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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

Venice.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53633](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53633)

*Antenor potuit mediis elapsus Achivis
 Illyricos penetrare sinus, atque intima tutus
 Regna Liburnorum, et fontem superare Timavi:
 Unde per ora novem vasto cum murmure montis
 It mare præruptum, et pelago premit arva sonanti;
 Hic tamen ille urbem Patavi, sedesque locavit
 Teucrorum, et genti nomen dedit, armaque fixit
 Tröia: nunc placidâ compositus pace quiescit.*

Æ. 1.

*Antenor, from the midst of Grecian hosts,
 Could pass secure; and pierce th' Illyrian coasts,
 Where rolling down the steep Timavus raves,
 And through nine channels difembogues his waves.
 At length he founded Padua's happy feat,
 And gave his Trojans a secure retreat:
 There fix'd their arms, and there renew'd their names;
 And there in quiet lyes.—*

Dryden.

From Padua I went down to the river Brent in the ordinary ferry, which brought me in a day's time to Venice.

V E N I C E.

HAVING often heard Venice represented as one of the most defensible cities in the world, I took care to inform my self of the particulars in which its strength consists. And these I find are chiefly owing to its advantageous situation; for it has neither rocks nor fortifications near it, and yet is, perhaps, the most impregnable town in Europe. It stands at least four miles from any part of the Terra Firma, nor are the shallows that lye about it ever frozen hard enough to bring over an army from the land-side; the constant flux and reflux of the sea, or the natural mildness of the climate, hindering the ice from gathering to any thickness; which is an advantage the *Hollanders* want, when they have laid all their country under water. On the side that is
 exposed

exposed to the Adriatic, the entrance is so difficult to hit, that they have marked it out with several stakes driven into the ground, which they would not fail to cut upon the first approach of an enemy's fleet. For this reason they have not fortified the little Islands, that lye at the entrance, to the best advantage, which might otherwise very easily command all the passes that lead to the city from the Adriatic. Nor could an ordinary fleet, with bomb-vessels, hope to succeed against a place that has always in its arsenal a considerable number of gallies and men of war ready to put to sea on a very short warning. If we could therefore suppose them blocked up on all sides, by a power too strong for them, both by sea and land, they would be able to defend themselves against every thing but famine; and this would not be a little mitigated by the great quantities of fish that their seas abound with, and that may be taken up in the midst of their very streets, which is such a natural magazine as few other places can boast of.

Our voyage-writers will needs have this city in great danger of being left, within an age or two, on the *Terra Firma*; and represent it in such a manner, as if the sea was insensibly shrinking from it, and retiring into its channel. I asked several, and among the rest Father *Coronelli*, the State's Geographer, of the truth of this particular, and they all assured me that the sea rises as high as ever, though the great heaps of dirt it brings along with it are apt to choak up the shallows, but that they are in no danger of losing the benefit of their situation, so long as they are at the charge of removing these banks of mud and sand. One may see abundance of them above the surface of the water, scattered up and down like so many little Islands, when the tide is low; and they are these that make the entrance for ships difficult to such as are not used to them, for the deep canals run between them, which the *Venetians* are at a great expence to keep free and open.

This city stands very convenient for commerce. It has several navigable rivers that run up into the body of *Italy*, by which they might supply a great many countries with fish and other commodities; not to mention their opportunities for the *Levant*, and each side of the Adriatic. But, notwithstanding these conveniencies, their trade is far from being in a flourishing condition for many reasons. The duties are great that are laid on merchandizes. Their Nobles think it below their quality to engage in traffick. The Merchants who are grown rich, and able to manage great dealings, buy their nobility, and generally give over trade. Their manufactures of cloth, glass and silk, formerly the best in *Europe*, are now

excel-

excelled by those of other countries. They are tenacious of old laws and customs to their great prejudice, whereas a trading nation must be still for new changes and expedients, as different junctures and emergencies arise. The State is at present very sensible of this decay in their trade, and as a noble *Venetian*, who is still a merchant, told me, they will speedily find out some method to redress it; possibly by making a Free port, for they look with an evil eye upon *Legborne*, which draws to it most of the vessels bound for *Italy*. They have hitherto been so negligent in this particular, that many think the Great Duke's gold has had no small influence in their councils.

