

"SOWERS AND REAPERS."

By ANNE BEALE.



A PRETTY and interesting festival took place at Macready House on Saturday, October 8th. The juvenile members of the Sowers and Reapers' Union assembled there to commemorate a good work begun in the interests of the Theatrical Mission. Just thirteen weeks ago the energetic founder and director of this good work, the Rev. Courthope Todd, made an appeal to young people to aid him in supplying the ever-increasing needs of his large establishment, by collecting sums varying in amount from one penny upwards. This was speedily responded to, and already there are four hundred boys and girls doing good service. The result of their three months' labours has been over £90, duly sent to the Mission; and since, as the copy-books used to say, "A good beginning is very desirable," we may hope that before the next festival hundreds instead of tens may swell the much-needed funds. In recognition of the unselfish efforts of his young friends, Mr. Courthope Todd provided six presents for those who had worked the hardest; and as the writer was privileged to present them to the happy recipients, she may be supposed to "know all about it."

What is called the children's playroom was prepared for the occasion. This is on the ground-floor of the large building, and generally re-echoes to the mirth of the little ones who are employed in the various theatres. On the present occasion, however, it was lined with the young folk and their friends, who had gathered for the festival, while the centre was reserved for certain games to be played in due course. "Sowers and Reapers" were there from all parts, a few even hailing from a distance. It was pretty to see many tiny children who had learnt to collect for the "mites" of the pantomime, trying to understand the proceedings.

They began with a kindly and appreciative address by the founder of the Institution, in which he expressed gratitude to his young friends for their help, and gave them an account of what God had wrought amongst the children of the ballet and pantomime. Then three youths, gymnasts by profession, presented themselves to receive watches in recognition of years of faithful membership of the Institutes, Bible Classes, and Sunday services, as well as of the other advantages of Macready House. One had been a member fourteen years, almost from infancy to budding manhood. They were followed by half a

dozen young cooks, bearing baskets of cakes of their own making, and receiving in return presents of books in token of good service. It was evident that they made the most of their time, since, in addition to "rehearsal and play," they were studying the useful art of cookery. They were succeeded by the juvenile washerwomen, bearing specimens of their laundry-work, and also being rewarded by a suitable gift-book. Their young friends applauded them as they received their prizes from a young lady who had been among the largest collectors, and had come, we believe, from Cheltenham, to be not only a distributor but recipient of reward for good work done.

She was the first to stand at the small table in the centre of the room, on which were placed three helmets and three shields. These were made after the fashion of the old Roman helmet and shield, and were very handsome. The name of the winner was engraved on the brass plate appended, and a suitable text and emblem painted on the warlike gifts, which symbolised the "helmet of salvation, and the shield of faith," so beautifully and typically described by St. Paul in the last chapter of the Ephesians. The shields were presented to three girls, the helmets to three boys of various ages, one of the latter being so tall as to be compelled to stoop when the helmet was placed upon his head, thus causing amusement to his compeers amongst the spectators, and much applause. There was a consolation prize as well, in the form of a handsome desk, presented to one who should have received a helmet but for some mistake. It is a cause of congratulation and thankfulness to find that young gentlemen as well as young ladies are willing to aid in so excellent a work, and to "bring grist to a mill" which is prepared to receive any amount of corn for the sustentation of the Mission to Theatrical *Employés* all over the world. We write advisedly, for, thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Courthope Todd and their associates, wherever the stage, music-hall, or even circus, has penetrated, there is a Christian helper to advise, comfort, or assist the "poor player," be he or she young or old.

Our ceremonial over, the centre of the room was cleared of all save an ornamental pole, round which in no time a dozen young "theatricals" enacted the Belgian fishers' game. They were dressed in what we call Turkey-red, with check aprons, very inexpensively but very picturesquely. They wound in and out beneath the cords they held, twisting and untwisting them as they danced in a way which must be seen to be understood. This game over, they seated themselves in pairs, and became rowers of some imaginary golden boat, moving bodies and arms to the song they sang. Their youthful audience applauded them, and evidently appreciated the pretty sight.

But there was so much else to see in a short space of time, that the said audience was soon hurried below to the basement, where the acrobats and gymnasts, and other boy members of the theatrical world, have their own particular refreshment-bar, reading-room, and gymnasium. Here Bible-classes are held, and the youths of "the profession" learn that they must do their best to lead Christian lives amid the temptations of the stage. Some have belonged to the Institute over a dozen years. On the present occasion they displayed their gymnastic feats, and astonished the spectators by tumbling and climbing and vaulting as if they were "to the manner born," instead of being trained with pain and difficulty to these strange ways of pleasing the

public and earning a living. One little fellow of six, beginning this doubtful career, attracted the sympathy of young and old. It must be remembered that these lads seek the refuge of this, their own happy hunting-ground, during the intervals of leisure, when their places of performance are closed for an hour or so, and that they can obtain wholesome food for almost less than cost price, at their own particular refreshment-bar.

