

# SAMUEL JOHNSON

JOHNSON'S LIVES OF  
THE POETS. VOLUME 1

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*Johnson's Lives of the Poets – Volume 1:*

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# **Samuel Johnson Johnson's Lives of the Poets – Volume 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Johnson's "Lives of the Poets" were written to serve as Introductions to a trade edition of the works of poets whom the booksellers selected for republication. Sometimes, therefore, they dealt briefly with men in whom the public at large has long ceased to be interested. Richard Savage would be of this number if Johnson's account of his life had not secured for him lasting remembrance. Johnson's Life of Savage in this volume has not less interest than the Lives of Addison and Swift, between which it is set, although Savage himself has no right at all to be remembered in such company. Johnson published this piece of biography when his age was thirty-five; his other lives of poets appeared when that age was about doubled. He was very poor when the Life of Savage was written for Cave. Soon after its publication, we are told, Mr. Harte dined with Cave, and incidentally praised it. Meeting him again soon afterwards Cave said to Mr. Harte, "You made a man very happy t'other day." "How could that be?" asked Harte. "Nobody was there but

ourselves." Cave answered by reminding him that a plate of victuals was sent behind a screen, which was to Johnson, dressed so shabbily that he did not choose to appear.

Johnson, struggling, found Savage struggling, and was drawn to him by faith in the tale he told. We have seen in our own time how even an Arthur Orton could find sensible and good people to believe the tale with which he sought to enforce claim upon the Tichborne baronetcy. Savage had literary skill, and he could personate the manners of a gentleman in days when there were still gentlemen of fashion who drank, lied, and swaggered into midnight brawls. I have no doubt whatever that he was the son of the nurse with whom the Countess of Macclesfield had placed a child that died, and that after his mother's death he found the papers upon which he built his plot to personate the child, extort money from the Countess and her family, and bring himself into a profitable notoriety.

Johnson's simple truthfulness and ready sympathy made it hard for him to doubt the story told as Savage told it to him. But when he told it again himself, though he denounced one whom he believed to be an unnatural mother, and dealt gently with his friend, he did not translate evil into good. Through all the generous and kindly narrative we may see clearly that Savage was an impostor. There is the heart of Johnson in the noble appeal against judgment of the self-righteous who have never known the harder trials of the world, when he says of Savage, "Those are no proper judges of his conduct, who have slumbered away

their time on the down of plenty; nor will any wise man easily presume to say, 'Had I been in Savage's condition, I should have lived or written better than Savage.'" But Johnson, who made large allowance for temptations pressing on the poor, himself suffered and overcame the hardest trials, firm always to his duty, true servant of God and friend of man.

Richard Savage's whole public life was built upon a lie. His base nature foiled any attempt made to befriend him; and the friends he lost, he slandered; Richard Steele among them. Samuel Johnson was a friend easy to make, and difficult to lose. There was no money to be got from him, for he was altogether poor in everything but the large spirit of human kindness. Savage drew largely on him for sympathy, and had it; although Johnson was too clear-sighted to be much deceived except in judgment upon the fraudulent claims which then gave rise to division of opinion. The Life of Savage is a noble piece of truth, although it rests on faith put in a fraud.

H. M.

# ADDISON

Joseph Addison was born on the 1st of May, 1672, at Milston, of which his father, Lancelot Addison, was then rector, near Ambrosebury, in Wiltshire, and, appearing weak and unlikely to live, he was christened the same day. After the usual domestic education, which from the character of his father may be reasonably supposed to have given him strong impressions of piety, he was committed to the care of Mr. Naish at Ambrosebury, and afterwards of Mr. Taylor at Salisbury.

Not to name the school or the masters of men illustrious for literature, is a kind of historical fraud, by which honest fame is injuriously diminished: I would therefore trace him through the whole process of his education. In 1683, in the beginning of his twelfth year, his father, being made Dean of Lichfield, naturally carried his family to his new residence, and, I believe, placed him for some time, probably not long, under Mr. Shaw, then master of the school at Lichfield, father of the late Dr. Peter Shaw. Of this interval his biographers have given no account, and I know it only from a story of a BARRING-OUT, told me, when I was a boy, by Andrew Corbet, of Shropshire, who had heard it from Mr. Pigot, his uncle.

The practice of BARRING-OUT was a savage licence, practised in many schools to the end of the last century, by which the boys, when the periodical vacation drew near, growing

petulant at the approach of liberty, some days before the time of regular recess, took possession of the school, of which they barred the doors, and bade their master defiance from the windows. It is not easy to suppose that on such occasions the master would do more than laugh; yet, if tradition may be credited, he often struggled hard to force or surprise the garrison. The master, when Pigot was a schoolboy, was **BARRED OUT** at Lichfield; and the whole operation, as he said, was planned and conducted by Addison.

To judge better of the probability of this story, I have inquired when he was sent to the Chartreux; but, as he was not one of those who enjoyed the founder's benefaction, there is no account preserved of his admission. At the school of the Chartreux, to which he was removed either from that of Salisbury or Lichfield, he pursued his juvenile studies under the care of Dr. Ellis, and contracted that intimacy with Sir Richard Steele which their joint labours have so effectually recorded.

Of this memorable friendship the greater praise must be given to Steele. It is not hard to love those from whom nothing can be feared; and Addison never considered Steele as a rival; but Steele lived, as he confesses, under an habitual subjection to the predominating genius of Addison, whom he always mentioned with reverence, and treated with obsequiousness.

Addison, who knew his own dignity, could not always forbear to show it, by playing a little upon his admirer; but he was in no danger of retort; his jests were endured without resistance or



resentment. But the sneer of jocularly was not the worst. Steele, whose imprudence of generosity, or vanity of profusion, kept him always incurably necessitous, upon some pressing exigence, in an evil hour, borrowed a hundred pounds of his friend probably without much purpose of repayment; but Addison, who seems to have had other notions of a hundred pounds, grew impatient of delay, and reclaimed his loan by an execution. Steele felt with great sensibility the obduracy of his creditor, but with emotions of sorrow rather than of anger.

In 1687 he was entered into Queen's College in Oxford, where, in 1689, the accidental perusal of some Latin verses gained him the patronage of Dr. Lancaster, afterwards Provost of Queen's College; by whose recommendation he was elected into Magdalen College as a demy, a term by which that society denominates those who are elsewhere called scholars: young men who partake of the founder's benefaction, and succeed in their order to vacant fellowships. Here he continued to cultivate poetry and criticism, and grew first eminent by his Latin compositions, which are indeed entitled to particular praise. He has not confined himself to the imitation of any ancient author, but has formed his style from the general language, such as a diligent perusal of the productions of different ages happened to supply. His Latin compositions seem to have had much of his fondness, for he collected a second volume of the "*Musae Anglicanae*" perhaps for a convenient receptacle, in which all his Latin pieces are inserted, and where his poem on the Peace has the first place.

He afterwards presented the collection to Boileau, who from that time "conceived," says Tickell, "an opinion of the English genius for poetry." Nothing is better known of Boileau than that he had an injudicious and peevish contempt of modern Latin, and therefore his profession of regard was probably the effect of his civility rather than approbation.

Three of his Latin poems are upon subjects on which perhaps he would not have ventured to have written in his own language: "The Battle of the Pigmies and Cranes," "The Barometer," and "A Bowling-green." When the matter is low or scanty, a dead language, in which nothing is mean because nothing is familiar, affords great conveniences; and by the sonorous magnificence of Roman syllables, the writer conceals penury of thought, and want of novelty, often from the reader and often from himself.

In his twenty-second year he first showed his power of English poetry by some verses addressed to Dryden; and soon after published a translation of the greater part of the Fourth Georgic upon Bees; after which, says Dryden, "my latter swarm is scarcely worth the hiving." About the same time he composed the arguments prefixed to the several books of Dryden's Virgil; and produced an Essay on the Georgics, juvenile, superficial, and uninformative, without much either of the scholar's learning or the critic's penetration. His next paper of verses contained a character of the principal English poets, inscribed to Henry Sacheverell, who was then, if not a poet, a writer of verses; as is shown by his version of a small part of Virgil's Georgics,

published in the Miscellanies; and a Latin encomium on Queen Mary, in the "Musae Anglicanae." These verses exhibit all the fondness of friendship; but, on one side or the other, friendship was afterwards too weak for the malignity of faction. In this poem is a very confident and discriminate character of Spenser, whose work he had then never read; so little sometimes is criticism the effect of judgment. It is necessary to inform the reader that about this time he was introduced by Congreve to Montague, then Chancellor of the Exchequer: Addison was then learning the trade of a courtier, and subjoined Montague as a poetical name to those of Cowley and of Dryden. By the influence of Mr. Montague, concurring, according to Tickell, with his natural modesty, he was diverted from his original design of entering into holy orders. Montague alleged the corruption of men who engaged in civil employments without liberal education; and declared that, though he was represented as an enemy to the Church, he would never do it any injury but by withholding Addison from it.