Venice has several particulars which are not to be found in other cities, and is therefore very entertaining to a traveller. It looks, at a distance, like a great town half floated by a deluge. There are canals every where crossing it, so that one may go to most houses either by land or water. This is a very great convenience to the inhabitants; for a *Gondola* with two oars at *Venice*, is as magnificent as a coach and six horses, with a large equipage, in another country; besides that it makes all carriages extremely cheap. The streets are generally paved with brick or free-stone, and always kept very neat, for there is no carriage, not so much as a chair, that passes through them. There is an innumerable multitude of very handsome bridges, all of a single arch, and without any fence on either side, which would be a great inconvenience to a city less sober than *Venice*. One would indeed wonder that drinking is so little in vogue among the *Venetians*, who are in a moist air and a moderate climate, and have no such diversions as bowling, hunting, walking, riding, and the like exercises to employ them without doors. But as the Nobles are not to converse too much with strangers, they are in no danger of learning it; and they are generally too distrustful of one another for the freedoms that are used in such kind of conversations. There are many noble palaces in *Venice*. Their furniture is not commonly very rich, if we except the pictures, which are here in greater plenty than in any other place in *Europe*, from the hands of the best masters of the *Lombard* school; as *Titian*, *Paul Veronese*, and *Tintoret*. The last of these is in greater esteem at *Venice* than in other parts of *Italy*. The rooms are generally hung with gilt leather, which they cover on extraordinary occasions with tapestry, and hangings of greater value. The flooring is a kind of red plaster made of brick ground to powder, and afterwards work'd into mortar. It is rubbed with oil, and makes a smooth, shining and beautiful surface. These particularities are chiefly owing

owing to the moisture of the air, which would have an ill effect on other kinds of furniture, as it shows it self too visibly in many of their finest pictures. Though the *Venetians* are extremely jealous of any great fame or merit in a living member of their common-wealth, they never fail of giving a man his due praises, when they are in no danger of suffering from his ambition. For this reason, though there are a great many monuments erected to such as have been benefactors to the Republick, they are generally put up after their deaths. Among the many Elogiums that are given to the Doge *Pisauro*, who had been Ambassador in *England*, his epitaph says, *In Angliâ Jacobi Regis obitum mirâ calliditate celatum mirâ sagacitate rimatus priscam benevolentiam firmavit.* The particular palaces, churches, and pictures of *Venice* are enumerated in several little books that may be bought on the place, and have been faithfully transcribed by many voyage-writers. When I was at *Venice*, they were putting out very curious stamps of the several edifices which are most famous for their beauty or magnificence. The *Arsenal* of *Venice* is an Island of about three miles round. It contains all the stores and provisions for war, that are not actually employed. There are docks for their gallies and men of war, most of them full, as well as work-houses for all land and naval preparations. That part of it, where the arms are laid, makes a great show, and was indeed very extraordinary about a hundred years ago, but at present a great part of its furniture is grown useles. There seem to be almost as many suits of armour as there are guns. The swords are old-fashioned and unwieldy in a very great number, and the fire-arms fitted with locks of little convenience in comparison of those that are now in use. The *Venetians* pretend they could set out, in case of great necessity, thirty men of war, a hundred gallies, and ten galeasses, though I cannot conceive how they could man a fleet of half the number. It was certainly a mighty error in this State to affect so many conquests on the *Terra Firma*, which has only served to raise the jealousy of the christian Princes, and about three hundred years ago had like to have ended in the utter extirpation of the common-wealth; whereas, had they applyed themselves with the same politics and industry to the increase of their strength by sea, they might perhaps have had all the Islands of the *Archipelago* in their hands, and, by consequence, the greatest fleet, and the most sea-men of any other State in *Europe*. Besides, that this would have given no jealousy to the Princes their neighbours, who would have enjoyed their own dominions in peace, and have been very well contented to have seen so strong a bulwark

bulwark against all the forces and invasions of the *Ottoman Empire*.

This Republick has been much more powerful than it is at present, as it is still likelier to sink than increase in its dominions. It is not impossible but the *Spaniard* may, some time or other, demand of them *Crema*, *Brescia*, and *Bergame*, which have been torn from the *Milanese*; and in case a war should arise upon it, and the *Venetians* lose a single battel, they might be beaten off the Continent in a single summer, for their fortifications are very inconsiderable. On the other side, the *Venetians* are in continual apprehensions from the *Turk*, who will certainly endeavour at the recovery of the *Morea*, as soon as the *Ottoman Empire* has recruited a little of its antient strength. They are very sensible that they had better have pushed their conquests on the other side of the *Adriatick* into *Albania*, for then their territories would have lain together, and have been nearer the fountain-head to have received succours on occasion; but the *Venetians* are under articles with the Emperor, to resign into his hands whatever they conquer of the *Turkish* dominions, that has been formerly dismembred from the Empire. And having already very much dissatisfied him in the *Frioul* and *Dalmatia*, they dare not think of exasperating him further. The Pope disputes with them their pretensions to the *Polesin*, as the Duke of *Savoy* lays an equal claim to the Kingdom of *Cyprus*. 'Tis surprizing to consider with what heats these two powers have contested their title to a Kingdom that is in the hands of the *Turk*.