From the basement the guests swarmed up to the topmost storey, where the newly-formed orphanage for the children, whose theatrical parents are dead, is located. We forgot to describe how they presented themselves to receive toys and sweets when the prizes were distributed; and now they were rejoicing in them, and displaying them to every beholder. All would have strange and pitiful stories to tell if they could only tell them.

In addition to this budding orphanage, the "topmost storey" contains cubicles which are let to actresses "alone in London." Such often come up to this huge, overstocked city, upon the chance of an engagement, knowing no one, and uncertain where to turn, either for food or lodging. Macready House is truly a home at such periods.

On this festival day, however, it was, so to say, turned inside out for its "Sowers and Reapers," and they were invited to afternoon tea in the large room appropriated to the ladies of the ballet and chorus. Here the good matron and others had enough to do to supply the needs of the large party; and here the young laundresses were occupied in displaying their talents to the public. Pantomime children were turned into washerwomen, ironers, and manglers, and stood before small tubs, a miniature mangle, and an ironing-board, proud of an accomplishment that should turn to good account in their homes some future day. They looked as busy and occupied as if the world depended on their labours. So did the champion knitter, who was seated on a high chair before a knitting-machine, showing off her goods and asking for orders.

To this room, ordinarily, come the older members of the profession, for rest and refreshment in the intervals of their arduous labours. Here they are sure of a kindly reception, and can command a good meal at a reasonable price. Here also are held weekly free teas, and various religious services. When we reflect that sometimes as many as 300 actresses, mostly young, visit this large building in one day, and that the Theatrical Mission has 8,000 members, we cannot be surprised that funds are needed to supply and maintain the work.

Thus it is fervently hoped that the "Sowers and Reapers" may increase and multiply. Boys and girls, "young men and maidens," are invited to join the Union. Cards of membership and all necessary information will be supplied by Miss Rundle, the Secretary, on application to her at this same Macready House, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden.

But while we make this little private and confidential appeal to our friends and readers of the GIRL'S OWN PAPER, the handbell-ringer is summoning us downstairs to the children's play-room. He "rang us in," and is now "ringing us out," just as if he were the new and the old year. His chimes are very tuneful and cheerful, and we wonder how one pair of hands can manipulate so many bells. Here we encounter the Belgian fishers, who tell us that most of them belong to the Empire Theatre while the rest are "seeking engagements," and longing for the pantomime

season! Why? Because they and tens of thousands of poor children are bread-winners through their efforts to please and amuse an insatiable public! And to do this many do not reach their poor homes in all parts of London till past midnight, and but for the Theatrical Mission would be turned adrift

upon the crowded streets between "rehearsal and play."

And where, all this time, are the founder of this grand work and his devoted wife? They are here, there, and everywhere—"upstairs, downstairs, and in my lady's chamber." Let us strengthen their hands, for assuredly they

need help. They are, under Almighty God, the primary Sower and Reaper, and, therefore, chiefs of the Union, as His instruments. We say to them, as to their young allies, in the words of Holy Scripture, "Be not weary in well-doing, for ye shall reap if ye faint not."



OUR "POETS' CORNER."

JOSEPH ADDISON (1672).

THE stormy twelve years of Queen Anne's reign, when Whig and Tory parties disputed fiercely on topics we now think very unimportant; when Scotch people were filled with short-sighted indignation on account of their country's being joined in union with England; there yet managed to flourish a large school of writers who distinguished themselves in verse and prose. These twelve years have even been called the "Augustan Era of English Literature," from some supposed resemblance to the age of the Emperor Augustus.

Chief in this school of writers was Joseph Addison, some of whose poems are more familiar to us in the present day than perhaps is generally known, particularly by the young; yet who is there of education who cannot repeat the famous ode?—

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their glorious Architect proclaim.
Th' unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand."

And who is there who does not remember from their very childhood hearing in church the well-known hymn?—

"How are Thy servants blest, O Lord!
How sure is their defence!
Eternal wisdom is their guide,
Their help Omnipotence."

These poems of Addison's have lost none of their celebrity since they were written, nor are they likely to be forgotten in this generation. Joseph Addison was born in Wiltshire in the year 1672, and was such a puny, delicate child that he was baptised in all haste on the day he was born, as it was not expected he could live. But he managed to outgrow the delicacy of childhood, and when he was little more than fifteen years old entered Queen's College, Oxford. His first verses published in English were an address to the poet Dryden, beginning—

"How long, great poet, shall thy sacred
lays
Provoke our wonder, and transcend our
praise?"