Soon after (in 1695) he wrote a poem to King William, with a rhyming introduction addressed to Lord Somers. King William had no regard to elegance or literature; his study was only war; yet by a choice of Ministers, whose disposition was very different from his own, he procured, without intention, a very liberal patronage to poetry. Addison was caressed both by Somers and Montague.

In 1697 appeared his Latin verses on the Peace of Ryswick,

which he dedicated to Montague, and which was afterwards called, by Smith, "the best Latin poem since the 'Æneid.'" Praise must not be too rigorously examined; but the performance cannot be denied to be vigorous and elegant. Having yet no public employment, he obtained (in 1699) a pension of three hundred pounds a year, that he might be enabled to travel. He stayed a year at Blois, probably to learn the French language and then proceeded in his journey to Italy, which he surveyed with the eyes of a poet. While he was travelling at leisure, he was far from being idle: for he not only collected his observations on the country, but found time to write his "Dialogues on Medals," and four acts of Cato. Such, at least, is the relation of Tickell. Perhaps he only collected his materials and formed his plan. Whatever were his other employments in Italy, he there wrote the letter to Lord Halifax which is justly considered as the most elegant, if not the most sublime, of his poetical productions. But in about two years he found it necessary to hasten home; being, as Swift informs us, distressed by indigence, and compelled to become the tutor of a travelling squire, because his pension was not remitted.

At his return he published his Travels, with a dedication to Lord Somers. As his stay in foreign countries was short, his observations are such as might be supplied by a hasty view, and consist chiefly in comparisons of the present face of the country with the descriptions left us by the Roman poets, from whom he made preparatory collections, though he might have spared the trouble had he known that such collections had been made twice

before by Italian authors.

The most amusing passage of his book is his account of the minute republic of San Marino; of many parts it is not a very severe censure to say that they might have been written at home. His elegance of language, and variegation of prose and verse, however, gain upon the reader; and the book, though awhile neglected, became in time so much the favourite of the public that before it was reprinted it rose to five times its price.

When he returned to England (in 1702), with a meanness of appearance which gave testimony of the difficulties to which he had been reduced, he found his old patrons out of power, and was therefore, for a time, at full leisure for the cultivation of his mind; and a mind so cultivated gives reason to believe that little time was lost. But he remained not long neglected or useless. The victory at Blenheim (1704) spread triumph and confidence over the nation; and Lord Godolphin, lamenting to Lord Halifax that it had not been celebrated in a manner equal to the subject, desired him to propose it to some better poet. Halifax told him that there was no encouragement for genius; that worthless men were unprofitably enriched with public money, without any care to find or employ those whose appearance might do honour to their country. To this Godolphin replied that such abuses should in time be rectified; and that, if a man could be found capable of the task then proposed, he should not want an ample recompense. Halifax then named Addison, but required that the Treasurer should apply to him in his own person. Godolphin

sent the message by Mr. Boyle, afterwards Lord Carlton; and Addison, having undertaken the work, communicated it to the Treasury while it was yet advanced no further than the simile of the angel, and was immediately rewarded by succeeding Mr. Locke in the place of Commissioner of Appeals.

In the following year he was at Hanover with Lord Halifax: and the year after he was made Under Secretary of State, first to Sir Charles Hedges, and in a few months more to the Earl of Sunderland. About this time the prevalent taste for Italian operas inclined him to try what would be the effect of a musical drama in our own language. He therefore wrote the opera of *Rosamond*, which, when exhibited on the stage, was either hissed or neglected; but, trusting that the readers would do him more justice, he published it with an inscription to the Duchess of Marlborough—a woman without skill, or pretensions to skill, in poetry or literature. His dedication was therefore an instance of servile absurdity, to be exceeded only by Joshua Barnes's dedication of a Greek *Anacreon* to the Duke. His reputation had been somewhat advanced by *The Tender Husband*, a comedy which Steele dedicated to him, with a confession that he owed to him several of the most successful scenes. To this play Addison supplied a prologue.

When the Marquis of Wharton was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Addison attended him as his secretary; and was made Keeper of the Records, in Birmingham's Tower, with a salary of three hundred pounds a year. The office

was little more than nominal, and the salary was augmented for his accommodation. Interest and faction allow little to the operation of particular dispositions or private opinions. Two men of personal characters more opposite than those of Wharton and Addison could not easily be brought together. Wharton was impious, profligate, and shameless; without regard, or appearance of regard, to right and wrong. Whatever is contrary to this may be said of Addison; but as agents of a party they were connected, and how they adjusted their other sentiments we cannot know.

Addison must, however, not be too hastily condemned. It is not necessary to refuse benefits from a bad man when the acceptance implies no approbation of his crimes; nor has the subordinate officer any obligation to examine the opinions or conduct of those under whom he acts, except that he may not be made the instrument of wickedness. It is reasonable to suppose that Addison counteracted, as far as he was able, the malignant and blasting influence of the Lieutenant; and that at least by his intervention some good was done, and some mischief prevented. When he was in office he made a law to himself, as Swift has recorded, never to remit his regular fees in civility to his friends: "for," said he, "I may have a hundred friends; and if my fee be two guineas, I shall, by relinquishing my right, lose two hundred guineas, and no friend gain more than two; there is therefore no proportion between the good imparted and the evil suffered." He was in Ireland when Steele, without any communication of his

design, began the publication of the Tatler; but he was not long concealed; by inserting a remark on Virgil which Addison had given him he discovered himself. It is, indeed, not easy for any man to write upon literature or common life so as not to make himself known to those with whom he familiarly converses, and who are acquainted with his track of study, his favourite topic, his peculiar notions, and his habitual phrases.

If Steele desired to write in secret, he was not lucky; a single month detected him. His first Tatler was published April 22 (1709); and Addison's contribution appeared May 26. Tickell observes that the Tatler began and was concluded without his concurrence. This is doubtless literally true; but the work did not suffer much by his unconsciousness of its commencement, or his absence at its cessation; for he continued his assistance to December 23, and the paper stopped on January 2. He did not distinguish his pieces by any signature; and I know not whether his name was not kept secret till the papers were collected into volumes.

To the Tatler, in about two months, succeeded the Spectator: a series of essays of the same kind, but written with less levity, upon a more regular plan, and published daily. Such an undertaking showed the writers not to distrust their own copiousness of materials or facility of composition, and their performance justified their confidence. They found, however, in their progress many auxiliaries. To attempt a single paper was no terrifying labour; many pieces were offered, and many were



received.

Addison had enough of the zeal of party; but Steele had at that time almost nothing else. The Spectator, in one of the first papers, showed the political tenets of its authors; but a resolution was soon taken of courting general approbation by general topics, and subjects on which faction had produced no diversity of sentiments—such as literature, morality, and familiar life. To this practice they adhered with few deviations. The ardour of Steele once broke out in praise of Marlborough; and when Dr. Fleetwood prefixed to some sermons a preface overflowing with Whiggish opinions, that it might be read by the Queen, it was reprinted in the Spectator.

To teach the minuter decencies and inferior duties, to regulate the practice of daily conversation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, and remove those grievances which, if they produce no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation, was first attempted by Casa in his book of "Manners," and Castiglione in his "Courtier:" two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now less read, are neglected only because they have effected that reformation which their authors intended, and their precepts now are no longer wanted. Their usefulness to the age in which they were written is sufficiently attested by the translations which almost all the nations of Europe were in haste to obtain.