Among all these difficulties the Republick will still maintain it self, if policy can prevail upon force; for it is certain the *Venetian* Senate is one of the wisest councils in the world, though at the same time, if we believe the reports of several that have been well versed in their constitution, a great part of their politics is founded on maximes which others do not think consistent with their honour to put in practice. The preservation of the Republick is that to which all other considerations submit. To encourage idleness and luxury in the Nobility, to cherish ignorance and licentiousness in the Clergy, to keep alive a continual faction in the common people, to connive at the viciousness and debauchery of convents, to breed dissentions among the Nobles of the *Terra Firma*, to treat a brave man with scorn and infamy; in short, to stick at nothing for the publick interest, are represented as the refined parts of the *Venetian* wisdom.

Among all the instances of their politics, there is none more admirable than the great secrecy that reigns in their public councils. The Senate is generally as numerous as our House of Commons, if we only reckon

on

on the sitting Members, and yet carries its resolutions so privately, that they are seldom known 'till they discover themselves in the execution. It is not many years since they had before them a great debate concerning the punishment of one of their Admirals, which lasted a month together, and concluded in his condemnation; yet was there none of his friends, nor of those who had engaged warmly in his defence, that gave him the least intimation of what was passing against him, 'till he was actually seiz'd, and in the hands of justice.

The Noble *Venetians* think themselves equal at least to the Electors of the Empire, and but one degree below Kings; for which reason they seldom travel into foreign countries, where they must undergo the mortification of being treated like private Gentlemen: Yet it is observed of them, that they discharge themselves with a great deal of dexterity in such embassies and treaties as are laid on them by the Republick; for their whole lives are employed in intrigues of state, and they naturally give themselves airs of Kings and Princes, of which the Ministers of other nations are only the Representatives. Monsieur *Amelot* reckons in his time, two thousand five hundred Nobles that had voices in the great Council, but at present, I am told, there are not at most fifteen hundred, notwithstanding the addition of many new families since that time. It is very strange, that with this advantage they are not able to keep up their number, considering that the Nobility spreads equally through all the brothers, and that so very few of them are destroyed by the wars of the Republick. Whether this may be imputed to the luxury of the *Venetians*; or to the ordinary celibacy of the younger brothers, or to the last plague which swept away many of them, I know not. They generally thrust the females of their families into convents, the better to preserve their estates. This makes the *Venetian Nuns* famous for the liberties they allow themselves. They have Opera's within their own walls, and often go out of their bounds to meet their admirers, or they are very much misrepresented. They have many of them their lovers, that converse with them daily at the grate, and are very free to admit a visit from a stranger. There is indeed one of the *Cornara's*, that not long ago refused to see any under a Prince.

The Carnival of *Venice* is every where talked of. The great diversion of the place at that time, as well as on all other high occasions, is Masking. The *Venetians*, who are naturally grave, love to give into the follies and entertainments of such seasons, when disguised in a false personage. They are indeed under a necessity of finding out diversions that

may agree with the nature of the place, and make some amends for the loss of several pleasures which may be met with on the Continent. These disguises give occasion to abundance of love-adventures; for there is something more intriguing in the amours of *Venice*, than in those of other countries, and I question not but the secret history of a Carnival would make a collection of very diverting Novels. Opera's are another great entertainment of this season. The Poetry of them is generally as exquisitely ill, as the Musick is good. The arguments are often taken from some celebrated action of the ancient *Greeks* or *Romans*, which sometimes looks ridiculous enough; for who can endure to hear one of the rough old *Romans* squeaking through the mouth of an Eunuch, especially when they may chuse a subject out of courts where Eunuchs are really Actors, or represent by them any of the soft *Asiatic* Monarchs? The Opera that was most in vogue, during my stay at *Venice*, was built on the following subject. *Cæsar* and *Scipio* are rivals for *Cato's* daughter. *Cæsar's* first words bid his soldiers fly, for the enemies are upon them. *Si leva Cæsar, e dice a Soldati. A la fugga. A lo Scampo.* The daughter gives the preference to *Cæsar*, which is made the occasion of *Cato's* death. Before he kills himself, you see him withdrawn into his Library, where, among his books, I observed the titles of *Plutarch* and *Tasso*. After a short soliloquy he strikes himself with the dagger that he holds in his hand, but, being interrupted by one of his friends, he stabs him for his pains, and by the violence of the blow unluckily breaks the dagger on one of his ribs, so that he is forced to dispatch himself by tearing up his first wound. This last circumstance puts me in mind of a contrivance in the Opera of *St. Angelo*, that was acted at the same time. The King of the play endeavours at a rape, but the Poet being resolved to save his Heroine's honour, has so ordered it, that the King always acts with a great case-knife stuck in his girdle, which the Lady snatches from him in the struggle, and so defends her self.

