changed his ways; had become very sober and somewhat careless about dress after he had been thwarted in his love for a widow. The widow is throughout the essays referred to as the 'perverse widow'. In one of the later essays, *His Account of his Disappointment in Love*, we have the description of his first meeting with the widow. He was in his twenty-third year, young and proud of the handsome appearance he cut. He saw the widow first in the court over which he presides in his capacity of country magistrate. The case being tried was related to the widow's inheritance. The widow had many admirers and Sir Roger was added to these just as she cast a look upon him. She captivated his heart, and bewitched him and Sir Roger's love affair.

**The visit to the widow's house : not successful** : After losing his heart to the widow at the court, Sir Roger felt encouraged when he was told by someone that the widow considered Sir Roger to be "the tamest and most humane of all the brutes in the country", and decided to call upon her. He got new uniforms made for his servants, new matched the coach horses, sent them to town to learn to trot properly, and then ventured to visit the widow. On seeing her, however, Sir Roger was so overawed that he sat silently, unable to utter a word. Seeing the embarrassment of the knight, the widow started speaking on love and honour and false and true followers of these sentiments. Sir Roger was even more awe-struck and impressed. It did not help matters any more when the lady's 'confident' remarked that Sir Roger's silence showed that his reply, when it

came, would be thoroughly exhaustive of the subject. Puzzled and embarrassed, Sir Roger took his leave after half an hour of silence in which he could not decide what to say.

**Sir Roger's love is not reciprocated** : After the unhappy experience of the visit to the widow's house, Sir Roger had often met the widow. On these chance meetings too the widow always made elaborate and involved discourses to Sir Roger which left him completely bewildered and awed. He found the widow rather cruel and hard hearted, even though he considered her also to be the most beautiful woman in the world. He knew that she had treated all her admirers rather shabbily but he could not help loving her. He had carved her name on the trees of one of the avenues on his estate to get some relief from his overw-whelming and hopeless passion but this only served to enhance his unhappiness, for whenever he saw the avenue he was reminded of her. We read about the love affair in the essays, His Account of his Disappointment in Love and Sir Roger's Reflections on the Widow.

**The role of the confidant** : According to Sir Roger, the widow might just have learnt to return his love if it had not been for her confidant. It was this female who was vicious enough to instigate the widow against Sir Roger. Sir Roger's views on confidants show a mixture of shrewdness and simple bitterness. The confidants prevent their mistresses from getting married by throwing in their faces the dictums the mistresses themselves had formulated against men and marriage. The confidant acquires great power and influence over the mistress's mind and wields this power mercilessly. Sir Roger is of the firm opinion that it was the widow's companion who was instrumental in his disappointment in love. The picture of the widow .

**The picture of the widow** Steele's art of characterisation comes out in these essays dealing with Sir Roger's affair of the heart. Though we never actually 'meet' the widow in person

in the essays, we are given a vivid picture of her through the words of Sir Roger. She becomes a living character even though she is not presented directly. She is beautiful as well as intelligent. She is able to hold her own in debates and discussions, being well informed and widely read. But she is a strange creature who rejoices in the admiration of her various admirers but does not return any of their love. She has a poor opinion of the male sex in general. She inflames the hearts of men but never responds encouragingly to them. She combined charm with a certain dignity which kept her admirers at a distance even while-inflaming their hearts. Her voice was sweet and she could sing beautifully. She was so confident of her own qualities that she could not be offended by any of her rejected lovers. She knew all the arts of coquetry and used them to great extent without, however, involving her true feelings. She had extraordinary and intellectual interests like studying bees. She was always accompanied by her confident to whom she told all her secret observations on the male sex in general. She is apparently a woman of beauty and intellect but one without a soft heart.

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#### POPULAR SUPERSTITION BY ADDISON

It is a social satire on the popular superstitions which scare us to do silly things.

The narrator is shocked when his friend's wife compares falling of salt on the table with the Battle of Alamas and warns him not to keep spoon and forks one upon another.

He is amused by the fear of the unlucky number 13 and the sounds of owl or cricket which bring fear of misfortune or disaster.

The narrator finds the ultimate solution in laying his faith in God's powers and avoid all mishaps. He ends it up by saying that a believer in God can turn every danger into an opportunity and every sorrow into a blessing.

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