This species of instruction was continued, and perhaps advanced, by the French; among whom La Bruyere's "Manners

of the Age" (though, as Boileau remarked, it is written without connection) certainly deserves praise for liveliness of description and justness of observation. Before the Tatler and Spectator, if the writers for the theatre are excepted, England had no masters of common life. No writers had yet undertaken to reform either the savageness of neglect, or the impertinence of civility; to show when to speak, or to be silent; how to refuse, or how to comply. We had many books to teach us our more important duties, and to settle opinions in philosophy or politics; but an arbiter elegantiarum, (a judge of propriety) was yet wanting who should survey the track of daily conversation, and free it from thorns and prickles, which tease the passer, though they do not wound him. For this purpose nothing is so proper as the frequent publication of short papers, which we read, not as study, but amusement. If the subject be slight, the treatise is short. The busy may find time, and the idle may find patience. This mode of conveying cheap and easy knowledge began among us in the civil war, when it was much the interest of either party to raise and fix the prejudices of the people. At that time appeared Mercurius Aulicus, Mercurius Rusticus, and Mercurius Civicus. It is said that when any title grew popular, it was stolen by the antagonist, who by this stratagem conveyed his notions to those who would not have received him had he not worn the appearance of a friend. The tumult of those unhappy days left scarcely any man leisure to treasure up occasional compositions; and so much were they neglected that a complete collection is nowhere to be found.

These Mercuries were succeeded by L'Estrange's *Observator*; and that by Lesley's *Rehearsal*, and perhaps by others; but hitherto nothing had been conveyed to the people, in this commodious manner, but controversy relating to the Church or State; of which they taught many to talk, whom they could not teach to judge.

It has been suggested that the Royal Society was instituted soon after the Restoration to divert the attention of the people from public discontent. The *Tatler* and *Spectator* had the same tendency; they were published at a time when two parties—loud, restless, and violent, each with plausible declarations, and each perhaps without any distinct termination of its views—were agitating the nation; to minds heated with political contest they supplied cooler and more inoffensive reflections; and it is said by Addison, in a subsequent work, that they had a perceptible influence upon the conversation of that time, and taught the frolic and the gay to unite merriment with decency—an effect which they can never wholly lose while they continue to be among the first books by which both sexes are initiated in the elegances of knowledge.

The *Tatler* and *Spectator* adjusted, like *Casa*, the unsettled practice of daily intercourse by propriety and politeness; and, like *La Bruyere*, exhibited the "Characters and Manners of the Age." The personages introduced in these papers were not merely ideal; they were then known, and conspicuous in various stations. Of the *Tatler* this is told by Steele in his last paper; and of the

Spectator by Budgell in the preface to "Theophrastus," a book which Addison has recommended, and which he was suspected to have revised, if he did not write it. Of those portraits which may be supposed to be sometimes embellished, and sometimes aggravated, the originals are now partly known, and partly forgotten. But to say that they united the plans of two or three eminent writers, is to give them but a small part of their due praise; they superadded literature and criticism, and sometimes towered far above their predecessors; and taught, with great justness of argument and dignity of language, the most important duties and sublime truths. All these topics were happily varied with elegant fictions and refined allegories, and illuminated with different changes of style and felicities of invention.

It is recorded by Budgell, that of the characters feigned or exhibited in the Spectator, the favourite of Addison was Sir Roger de Coverley, of whom he had formed a very delicate and discriminate idea, which he would not suffer to be violated; and therefore when Steele had shown him innocently picking up a girl in the Temple, and taking her to a tavern, he drew upon himself so much of his friend's indignation that he was forced to appease him by a promise of forbearing Sir Roger for the time to come.

The reason which induced Cervantes to bring his hero to the grave, *para mi sola nacio Don Quixote, y yo para el*, made Addison declare, with undue vehemence of expression, that he would kill Sir Roger; being of opinion that they were born for one another, and that any other hand would do him wrong.

It may be doubted whether Addison ever filled up his original delineation. He describes his knight as having his imagination somewhat warped; but of this perversion he has made very little use. The irregularities in Sir Roger's conduct seem not so much the effects of a mind deviating from the beaten track of life, by the perpetual pressure of some overwhelming idea, as of habitual rusticity, and that negligence which solitary grandeur naturally generates. The variable weather of the mind, the flying vapours of incipient madness, which from time to time cloud reason without eclipsing it, it requires so much nicety to exhibit that Addison seems to have been deterred from prosecuting his own design.

To Sir Roger (who, as a country gentleman, appears to be a Tory, or, as it is gently expressed, an adherent to the landed interest) is opposed Sir Andrew Freeport, a new man, a wealthy merchant, zealous for the moneyed interest, and a Whig. Of this contrariety of opinions, it is probable more consequences were at first intended than could be produced when the resolution was taken to exclude party from the paper. Sir Andrew does but little, and that little seems not to have pleased Addison, who, when he dismissed him from the club, changed his opinions. Steele had made him, in the true spirit of unfeeling commerce, declare that he "would not build an hospital for idle people;" but at last he buys land, settles in the country, and builds, not a manufactory, but an hospital for twelve old husbandmen—for men with whom a merchant has little acquaintance, and whom

he commonly considers with little kindness.

Of essays thus elegant, thus instructive, and thus commodiously distributed, it is natural to suppose the approbation general, and the sale numerous. I once heard it observed that the sale may be calculated by the product of the tax, related in the last number to produce more than twenty pounds a week, and therefore stated at one-and-twenty pounds, or three pounds ten shillings a day: this, at a halfpenny a paper, will give sixteen hundred and eighty for the daily number. This sale is not great; yet this, if Swift be credited, was likely to grow less; for he declares that the Spectator, whom he ridicules for his endless mention of the FAIR sex, had before his recess wearied his readers.

The next year (1713), in which Cato came upon the stage, was the grand climacteric of Addison's reputation. Upon the death of Cato he had, as is said, planned a tragedy in the time of his travels, and had for several years the four first acts finished, which were shown to such as were likely to spread their admiration. They were seen by Pope and by Cibber, who relates that Steele, when he took back the copy, told him, in the despicable cant of literary modesty, that, whatever spirit his friend had shown in the composition, he doubted whether he would have courage sufficient to expose it to the censure of a British audience. The time, however, was now come when those who affected to think liberty in danger affected likewise to think that a stage-play might preserve it; and Addison was importuned,

in the name of the tutelary deities of Britain, to show his courage and his zeal by finishing his design.

To resume his work he seemed perversely and unaccountably unwilling; and by a request, which perhaps he wished to be denied, desired Mr. Hughes to add a fifth act. Hughes supposed him serious; and, undertaking the supplement, brought in a few days some scenes for his examination; but he had in the meantime gone to work himself, and produced half an act, which he afterwards completed, but with brevity irregularly disproportionate to the foregoing parts, like a task performed with reluctance and hurried to its conclusion.

It may yet be doubted whether Cato was made public by any change of the author's purpose; for Dennis charged him with raising prejudices in his own favour by false positions of preparatory criticism, and with POISONING THE TOWN by contradicting in the Spectator the established rule of poetical justice, because his own hero, with all his virtues, was to fall before a tyrant. The fact is certain; the motives we must guess.

Addison was, I believe, sufficiently disposed to bar all avenues against all danger. When Pope brought him the prologue, which is properly accommodated to the play, there were these words, "Britains, arise! be worth like this approved;" meaning nothing more than—Britons, erect and exalt yourselves to the approbation of public virtue. Addison was frightened, lest he should be thought a promoter of insurrection, and the line was liquidated to "Britains, attend."

Now "heavily in clouds came on the day, the great, the important day," when Addison was to stand the hazard of the theatre. That there might, however, be left as little hazard as was possible, on the first night Steele, as himself relates, undertook to pack an audience. "This," says Pope, "had been tried for the first time in favour of the Distressed Mother; and was now, with more efficacy, practised for Cato." The danger was soon over. The whole nation was at that time on fire with faction. The Whigs applauded every line in which liberty was mentioned, as a satire on the Tories; and the Tories echoed every clap, to show that the satire was unfelt. The story of Bolingbroke is well known; he called Booth to his box, and gave him fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. "The Whigs," says Pope, "design a second present, when they can accompany it with as good a sentence."

The play, supported thus by the emulation of factious praise, was acted night after night for a longer time than, I believe, the public had allowed to any drama before; and the author, as Mrs. Porter long afterwards related, wandered through the whole exhibition behind the scenes with restless and unappeasable solicitude. When it was printed, notice was given that the Queen would be pleased if it was dedicated to her; "but, as he had designed that compliment elsewhere, he found himself obliged," says Tickell, "by his duty on the one hand, and his honour on the other, to send it into the world without any dedication."

Human happiness has always its abatements; the brightest



sunshine of success is not without a cloud. No sooner was Cato offered to the reader than it was attacked by the acute malignity of Dennis with all the violence of angry criticism. Dennis, though equally zealous, and probably by his temper more furious than Addison, for what they called liberty, and though a flatterer of the Whig Ministry, could not sit quiet at a successful play; but was eager to tell friends and enemies that they had misplaced their admirations. The world was too stubborn for instruction; with the fate of the censurer of Corneille's Cid, his animadversions showed his anger without effect, and Cato continued to be praised.