The *Italian* Poets, besides the celebrated smoothness of their tongue, have a particular advantage, above the writers of other nations, in the difference of their Poetical and Prose language. There are indeed sets of phrases that in all countries are peculiar to the Poets, but among the *Italians* there are not only sentences, but a multitude of particular words that never enter into common discourse. They have such a different turn and polishing for poetical use, that they drop several of their letters, and appear in another form, when they come to be ranged in verse. For this reason the *Italian* Opera seldom sinks into a poorness of language,

language, but, amidst all the meanness and familiarity of the thoughts, has something beautiful and sonorous in the expression. Without this natural advantage of the tongue, their present poetry would appear wretchedly low and vulgar, notwithstanding the many strained allegories that are so much in use among the writers of this nation. The *English* and *French*, who always use the same words in verse as in ordinary conversation, are forced to raise their language with metaphors and figures, or, by the pompousness of the whole phrase, to wear off any littleness that appears in the particular parts that compose it. This makes our blank verse, where there is no rhyme to support the expression, extremely difficult to such as are not masters in the tongue, especially when they write on low subjects; and 'tis probably for this reason that *Milton* has made use of such frequent transpositions, latinisms, antiquated words and phrases, that he might the better deviate from vulgar and ordinary expressions.

The Comedies that I saw at *Venice*, or indeed in any other part of *Italy*, are very indifferent, and more lewd than those of other countries. Their Poets have no notion of genteel Comedy, and fall into the most filthy double-meanings imaginable, when they have a mind to make their audience merry. There is no part generally so wretched as that of the fine Gentleman, especially when he converses with his Mistress; for then the whole dialogue is an insipid mixture of pedantry and romance. But 'tis no wonder that the Poets of so jealous and reserved a nation fail in such conversations on the stage, as they have no patterns of in nature. There are four standing characters which enter into every piece that comes on the stage, the *Doctor*, *Harlequin*, *Pantalone* and *Coviello*. The *Doctor*'s character comprehends the whole extent of a Pedant, that with a deep voice, and a magisterial air breaks in upon conversation, and drives down all before him: Every thing he says is backed with quotations out of *Galen*, *Hippocrates*, *Plato*, *Virgil*, or any Author that rises uppermost, and all answers from his companion are looked upon as impertinencies or interruptions. *Harlequin*'s part is made up of blunders and absurdities; he is to mistake one name for another, to forget his errands, to stumble over Queens, and to run his head against every post that stands in his way. This is all attended with something so comical in the voice and gestures, that a man, who is sensible of the folly of the part, can hardly forbear being pleased with it. *Pantalone* is generally an old Cully, and *Coviello* a Sharper.

I have seen a translation of the *Cid* acted at *Bolonia*, which would never have taken, had they not found a place in it for these Buffoons. All four of them appear in masks that are made like the old *Roman Personæ*, as I shall have occasion to observe in another place. The *French* and *Italians* have probably derived this custom of shewing some of their characters in masks, from the *Greek* and *Roman* theater. The old *Vatican Terence* has at the head of every scene the figures of all the persons that are concerned in it, with the particular disguises in which they acted; and I remember to have seen in the *Villa Mattheio* an antick statue masked, which was perhaps designed for *Gnatho* in the *Eunuch*, for it agrees exactly with the figure he makes in the *Vatican* manuscript. One would wonder indeed how so polite a people as the ancient *Romans* and *Athenians*, should not look on these borrowed faces as unnatural. They might do very well for a Cyclops, or a Satyr that can have no resemblance in human features; but for a Flatterer, a Miser, or the like characters, which abound in our own species, nothing is more ridiculous than to represent their looks by a painted vizard. In persons of this nature the turns and motions of the face are often as agreeable as any part of the action. Could we suppose that a mask represented never so naturally the general humour of a character, it can never suit with the variety of passions that are incident to every single person in the whole course of a play. The grimace may be proper on some occasions, but is too steady to agree with all. The rabble indeed are generally pleased at the first entry of a disguise, but the jest grows cold even with them too when it comes on the stage in a second scene.

