

Editorials.

THE POET-LAUREATE.

MUCH has been recently said upon the appointment of Mr. Alfred Austin as poet-laureate of England. Lord Salisbury has been called hard names for passing over such favorably known poets as William Watson and Rudyard Kipling to elevate to the literary headship of the nation one who, although possessing scholarly tastes and attainments, is generally reputed to be worthy only of the lowest place among the bards who have filled this historic office. Unquestionably, from the time when Berdric was enrolled in the Domesday Book as "Joculator Regis" down to the crowning of this last, there has been a greater or less outcry against the unfitness of the laureate from the friends of disappointed aspirants to honors.

Public opinion has expressed its severe disapproval of the laurels going to Mr. Austin, and, if any one who has not already done so, cares to examine his literary efforts, the reasons for giving the newly created laureate a cold reception must become apparent. Perhaps he appears at the greatest disadvantage in some doggerel stanzas recently written by him on "Jameson's Ride." This poem has been parodied in many of the comic papers and has excited much ill-concealed merriment in literary circles. It does not seem, however, to concern the critics so much that his song might be unworthy the occasion of a birth, betrothal or death of some royal personage, as that his best productions are unworthy to be classed with those of such predecessors as Spencer, Dryden, Southey, Wordsworth and Tennyson.

Without the higher gifts that characterize a true poet, Mr. Austin is a gentleman of acknowledged culture and ability, and through his persistent and laborious effort has succeeded in becoming a skilful versifier if not a poet. Let us hope that in the exercise of this new function he will not miss the mark set up in a short poem in which the ideal of a poet is portrayed :

"Nor would I shape for fame my lay,
But only for the sake
Of singing, and to charm away
My own or other's ache."