Pope had now an opportunity of courting the friendship of Addison by vilifying his old enemy, and could give resentment its full play without appearing to revenge himself. He therefore published "A Narrative of the Madness of John Dennis:" a performance which left the objections to the play in their full force, and therefore discovered more desire of vexing the critic than of defending the poet.

Addison, who was no stranger to the world, probably saw the selfishness of Pope's friendship; and, resolving that he should have the consequences of his officiousness to himself, informed Dennis by Steele that he was sorry for the insult; and that, whenever he should think fit to answer his remarks, he would do it in a manner to which nothing could be objected.

The greatest weakness of the play is in the scenes of love, which are said by Pope to have been added to the original

plan upon a subsequent review, in compliance with the popular practice of the stage. Such an authority it is hard to reject; yet the love is so intimately mingled with the whole action that it cannot easily be thought extrinsic and adventitious; for if it were taken away, what would be left? or how were the four acts filled in the first draft? At the publication the wits seemed proud to pay their attendance with encomiastic verses. The best are from an unknown hand, which will perhaps lose somewhat of their praise when the author is known to be Jeffreys.

Cato had yet other honours. It was censured as a party-play by a scholar of Oxford; and defended in a favourable examination by Dr. Sewel. It was translated by Salvini into Italian, and acted at Florence; and by the Jesuits of St. Omer's into Latin, and played by their pupils. Of this version a copy was sent to Mr. Addison: it is to be wished that it could be found, for the sake of comparing their version of the soliloquy with that of Bland.

A tragedy was written on the same subject by Des Champs, a French poet, which was translated with a criticism on the English play. But the translator and the critic are now forgotten.

Dennis lived on unanswered, and therefore little read. Addison knew the policy of literature too well to make his enemy important by drawing the attention of the public upon a criticism which, though sometimes intemperate, was often irrefragable.

While Cato was upon the stage, another daily paper, called the Guardian, was published by Steele. To this Addison gave great assistance, whether occasionally or by previous engagement is

not known. The character of *Guardian* was too narrow and too serious: it might properly enough admit both the duties and the decencies of life, but seemed not to include literary speculations, and was in some degree violated by merriment and burlesque. What had the *Guardian* of the Lizards to do with clubs of tall or of little men, with nests of ants, or with Strada's prolusions? Of this paper nothing is necessary to be said but that it found many contributors, and that it was a continuation of the *Spectator*, with the same elegance and the same variety, till some unlucky sparkle from a Tory paper set Steele's politics on fire, and wit at once blazed into faction. He was soon too hot for neutral topics, and quitted the *Guardian* to write the *Englishman*.

The papers of Addison are marked in the *Spectator* by one of the letters in the name of Clio, and in the *Guardian* by a hand; whether it was, as Tickell pretends to think, that he was unwilling to usurp the praise of others, or as Steele, with far greater likelihood, insinuates, that he could not without discontent impart to others any of his own. I have heard that his avidity did not satisfy itself with the air of renown, but that with great eagerness he laid hold on his proportion of the profits.

Many of these papers were written with powers truly comic, with nice discrimination of characters, and accurate observation of natural or accidental deviations from propriety; but it was not supposed that he had tried a comedy on the stage, till Steele after his death declared him the author of *The Drummer*. This, however, Steele did not know to be true by any direct testimony,

for when Addison put the play into his hands, he only told him it was the work of a "gentleman in the company;" and when it was received, as is confessed, with cold disapprobation, he was probably less willing to claim it. Tickell omitted it in his collection; but the testimony of Steele, and the total silence of any other claimant, has determined the public to assign it to Addison, and it is now printed with other poetry. Steele carried *The Drummer* to the play-house, and afterwards to the press, and sold the copy for fifty guineas.

To the opinion of Steele may be added the proof supplied by the play itself, of which the characters are such as Addison would have delineated, and the tendency such as Addison would have promoted. That it should have been ill received would raise wonder, did we not daily see the capricious distribution of theatrical praise.

He was not all this time an indifferent spectator of public affairs. He wrote, as different exigences required (in 1707), "*The Present State of the War, and the Necessity of an Augmentation*," which, however judicious, being written on temporary topics, and exhibiting no peculiar powers, laid hold on no attention, and has naturally sunk by its own weight into neglect. This cannot be said of the few papers entitled the *Whig Examiner*, in which is employed all the force of gay malevolence and humorous satire. Of this paper, which just appeared and expired, Swift remarks, with exultation, that "it is now down among the dead men." He might well rejoice at the death of that which he could not have

killed. Every reader of every party, since personal malice is past, and the papers which once inflamed the nation are read only as effusions of wit, must wish for more of the Whig Examiners; for on no occasion was the genius of Addison more vigorously exerted, and on none did the superiority of his powers more evidently appear. His "Trial of Count Tariff," written to expose the treaty of commerce with France, lived no longer than the question that produced it.

Not long afterwards an attempt was made to revive the Spectator, at a time indeed by no means favourable to literature, when the succession of a new family to the throne filled the nation with anxiety, discord, and confusion; and either the turbulence of the times, or the satiety of the readers, put a stop to the publication after an experiment of eighty numbers, which were actually collected into an eighth volume, perhaps more valuable than any of those that went before it. Addison produced more than a fourth part; and the other contributors are by no means unworthy of appearing as his associates. The time that had passed during the suspension of the Spectator, though it had not lessened his power of humour, seems to have increased his disposition to seriousness: the proportion of his religious to his comic papers is greater than in the former series.

The Spectator, from its re-commencement, was published only three times a week; and no discriminative marks were added to the papers. To Addison, Tickell has ascribed twenty-three. The Spectator had many contributors; and Steele, whose

negligence kept him always in a hurry, when it was his turn to furnish a paper, called loudly for the letters, of which Addison, whose materials were more, made little use—having recourse to sketches and hints, the product of his former studies, which he now reviewed and completed: among these are named by Tickell the Essays on Wit, those on the Pleasures of the Imagination, and the Criticism on Milton.

When the House of Hanover took possession of the throne, it was reasonable to expect that the zeal of Addison would be suitably rewarded. Before the arrival of King George, he was made Secretary to the Regency, and was required by his office to send notice to Hanover that the Queen was dead, and that the throne was vacant. To do this would not have been difficult to any man but Addison, who was so overwhelmed with the greatness of the event, and so distracted by choice of expression, that the lords, who could not wait for the niceties of criticism, called Mr. Southwell, a clerk in the House, and ordered him to despatch the message. Southwell readily told what was necessary in the common style of business, and valued himself upon having done what was too hard for Addison. He was better qualified for the Freeholder, a paper which he published twice a week, from December 23, 1715, to the middle of the next year. This was undertaken in defence of the established Government, sometimes with argument, and sometimes with mirth. In argument he had many equals; but his humour was singular and matchless. Bigotry itself must be delighted with the

"Tory Fox-hunter." There are, however, some strokes less elegant and less decent; such as the "Pretender's Journal," in which one topic of ridicule is his poverty. This mode of abuse had been employed by Milton against King Charles II.

"Jacoboei.

*Centum exulantis viscera Marsupii regis."*

And Oldmixon delights to tell of some alderman of London that he had more money than the exiled princes; but that which might be expected from Milton's savageness, or Oldmixon's meanness, was not suitable to the delicacy of Addison.

Steele thought the humour of the Freeholder too nice and gentle for such noisy times, and is reported to have said that the Ministry made use of a lute, when they should have called for a trumpet.

This year (1716) he married the Countess Dowager of Warwick, whom he had solicited by a very long and anxious courtship, perhaps with behaviour not very unlike that of Sir Roger to his disdainful widow; and who, I am afraid, diverted herself often by playing with his passion. He is said to have first known her by becoming tutor to her son. "He formed," said Tonson, "the design of getting that lady from the time when he was first taken into the family." In what part of his life he obtained the recommendation, or how long, and in what manner he lived in the family, I know not. His advances at first were certainly timorous, but grew bolder as his reputation and influence increased; till at last the lady was persuaded to marry

him, on terms much like those on which a Turkish princess is espoused, to whom the Sultan is reported to pronounce, "Daughter, I give thee this man for thy slave." The marriage, if uncontradicted report can be credited, made no addition to his happiness; it neither found them nor made them equal. She always remembered her own rank, and thought herself entitled to treat with very little ceremony the tutor of her son. Rowe's ballad of the "Despairing Shepherd" is said to have been written, either before or after marriage, upon this memorable pair; and it is certain that Addison has left behind him no encouragement for ambitious love.