Since I am on this subject, I cannot forbear mentioning a custom at *Venice*, which they tell me is particular to the common people of this country, of singing Stanza's out of *Tasso*. They are set to a pretty solemn tune, and when one begins in any part of the Poet, it is odds but he will be answered by some body else that over-hears him: So that sometimes you have ten or a dozen in the neighbourhood of one another, taking verse after verse, and running on with the Poem as far as their memories will carry them.

On *Holy-Thursday*, among the several shows that are yearly exhibited, I saw one that is odd enough, and particular to the *Venetians*. There is a set of Artisans, who by the help of several poles, which they lay across each others shoulders, build themselves up into a kind of Pyramid; so that you see a pile of men in the air of four or five rows rising one above another. The weight is so equally distributed, that every man

man is very well able to bear his part of it, the stories, if I may so call them, growing less and less as they advance higher and higher. A little boy represents the point of the Pyramid, who, after a short space, leaps off, with a great deal of dexterity, into the arms of one that catches him at the bottom. In the same manner the whole building falls to pieces. I have been the more particular on this, because it explains the following verses of *Claudian*, which show that the *Venetians* are not the inventors of this trick.

*Vel qui more avium sese jaculantur in auras,
Corpora que adificant, celeri crescentia nexu,
Quorum compositam puer augmentatus in arcem
Emicat, et vinctus plantæ, vel cruribus hærens,
Pendula librato figit vestigia saltu.* Claud. de Pr. et Olyb. Conf.

Men, pil'd on men, with active leaps arise,
And build the breathing fabrick to the skies;
A sprightly youth above the topmost row
Points the tall pyramid, and crowns the show.

Though we meet with the *Veneti* in the old poets, the city of *Venice* is too modern to find a place among them. *Sannazarius's* Epigram is too well known to be inserted. The same Poet has celebrated this city in two other places of his Poems:

— *Quis Venetæ miracula proferat urbis,
Una instar magni quæ simul Orbis habet?
Salve Italùm Regina, altæ pulcherrima Romæ
Æmula, quæ terris, quæ dominaris aquis!
Tu tibi vel Reges cives facis; O Decus, O Lux
Ausonia, per quam libera turba sumus,
Per quam Barbaries nobis non imperat, et Sob
Exoriens nostro clarius orbe nitet!*

L. 3. El. 1.

Venetia stands with endless beauties crown'd,
And as a world within her self is found.
Hail Queen of *Italy!* for years to come
The mighty rival of immortal *Rome!*
Nations and Seas are in thy states enroll'd,
And Kings among thy citizens are told.

Ausonia's

Ausonia's brightest ornament! by thee
 She sits a Sov'rain, unentlav'd, and free;
 By thee, the rude Barbarian chas'd away,
 The rising sun cheers with a purer ray
 Our western world, and doubly gilds the day.

*Nec Tu semper eris, quæ septem amplecteris arces,
 Ne Tu, quæ mediis amula surgis aquis.*

L. 2. El. 1.

Thou too shalt fall by time or barb'rous foes,
 Whose circling walls the sev'n fam'd hills inclose;
 And thou, whose rival tow'rs invade the skies,
 And, from amidst the waves, with equal glory rise.

FERRARA, RAVENNA, RIMINI.

AT *Venice* I took a bark for *Ferrara*, and in my way thither
 saw several mouths of the *Po*, by which it empties it self in-
 to the Adriatic,

— *Quo non alius per pingua culta
 In mare purpureum violentior influit amnis.*

Virg. G. 4.

which is true, if understood only of the rivers of *Italy*.

Lucan's description of the *Po* would have been very beautiful, had he
 known when to have given over.

*Quoque magis nullum tellus se solvit in amnem
 Eridanus, fractasque evolvit in æquora sylvas,
 Hesperiamque exhaurit aquis: hunc fabula primum
 Populeâ fluvium ripas umbrâsse coronâ:
 Cumque diem pronum transverso limite ducens
 Succendit Phaëton flagrantibus æthera loris;
 Gurgitibus raptis, penitus tellure perustâ,
 Hunc habuisse pares Phœbeis ignibus undas.*

L. 2.
The