A few words in passing about the celebrated poet John Dryden, who, at the time Addison so highly eulogised him, was at the height of his career, strange and chequered as it was, and was sending out numerous poems, some of which still retain their popularity. Dryden made an extraordinary contract with his publisher that speaks for the fertility of his powers of composition. He was to write *ten thousand*

verses in the form of *Fables*, and for this marvel of industry he was to receive 250 guineas for the first edition. Doubtless this contract would have been fulfilled to the letter, for Dryden had already published 7500 verses when death stopped his work.

Addison dedicated his Latin poems to Lord Halifax, and in return his patron procured him a pension of £300 a year from the Crown, that he might be enabled to travel to foreign countries to gather information and improve his mind by increased stores of knowledge.

One cannot but think this pension from the Crown was well laid out, and that it won a rich return. Addison went to Italy, and while enjoying the luxuriant climate, and visiting the classical scenes of Rome, he wrote a poetical journal to Lord Halifax, full of rich description and tuneful melody. But while he was luxuriating in the picturesque beauties of Geneva, the sad account reached him of King William's death, and consequently of the loss of his pension and Court patronage. But the poet was not the man to despair. Soon after his return to England he wrote a poem on the *Battle of Blenheim*, which so pleased Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer, that again he enjoyed the sunshine of Court favour. He was sent to Ireland as secretary to the Marquis of Wharton, the Lord-Lieutenant, and the Queen made him Keeper of the Records of Ireland.

Once in his life Addison had been tutor to the son of the Dowager Countess of Warwick, and for a long time, whether from love or ambition is not recorded, he had aspired to the hand of the haughty lady of title. Now he had become famous, and held a high position, she no longer refused to share his fortunes, and the marriage took place; but it did not prove by any means a happy one. Contradictory sentiments began to appear, and doubtless the disappointment was mutual. Addison's was by no means an idle life. At one time he was engaged in writing comedy, at another time he was equally occupied with tragedy; also many other works were produced by his fertile pen. Some of us have, no doubt, met with various little brown leather-covered books, the paper of which was coarse, the printing old-fashioned, and we have seen their names were either the *Spectator*, the *Tatler*, or the *Guardian*. In these books appear numerous essays, with the initials C. L. I. O. They are all written by Addison, and it is more as an essayist than as a poet he holds his high place in English literature. Some critics say his poems have not the fire of great genius, but are rather the outcome of intense study and refined classical taste. Be this as it may, of his essays there is no divided opinion; they are universally pronounced

brilliant and clever, and full of deep insight into human nature. In those "long-ago" days, when the faults and follies of the aristocracy needed reformation in no slight degree, Addison and other clever authors sent home the shafts of *satire, of wit, and humour* to the very hearts of the people. Fearlessly they poured forth their essays, and with much good humour and good sense wrote down pretence, and vice, and absurdity, sparing no one; and it is believed these essays led to a purer taste in literature, to better manners in social life, and to higher religious feelings.

Addison's last work was called the *Evidences of Christianity*. He did not live to finish it, however, but after a short illness died at Holland House at the comparatively early age of forty-seven. There is a monument to him in Poets' Corner. Did he imagine his name would one day be there, I wonder, when he wrote his thoughtful and touching paper, *Reflections in Westminster Abbey*?

Mention has been made of the "Augustan Era of English Literature," and it may be well to name one or two other poets who flourished at this time. Alexander Pope, a friend and fellow-writer with Addison in the essays for the *Spectator*, etc., is considered to have excelled Addison, both in the genius displayed in his poetry and in the refined taste of his satire. He translated the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, making about £9,000 by the translation. He also published an edition of Shakespeare's works in six volumes, and wrote, amongst other poems, an *Essay on Man*, which is still admired for its poetry. In his picturesque villa at Twickenham, Pope was making his mark in the age both in prose and verse.

Jonathan Swift also, a political and witty writer, and poet of *no mean order*, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, was at the same time publishing his often satirical verses, as he aided Addison in attempts to "lash the frivolities of the age," to portray its many absurdities, and to point out its lack of thoroughness.

Far away in Scotland, Allan Ramsay was contemporary with these English authors, and was singing *Farewell to Lochaber*, and delighting the people of his "ain country" with his poems, that were at once famed for tender simplicity, for manly earnestness, and pathetic feeling. Still Allan Ramsay was not behind his English rivals in his keen sense of humour. None better than he could depict scenes of innocent mirth, grotesque incident, or amusing descriptions of men and manners. Many of his lyrics have obtained a deserved celebrity, and are still sung, not only in Scotland but wherever there is a true taste for Scottish song.