The year after (1717) he rose to his highest elevation, being made Secretary of State. For this employment he might be justly supposed qualified by long practice of business, and by his regular ascent through other offices; but expectation is often disappointed; it is universally confessed that he was unequal to the duties of his place. In the House of Commons he could not speak, and therefore was useless to the defence of the Government. "In the office," says Pope, "he could not issue an order without losing his time in quest of fine expressions." What he gained in rank he lost in credit; and finding by experience his own inability, was forced to solicit his dismissal, with a pension of fifteen hundred pounds a year. His friends palliated this relinquishment, of which both friends and enemies knew the true reason, with an account of declining health, and the necessity of recess and quiet. He now returned to his vocation,



and began to plan literary occupations for his future life. He purposed a tragedy on the death of Socrates: a story of which, as Tickell remarks, the basis is narrow, and to which I know not how love could have been appended. There would, however, have been no want either of virtue in the sentiments, or elegance in the language. He engaged in a nobler work, a "Defence of the Christian Religion," of which part was published after his death; and he designed to have made a new poetical version of the Psalms.

These pious compositions Pope imputed to a selfish motive, upon the credit, as he owns, of Tonson; who, having quarrelled with Addison, and not loving him, said that when he laid down the Secretary's office he intended to take orders and obtain a bishopric; "for," said he, "I always thought him a priest in his heart."

That Pope should have thought this conjecture of Tonson worth remembrance, is a proof—but indeed, so far as I have found, the only proof—that he retained some malignity from their ancient rivalry. Tonson pretended to guess it; no other mortal ever suspected it; and Pope might have reflected that a man who had been Secretary of State in the Ministry of Sunderland knew a nearer way to a bishopric than by defending religion or translating the Psalms.

It is related that he had once a design to make an English dictionary, and that he considered Dr. Tillotson as the writer of highest authority. There was formerly sent to me by Mr.

Locker, clerk of the Leathersellers Company, who was eminent for curiosity and literature, a collection of examples selected from Tillotson's works, as Locker said, by Addison. It came too late to be of use, so I inspected it but slightly, and remember it indistinctly. I thought the passages too short. Addison, however, did not conclude his life in peaceful studies, but relapsed, when he was near his end, to a political dispute.

It so happened that (1718-19) a controversy was agitated with great vehemence between those friends of long continuance, Addison and Steele. It may be asked, in the language of Homer, what power or what cause should set them at variance. The subject of their dispute was of great importance. The Earl of Sunderland proposed an Act, called the "Peerage Bill;" by which the number of Peers should be fixed, and the King restrained from any new creation of nobility, unless when an old family should be extinct. To this the Lords would naturally agree; and the King, who was yet little acquainted with his own prerogative, and, as is now well known, almost indifferent to the possessions of the Crown, had been persuaded to consent. The only difficulty was found among the Commons, who were not likely to approve the perpetual exclusion of themselves and their posterity. The Bill, therefore, was eagerly opposed, and, among others, by Sir Robert Walpole, whose speech was published.

The Lords might think their dignity diminished by improper advancements, and particularly by the introduction of twelve new Peers at once, to produce a majority of Tories in the last reign:

an act of authority violent enough, yet certainly legal, and by no means to be compared with that contempt of national right with which some time afterwards, by the instigation of Whiggism, the Commons, chosen by the people for three years, chose themselves for seven. But, whatever might be the disposition of the Lords, the people had no wish to increase their power. The tendency of the Bill, as Steele observed in a letter to the Earl of Oxford, was to introduce an aristocracy: for a majority in the House of Lords, so limited, would have been despotic and irresistible.

To prevent this subversion of the ancient establishment, Steele, whose pen readily seconded his political passions, endeavoured to alarm the nation by a pamphlet called "The Plebeian." To this an answer was published by Addison, under the title of "The Old Whig," in which it is not discovered that Steele was then known to be the advocate for the Commons. Steele replied by a second "Plebeian;" and, whether by ignorance or by courtesy, confined himself to his question, without any personal notice of his opponent. Nothing hitherto was committed against the laws of friendship or proprieties of decency; but controvertists cannot long retain their kindness for each other. The "Old Whig" answered "The Plebeian," and could not forbear some contempt of "little DICKY, whose trade it was to write pamphlets." Dicky, however, did not lose his settled veneration for his friend, but contented himself with quoting some lines of Cato, which were at once detection and reproof. The Bill was

laid aside during that session, and Addison died before the next, in which its commitment was rejected by two hundred and sixty-five to one hundred and seventy-seven.

Every reader surely must regret that these two illustrious friends, after so many years passed in confidence and endearment, in unity of interest, conformity of opinion, and fellowship of study, should finally part in acrimonious opposition. Such a controversy was "*bellum plusquam CIVILE*," as Lucan expresses it. Why could not faction find other advocates? But among the uncertainties of the human state, we are doomed to number the instability of friendship. Of this dispute I have little knowledge but from the "*Biographia Britannica*." "*The Old Whig*" is not inserted in Addison's works: nor is it mentioned by Tickell in his *Life*; why it was omitted, the biographers doubtless give the true reason—the fact was too recent, and those who had been heated in the contention were not yet cool.

The necessity of complying with times, and of sparing persons, is the great impediment of biography. History may be formed from permanent monuments and records: but lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less, and in a short time is lost for ever. What is known can seldom be immediately told; and when it might be told, it is no longer known. The delicate features of the mind, the nice discriminations of character, and the minute peculiarities of conduct, are soon obliterated; and it is surely better that caprice,

obstinacy, frolic, and folly, however they might delight in the description, should be silently forgotten, than that, by wanton merriment and unseasonable detection, a pang should be given to a widow, a daughter, a brother, or a friend. As the process of these narratives is now bringing me among my contemporaries, I begin to feel myself "walking upon ashes under which the fire is not extinguished," and coming to the time of which it will be proper rather to say "nothing that is false, than all that is true."

The end of this useful life was now approaching. Addison had for some time been oppressed by shortness of breath, which was now aggravated by a dropsy; and, finding his danger pressing, he prepared to die conformably to his own precepts and professions. During this lingering decay, he sent, as Pope relates, a message by the Earl of Warwick to Mr. Gay, desiring to see him. Gay, who had not visited him for some time before, obeyed the summons, and found himself received with great kindness. The purpose for which the interview had been solicited was then discovered. Addison told him that he had injured him; but that, if he recovered, he would recompense him. What the injury was he did not explain, nor did Gay ever know; but supposed that some preferment designed for him had, by Addison's intervention, been withheld.

Lord Warwick was a young man, of very irregular life, and perhaps of loose opinions. Addison, for whom he did not want respect, had very diligently endeavoured to reclaim him, but his arguments and expostulations had no effect. One experiment,

however, remained to be tried; when he found his life near its end, he directed the young lord to be called, and when he desired with great tenderness to hear his last injunctions, told him, "I have sent for you that you may see how a Christian can die." What effect this awful scene had on the earl, I know not; he likewise died himself in a short time.

In Tickell's excellent Elegy on his friend are these lines:—

"He taught us how to live; and, oh! too high  
The price of knowledge, taught us how to die"—

in which he alludes, as he told Dr. Young, to this moving interview.

Having given directions to Mr. Tickell for the publication of his works, and dedicated them on his death-bed to his friend Mr. Craggs, he died June 17, 1719, at Holland House, leaving no child but a daughter.

Of his virtue it is a sufficient testimony that the resentment of party has transmitted no charge of any crime. He was not one of those who are praised only after death; for his merit was so generally acknowledged that Swift, having observed that his election passed without a contest, adds that if he proposed himself for King he would hardly have been refused. His zeal for his party did not extinguish his kindness for the merit of his opponents; when he was Secretary in Ireland, he refused to intermit his acquaintance with Swift. Of his habits or external

manners, nothing is so often mentioned as that timorous or sullen taciturnity, which his friends called modesty by too mild a name. Steele mentions with great tenderness "that remarkable bashfulness which is a cloak that hides and muffles merit;" and tells us "that his abilities were covered only by modesty, which doubles the beauties which are seen, and gives credit and esteem to all that are concealed." Chesterfield affirms that "Addison was the most timorous and awkward man that he ever saw." And Addison, speaking of his own deficiency in conversation, used to say of himself that, with respect to intellectual wealth, "he could draw bills for a thousand pounds, though he had not a guinea in his pocket." That he wanted current coin for ready payment, and by that want was often obstructed and distressed; and that he was often oppressed by an improper and ungraceful timidity, every testimony concurs to prove; but Chesterfield's representation is doubtless hyperbolic. That man cannot be supposed very unexpert in the arts of conversation and practice of life who, without fortune or alliance, by his usefulness and dexterity became Secretary of State, and who died at forty-seven, after having not only stood long in the highest rank of wit and literature, but filled one of the most important offices of State.

