

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.