

**SELECTIONS FROM
THE SPECTATOR**

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Selections from the Spectator by Joseph Addison & K. Deighton

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JOSEPH ADDISON & K. DEIGHTON

**SELECTIONS FROM
THE SPECTATOR**

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Addison, Joseph
SELECTIONS

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FROM

THE SPECTATOR

WITH

AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

K. DEIGHTON

London
MACMILLAN AND CO
AND NEW YORK
1892

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INTRODUCTION.

ADDISON'S life extends over a period of forty-seven years only, from 1672 to 1719. At his birth, Charles the Second was still on the throne; when he died, George the First had been reigning for five years. The interval had witnessed scenes as important as almost any in English history, and the change of thought, of social manners, of political and religious principles, was marked and permanent. With this change was a change in the tone of literature, to bring which about no one contributed more largely than Addison, no one with a spirit so entirely healthy. From the point of view of practical action, Addison's life was uneventful. Though a politician, for many years a Member of Parliament, Under Secretary for Ireland, Chief Secretary for Ireland, and finally Secretary of State, he never distinguished himself as a brilliant administrator, while as a speaker he was a complete failure. The life he loved was that of a student, not so much of books as of mankind; and this life, embellished by literature and poetry, and accompanied by the honour and respect of all whose honour and respect were worth having, he enjoyed almost without interruption. From the peaceful society of his

*Brief Sketch
of Addison's
Life.*

well-loved Latin poets during a sojourn of ten years at Oxford, he passed into the larger sphere of the busy world. A poetical address to Dryden on the subject of his translations from the classical poets brought him to the laureate's notice. By him, as it is supposed, the young poet was made known to Congreve, who in his turn, as stated by Steele, introduced him to Montague, then Chancellor of the Exchequer. Montague, himself a man of letters, if not of great literary skill, was struck with Addison's verses, Latin and English; and feeling that the grace of so facile and polished a writer would be valuable in political affairs, determined to employ him in the diplomatic service. With this object he procured for Addison a pension of £300 a year, to enable him to travel and so acquire that knowledge of foreign languages which was indispensable for a diplomatic career. Furnished with this help, and retaining the fellowship he had won at Oxford, Addison set out for France in 1699, and for nearly a year studied the French language at Blois. Having mastered his task, he repaired, in 1700, to Paris, where he remained till December, mixing with distinguished men of letters, and meeting, among others, the philosopher Malebranche and the critic Boileau. From France he passed on to Italy, and afterwards visited Switzerland, Austria, and Holland, returning to England in the autumn of 1703. Some time before his return, his patron, Montague, now Lord Halifax, had lost office on the accession of Queen Anne, with the consequence to Addison that all his hopes of a diplomatic career came to an end, and his pension was stopped. For more than a year he remained without employment. But "bountiful Fortune," his

"dear lady," was never long from his side. In 1704, the more moderate Tories found it prudent to treat the Whigs with a consideration that in their first elevation to power they had not shown; and Lord Treasurer Godolphin, at his wits' ends to find a poet who would fittingly commemorate the great victory of Blenheim, was glad to conciliate Halifax by accepting his advice that Addison's help should be sought. Addison complied with the request made to him in very flattering terms, and in a short time produced *The Campaign*. Its success was great and general. As an immediate reward, a Commissionership worth about two hundred pounds a year was bestowed upon the poet; and early in 1706, on the recommendation of Godolphin, his services were further acknowledged by his being made Under Secretary of State. Meanwhile, besides giving considerable help to Steele in his drama of the *Tender Husband*, Addison had published a narrative of his travels in Italy, and brought out an opera entitled *Rosamond*, which seems to have failed owing to its being poorly set to music. In 1708 Addison's connection with politics became more definite. He was elected to the House of Commons, first for the borough of Lostwithiel and afterwards for Malmesbury, and in 1709 became Chief Secretary for Ireland, sitting in the Irish parliament as member for Cavan. It was while in Ireland that Addison, through the publication of the *Tatler*, was brought into that close literary connection with its editor, Steele, that ultimately led to the birth of the *Spectator*. For a while his papers in the *Tatler* were few and far between, official duties occupying most of his time. But during the winter of 1709 and the latter part of the

following year, both periods being spent in London, his contributions became frequent, and in the end so completely overshadowed those by all others that Steele, in his preface to the final volume, speaks of himself as faring "like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid. I was undone by my auxiliary; when I had once called him in, I could not subsist without him." The *Tatler* ceased to appear at the end of 1711, and two months later the *Spectator* took its place. The details of its history will be found further on; but it may here be said that it was a complete success, and pecuniarily most profitable. To Addison this latter fact was of importance. For in 1710 the Ministry had fallen, and with its fall went Addison's secretaryship, as well as a Keepership of Records which brought him in between three and four hundred a year. He had, however, enough to live on with comfort, and probably no part of his life was happier than that in which he created and sustained the *Spectator*. In 1713 he produced his well-known tragedy, *Cato*, the first four acts of which he is said to have had by him since his return from Italy. Though a "passionless and mechanical play," as it has been justly styled, *Cato* had at the time a marvellous success—success in a great measure due to the popularity of its author, and to a determination of both the great political parties to see in its sentiments an endorsement of their own principles. *Cato* was followed by more essays in the *Guardian*, a paper edited by Steele after the *Spectator* had ceased. These, however, were few in number; and with a prose comedy called the *Drummer*, Addison's purely literary career came to an end, though in 1715 and 1716 he published fifty-five numbers of the *Free-*