The time in which he lived had reason to lament his obstinacy of silence; "for he was," says Steele, "above all men in that talent called humour, and enjoyed it in such perfection that I have often reflected, after a night spent with him apart from all the world, that I had had the pleasure of conversing with

an intimate acquaintance of Terence and Catullus, who had all their wit and nature, heightened with humour more exquisite and delightful than any other man ever possessed." This is the fondness of a friend; let us hear what is told us by a rival. "Addison's conversation," says Pope, "had something in it more charming than I have found in any other man. But this was only when familiar: before strangers, or perhaps a single stranger, he preserved his dignity by a stiff silence." This modesty was by no means inconsistent with a very high opinion of his own merit. He demanded to be the first name in modern wit; and, with Steele to echo him, used to depreciate Dryden, whom Pope and Congreve defended against them. There is no reason to doubt that he suffered too much pain from the prevalence of Pope's poetical reputation; nor is it without strong reason suspected that by some disingenuous acts he endeavoured to obstruct it; Pope was not the only man whom he insidiously injured, though the only man of whom he could be afraid. His own powers were such as might have satisfied him with conscious excellence. Of very extensive learning he has indeed given no proofs. He seems to have had small acquaintance with the sciences, and to have read little except Latin and French; but of the Latin poets his "Dialogues on Medals" show that he had perused the works with great diligence and skill. The abundance of his own mind left him little indeed of adventitious sentiments; his wit always could suggest what the occasion demanded. He had read with critical eyes the important volume of human life, and knew the heart of man, from the



depths of stratagem to the surface of affectation. What he knew he could easily communicate. "This," says Steele, "was particular in this writer—that when he had taken his resolution, or made his plan for what he designed to write, he would walk about a room and dictate it into language with as much freedom and ease as any one could write it down, and attend to the coherence and grammar of what he dictated."

Pope, who can be less suspected of favouring his memory, declares that he wrote very fluently, but was slow and scrupulous in correcting; that many of his Spectators were written very fast, and sent immediately to the press; and that it seemed to be for his advantage not to have time for much revisal. "He would alter," says Pope, "anything to please his friends before publication, but would not re-touch his pieces afterwards; and I believe not one word of Cato to which I made an objection was suffered to stand."

The last line of Cato is Pope's, having been originally written

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"And oh! 'twas this that ended Cato's life."

Pope might have made more objections to the six concluding lines. In the first couplet the words "from hence" are improper; and the second line is taken from Dryden's Virgil. Of the next couplet, the first verse, being included in the second, is therefore useless; and in the third Discord is made to produce Strife.

Of the course of Addison's familiar day, before his marriage, Pope has given a detail. He had in the house with him Budgell, and perhaps Philips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Philips [Ambrose], Carey, Davenant, and Colonel Brett. With one or other of these he always breakfasted. He studied all morning; then dined at a tavern; and went afterwards to Button's. Button had been a servant in the Countess of Warwick's family, who, under the patronage of Addison, kept a coffee-house on the south side of Russell Street, about two doors from Covent Garden. Here it was that the wits of that time used to assemble. It is said when Addison had suffered any vexation from the countess, he withdrew the company from Button's house. From the coffee-house he went again to a tavern, where he often sat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle discontent seeks for comfort, cowardice for courage, and bashfulness for confidence. It is not unlikely that Addison was first seduced to excess by the manumission which he obtained from the servile timidity of his sober hours. He that feels oppression from the presence of those to whom he knows himself superior will desire to set loose his powers of conversation; and who that ever asked succours from Bacchus was able to preserve himself from being enslaved by his auxiliary?

Among those friends it was that Addison displayed the elegance of his colloquial accomplishments, which may easily be supposed such as Pope represents them. The remark of Mandeville, who, when he had passed an evening in his company,

declared that he was a parson in a tie-wig, can detract little from his character; he was always reserved to strangers, and was not incited to uncommon freedom by a character like that of Mandeville.

From any minute knowledge of his familiar manners the intervention of sixty years has now debarred us. Steele once promised Congreve and the public a complete description of his character; but the promises of authors are like the vows of lovers. Steele thought no more on his design, or thought on it with anxiety that at last disgusted him, and left his friend in the hands of Tickell.

One slight lineament of his character Swift has preserved. It was his practice, when he found any man invincibly wrong, to flatter his opinions by acquiescence, and sink him yet deeper in absurdity. This artifice of mischief was admired by Stella; and Swift seems to approve her admiration. His works will supply some information. It appears, from the various pictures of the world, that, with all his bashfulness, he had conversed with many distinct classes of men, had surveyed their ways with very diligent observation, and marked with great acuteness the effects of different modes of life. He was a man in whose presence nothing reprehensible was out of danger; quick in discerning whatever was wrong or ridiculous, and not unwilling to expose it. "There are," says Steele, "in his writings many oblique strokes upon some of the wittiest men of the age." His delight was more to excite merriment than detestation; and he detects follies

rather than crimes. If any judgment be made from his books of his moral character, nothing will be found but purity and excellence. Knowledge of mankind, indeed, less extensive than that of Addison, will show that to write, and to live, are very different. Many who praise virtue, do no more than praise it. Yet it is reasonable to believe that Addison's professions and practice were at no great variance, since amidst that storm of faction in which most of his life was passed, though his station made him conspicuous, and his activity made him formidable, the character given him by his friends was never contradicted by his enemies. Of those with whom interest or opinion united him he had not only the esteem, but the kindness; and of others whom the violence of opposition drove against him, though he might lose the love, he retained the reverence.

It is justly observed by Tickell that he employed wit on the side of virtue and religion. He not only made the proper use of wit himself, but taught it to others; and from his time it has been generally subservient to the cause of reason and of truth. He has dissipated the prejudice that had long connected gaiety with vice, and easiness of manners with laxity of principles. He has restored virtue to its dignity, and taught innocence not to be ashamed. This is an elevation of literary character "above all Greek, above all Roman fame." No greater felicity can genius attain than that of having purified intellectual pleasure, separated mirth from indecency, and wit from licentiousness; of having taught a succession of writers to bring elegance and gaiety to the

aid of goodness; and, if I may use expressions yet more awful, of having "turned many to righteousness."

Addison, in his life and for some time afterwards, was considered by a greater part of readers as supremely excelling both in poetry and criticism. Part of his reputation may be probably ascribed to the advancement of his fortune; when, as Swift observes, he became a statesman, and saw poets waiting at his levee, it was no wonder that praise was accumulated upon him. Much likewise may be more honourably ascribed to his personal character: he who, if he had claimed it, might have obtained the diadem, was not likely to be denied the laurel. But time quickly puts an end to artificial and accidental fame; and Addison is to pass through futurity protected only by his genius. Every name which kindness or interest once raised too high is in danger, lest the next age should, by the vengeance of criticism, sink it in the same proportion. A great writer has lately styled him "an indifferent poet, and a worse critic." His poetry is first to be considered; of which it must be confessed that it has not often those felicities of diction which give lustre to sentiments, or that vigour of sentiment that animates diction: there is little of ardour, vehemence, or transport; there is very rarely the awfulness of grandeur, and not very often the splendour of elegance. He thinks justly, but he thinks faintly. This is his general character; to which, doubtless, many single passages will furnish exception. Yet, if he seldom reaches supreme excellence, he rarely sinks into dulness, and is still more rarely entangled in absurdity. He did not

trust his powers enough to be negligent. There is in most of his compositions a calmness and equability, deliberate and cautious, sometimes with little that delights, but seldom with anything that offends. Of this kind seem to be his poems to Dryden, to Somers, and to the King. His ode on St. Cecilia has been imitated by Pope, and has something in it of Dryden's vigour. Of his Account of the English Poets he used to speak as a "poor thing;" but it is not worse than his usual strain. He has said, not very judiciously, in his character of Waller—

"Thy verse could show even Cromwell's innocence,  
And compliment the storms that bore him hence.  
Oh! had thy Muse not come an age too soon,  
But seen great Nassau on the British throne,  
How had his triumph glittered in thy page!"

What is this but to say that he who could compliment Cromwell had been the proper poet for King William? Addison, however, printed the piece.

The Letter from Italy has been always praised, but has never been praised beyond its merit. It is more correct, with less appearance of labour, and more elegant, with less ambition of ornament, than any other of his poems. There is, however, one broken metaphor, of which notice may properly be taken:—

"Fired with that name—  
I bridle in my struggling Muse with pain,

That longs to launch into a nobler strain."

To BRIDLE A GODDESS is no very delicate idea; but why must she be BRIDLED? because she LONGS TO LAUNCH; an act which was never hindered by a BRIDLE: and whither will she LAUNCH? into a NOBLER STRAIN. She is in the first line a HORSE, in the second a BOAT; and the care of the poet is to keep his HORSE or his BOAT from SINGING.

The next composition is the far-famed "Campaign," which Dr. Warton has termed a "Gazette in Rhyme," with harshness not often used by the good-nature of his criticism. Before a censure so severe is admitted, let us consider that war is a frequent subject of poetry, and then inquire who has described it with more justice and force. Many of our own writers tried their powers upon this year of victory: yet Addison's is confessedly the best performance; his poem is the work of a man not blinded by the dust of learning; his images are not borrowed merely from books. The superiority which he confers upon his hero is not personal prowess and "mighty bone," but deliberate intrepidity, a calm command of his passions, and the power of consulting his own mind in the midst of danger. The rejection and contempt of fiction is rational and manly. It may be observed that the last line is imitated by Pope:—

"Marlb'rough's exploits appear divinely bright—  
Raised of themselves their genuine charms they boast,  
And those that paint them truest, praise them most."

This Pope had in his thoughts, but, not knowing how to use what was not his own, he spoiled the thought when he had borrowed it:—

"The well-sung woes shall soothe my pensive ghost;  
He best can paint them who shall feel them most."

Martial exploits may be PAINTED; perhaps WOES may be PAINTED; but they are surely not PAINTED by being WELL SUNG: it is not easy to paint in song, or to sing in colours.

No passage in the "Campaign" has been more often mentioned than the simile of the angel, which is said in the Tatler to be "one of the noblest thoughts that ever entered into the heart of man," and is therefore worthy of attentive consideration. Let it be first inquired whether it be a simile. A poetical simile is the discovery of likeness between two actions in their general nature dissimilar, or of causes terminating by different operations in some resemblance of effect. But the mention of another like consequence from a like cause, or of a like performance by a like agency, is not a simile, but an exemplification. It is not a simile to say that the Thames waters fields, as the Po waters fields; or that as Hecla vomits flames in Iceland, so AETna vomits flames in Sicily. When Horace says of Pindar that he pours his violence and rapidity of verse, as a river swollen with rain rushes from the mountain; or of himself, that his genius wanders in quest of poetical decorations, as the bee wanders to collect honey; he,



in either case, produces a simile: the mind is impressed with the resemblance of things generally unlike, as unlike as intellect and body. But if Pindar had been described as writing with the copiousness and grandeur of Homer, or Horace had told that he reviewed and finished his own poetry with the same care as Isocrates polished his orations, instead of similitude, he would have exhibited almost identity; he would have given the same portraits with different names. In the poem now examined, when the English are represented as gaining a fortified pass by repetition of attack and perseverance of resolution, their obstinacy of courage and vigour of onset are well illustrated by the sea that breaks, with incessant battery, the dykes of Holland. This is a simile. But when Addison, having celebrated the beauty of Marlborough's person, tells us that "Achilles thus was formed of every grace," here is no simile, but a mere exemplification. A simile may be compared to lines converging at a point, and is more excellent as the lines approach from greater distance: an exemplification may be considered as two parallel lines, which run on together without approximation, never far separated, and never joined.

Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. Marlborough "teaches the battle to rage;" the angel "directs the storm:" Marlborough is "unmoved in peaceful thought;" the angel is "calm and serene:" Marlborough stands "unmoved amidst the shock of hosts;" the angel rides "calm in the

whirlwind." The lines on Marlborough are just and noble, but the simile gives almost the same images a second time. But perhaps this thought, though hardly a simile, was remote from vulgar conceptions, and required great labour and research, or dexterity of application. Of this Dr. Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honour, once gave me his opinion. "If I had set," said he, "ten schoolboys to write on the battle of Blenheim, and eight had brought me the angel, I should not have been surprised."

The opera of Rosamond, though it is seldom mentioned, is one of the first of Addison's compositions. The subject is well chosen, the fiction is pleasing, and the praise of Marlborough, for which the scene gives an opportunity, is, what perhaps every human excellence must be, the product of good luck improved by genius. The thoughts are sometimes great, and sometimes tender; the versification is easy and gay. There is doubtless some advantage in the shortness of the lines, which there is little temptation to load with expletive epithets. The dialogue seems commonly better than the songs. The two comic characters of Sir Trusty and Grideline, though of no great value, are yet such as the poet intended. Sir Trusty's account of the death of Rosamond is, I think, too grossly absurd. The whole drama is airy and elegant; engaging in its process, and pleasing in its conclusion. If Addison had cultivated the lighter parts of poetry, he would probably have excelled.

The tragedy of Cato, which, contrary to the rule observed in selecting the works of other poets, has by the weight of its

character forced its way into the late collection, is unquestionably the noblest production of Addison's genius. Of a work so much read, it is difficult to say anything new. About things on which the public thinks long, it commonly attains to think right; and of Cato it has been not unjustly determined that it is rather a poem in dialogue than a drama, rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language than a representation of natural affections, or of any state probable or possible in human life. Nothing here "excites or assuages emotion:" here is "no magical power of raising phantastic terror or wild anxiety." The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care; we consider not what they are doing, or what they are suffering; we wish only to know what they have to say. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence. To the rest neither gods nor men can have much attention; for there is not one amongst them that strongly attracts either affection or esteem. But they are made the vehicles of such sentiments and such expression that there is scarcely a scene in the play which the reader does not wish to impress upon his memory.

When Cato was shown to Pope, he advised the author to print it, without any theatrical exhibition, supposing that it would be read more favourably than heard. Addison declared himself of the same opinion, but urged the importunity of his friends for its appearance on the stage. The emulation of parties made it

successful beyond expectation; and its success has introduced or confirmed among us the use of dialogue too declamatory, of unaffected elegance, and chill philosophy. The universality of applause, however it might quell the censure of common mortals, had no other effect than to harden Dennis in fixed dislike; but his dislike was not merely capricious. He found and showed many faults; he showed them indeed with anger, but he found them indeed with acuteness, such as ought to rescue his criticism from oblivion; though, at last, it will have no other life than it derives from the work which it endeavours to oppress. Why he pays no regard to the opinion of the audience, he gives his reason by remarking that—

"A deference is to be paid to a general applause when it appears that the applause is natural and spontaneous; but that little regard is to be had to it when it is affected or artificial. Of all the tragedies which in his memory have had vast and violent runs, not one has been excellent, few have been tolerable, most have been scandalous. When a poet writes a tragedy who knows he has judgment, and who feels he has genius, that poet presumes upon his own merit, and scorns to make a cabal. That people come coolly to the representation of such a tragedy, without any violent expectation, or delusive imagination, or invincible prepossession; that such an audience is liable to receive the impressions which the poem shall naturally make on them, and to judge by their own reason, and their own judgments; and that reason and judgment are calm and serene, not formed by

nature to make proselytes, and to control and lord it over the imagination of others. But that when an author writes a tragedy who knows he has neither genius nor judgment, he has recourse to the making a party, and he endeavours to make up in industry what is wanting in talent, and to supply by poetical craft the absence of poetical art: that such an author is humbly contented to raise men's passions by a plot without doors, since he despairs of doing it by that which he brings upon the stage. That party and passion, and prepossession, are clamorous and tumultuous things, and so much the more clamorous and tumultuous by how much the more erroneous: that they domineer and tyrannise over the imaginations of persons who want judgment, and sometimes too of those who have it, and, like a fierce and outrageous torrent, bear down all opposition before them."

He then condemns the neglect of poetical justice, which is one of his favourite principles:—

"'Tis certainly the duty of every tragic poet, by the exact distribution of poetical justice, to imitate the Divine Dispensation, and to inculcate a particular Providence. 'Tis true, indeed, upon the stage of the world, the wicked sometimes prosper and the guiltless suffer; but that is permitted by the Governor of the World, to show, from the attribute of His infinite justice, that there is a compensation in futurity, to prove the immortality of the human soul, and the certainty of future rewards and punishments. But the poetical persons in tragedy exist no longer than the reading or the representation; the whole

extent of their enmity is circumscribed by those; and therefore, during that reading or representation, according to their merits or demerits, they must be punished or rewarded. If this is not done, there is no impartial distribution of poetical justice, no instructive lecture of a particular Providence, and no imitation of the Divine Dispensation. And yet the author of this tragedy does not only run counter to this, in the fate of his principal character; but everywhere, throughout it, makes virtue suffer, and vice triumph: for not only Cato is vanquished by Caesar, but the treachery and perfidiousness of Syphax prevail over the honest simplicity and the credulity of Juba; and the sly subtlety and dissimulation of Portius over the generous frankness and open-heartedness of Marcus."

Whatever pleasure there may be in seeing crimes punished and virtue rewarded, yet, since wickedness often prospers in real life, the poet is certainly at liberty to give it prosperity on the stage. For if poetry has an imitation of reality, how are its laws broken by exhibiting the world in its true form? The stage may sometimes gratify our wishes; but if it be truly the "MIRROR OF LIFE," it ought to show us sometimes what we are to expect.

Dennis objects to the characters that they are not natural or reasonable; but as heroes and heroines are not beings that are seen every day, it is hard to find upon what principles their conduct shall be tried. It is, however, not useless to consider what he says of the manner in which Cato receives the account of his son's death:—

"Nor is the grief of Cato, in the fourth act, one jot more in nature than that of his son and Lucia in the third. Cato receives the news of his son's death, not only with dry eyes, but with a sort of satisfaction; and in the same page sheds tears for the calamity of his country, and does the same thing in the next page upon the bare apprehension of the danger of his friends. Now, since the love of one's country is the love of one's countrymen, as I have shown upon another occasion, I desire to ask these questions:—Of all our countrymen, which do we love most, those whom we know, or those whom we know not? And of those whom we know, which do we cherish most, our friends or our enemies? And of our friends, which are the dearest to us, those who are related to us, or those who are not? And of all our relations, for which have we most tenderness, for those who are near to us, or for those who are remote? And of our near relations, which are the nearest, and consequently the dearest to us, our offspring, or others? Our offspring, most certainly; as Nature, or in other words Providence, has wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind. Now, does it not follow, from what has been said, that for a man to receive the news of his son's death with dry eyes, and to weep at the same time for the calamities of his country, is a wretched affectation and a miserable inconsistency? Is not that, in plain English, to receive with dry eyes the news of the deaths of those for whose sake our country is a name so dear to us, and at the same time to shed tears for those for whose sakes our country is not a name so dear to us?"

But this formidable assailant is less resistible when he attacks the probability of the action and the reasonableness of the plan. Every critical reader must remark that Addison has, with a scrupulosity almost unexampled on the English stage, confined himself in time to a single day, and in place to rigorous unity. The scene never changes, and the whole action of the play passes in the great hall of Cato's house at Utica. Much, therefore, is done in the hall for which any other place had been more fit; and this impropriety affords Dennis many hints of merriment and opportunities of triumph. The passage is long; but as such disquisitions are not common, and the objections are skilfully formed and vigorously urged, those who delight in critical controversy will not think it tedious:—

"Upon the departure of Portius, Sempronius makes but one soliloquy, and immediately in comes Syphax, and then the two politicians are at it immediately. They lay their heads together, with their snuff-boxes in their hands, as Mr. Bayes has it, and feague it away. But, in the midst of that wise scene, Syphax seems to give a seasonable caution to Sempronius:—

"SYPH. But is it true, Sempronius, that your senate  
Is called together? Gods! thou must be cautious;  
Cato has piercing eyes.'

"There is a great deal of caution shown, indeed, in meeting in a governor's own hall to carry on their plot against him. Whatever opinion they have of his eyes, I suppose they have none of his



ears, or they would never have talked at this foolish rate so near:  
—

"'Gods! thou must be cautious.'

Oh! yes, very cautious: for if Cato should overhear you, and turn you off for politicians, Caesar would never take you.

"When Cato, Act II., turns the senators out of the hall upon pretence of acquainting Juba with the result of their debates, he appears to me to do a thing which is neither reasonable nor civil. Juba might certainly have better been made acquainted with the result of that debate in some private apartment of the palace. But the poet was driven upon this absurdity to make way for another, and that is to give Juba an opportunity to demand Marcia of her father. But the quarrel and rage of Juba and Syphax, in the same act; the invectives of Syphax against the Romans and Cato; the advice that he gives Juba in her father's hall to bear away Marcia by force; and his brutal and clamorous rage upon his refusal, and at a time when Cato was scarcely out of sight, and perhaps not out of hearing, at least some of his guards or domestics must necessarily be supposed to be within hearing; is a thing that is so far from being probable, that it is hardly possible.

"Sempronius, in the second act, comes back once more in the same morning to the governor's hall to carry on the conspiracy with Syphax against the governor, his country, and his family: which is so stupid that it is below the wisdom of the O-s, the

Macs, and the Teagues; even Eustace Commins himself would never have gone to Justice-hall to have conspired against the Government. If officers at Portsmouth should lay their heads together in order to the carrying off J- G-'s niece or daughter, would they meet in J-G-'s hall to carry on that conspiracy? There would be no necessity for their meeting there—at least, till they came to the execution of their plot—because there would be other places to meet in. There would be no probability that they should meet there, because there would be places more private and more commodious. Now there ought to be nothing in a tragical action but what is necessary or probable.

"But treason is not the only thing that is carried on in this hall; that, and love and philosophy take their turns in it, without any manner of necessity or probability occasioned by the action, as duly and as regularly, without interrupting one another, as if there were a triple league between them, and a mutual agreement that each should give place to and make way for the other in a due and orderly succession.

"We now come to the third act. Sempronius, in this act, comes into the governor's hall with the leaders of the mutiny; but as soon as Cato is gone, Sempronius, who but just before had acted like an unparalleled knave, discovers himself, like an egregious fool, to be an accomplice in the conspiracy.

"SEMP. Know, villains, when such paltry slaves presume  
To mix in treason, if the plot succeeds,

They're thrown neglected by; but, if it fails,  
They're sure to die like dogs, as you shall do.  
Here, take these factious monsters, drag them forth  
To sudden death.'

""Tis true, indeed, the second leader says there are none there but friends; but is that possible at such a juncture? Can a parcel of rogues attempt to assassinate the governor of a town of war, in his own house, in midday, and, after they are discovered and defeated, can there be none near them but friends? Is it not plain, from these words of Sempronius—

""Here, take these factious monsters, drag them forth  
To sudden death—'

and from the entrance of the guards upon the word of command, that those guards were within ear-shot? Behold Sempronius, then, palpably discovered. How comes it to pass, then, that instead of being hanged up with the rest, he remains secure in the governor's hall, and there carries on his conspiracy against the Government, the third time in the same day, with his old comrade Syphax, who enters at the same time that the guards are carrying away the leaders, big with the news of the defeat of Sempronius?—though where he had his intelligence so soon is difficult to imagine. And now the reader may expect a very extraordinary scene. There is not abundance of spirit, indeed, nor a great deal of passion, but there is wisdom more than enough

to supply all defects.

"SYPH. Our first design, my friend, has proved abortive;  
Still there remains an after-game to play:  
My troops are mounted; their Numidian steeds  
Snuff up the winds, and long to scour the desert.  
Let but Sempronius lead us in our flight,  
We'll force the gate where Marcus keeps his guard,  
And hew down all that would oppose our passage;  
A day will bring us into Caesar's camp.  
SEMP. Confusion! I have failed of half my purpose;  
Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind.'

Well, but though he tells us the half-purpose he has failed of, he does not tell us the half that he has carried. But what does he mean by

"'Marcia, the charming Marcia's left behind'?

He is now in her own house! and we have neither seen her nor heard of her anywhere else since the play began. But now let us hear Syphax:—

"'What hinders, then, but that you find her out,  
And hurry her away by manly force?'

But what does old Syphax mean by finding her out? They talk as if she were as hard to be found as a hare in a frosty morning.

"SEMP. But how to gain admission?"

Oh! she is found out then, it seems.

"But how to gain admission? for access  
Is giv'n to none but Juba and her brothers.'

But, raillery apart, why access to Juba? For he was owned and received as a lover neither by the father nor by the daughter. Well, but let that pass. Syphax puts Sempronius out of pain immediately; and, being a Numidian, abounding in wiles, supplies him with a stratagem for admission that, I believe, is a nonpareil.

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