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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N^o 110. *Thursday, December 22. 1709.*

-----*Quæ lucis miseris tam dira cupido?*

Virg.

Sheer-Lane, December 21.

AS soon as I had placed my self in my Chair of Judicature, I ordered my Clerk Mr. *Lillie* to read to the Assembly (who were gathered together according to notice) a certain Declaration, by way of charge, to open the purpose of my Session, which tended only to this explanation, That as other Courts were often called to demand the Execution of persons Dead in Law, so this was held to give the last orders relating to those who are Dead in Reason. The Solicitor of the new company of Upholders near the *Hay-Market* appeared in behalf of that useful society, and brought in an accusation of a young woman, who her self stood at the Bar before me. Mr. *Lillie* read her Indictment, which was in substance, That whereas Mrs. *Rebecca Pindust*, of the Parish of *St. Martin in the Fields*, had, by the use of one instrument called a Looking-glass, and by the further use of certain attire, made either of Cambrick, Muslin, or other Linnen wares, upon her head, attained to such an evil art and magical force in the motion of her eyes and turn of her countenance, that she the said *Rebecca* had put to death several young men of the said Parish; and that the said young men had acknowledged in certain papers, commonly called *Love-letters* (which were produced in court, gilded on the edges, and sealed with a particular wax, with certain amorous and enchanting words wrought upon the said Seals) that they Died for the said *Rebecca*: And whereas the said *Rebecca* persisted in the said evil practice; this way of life the said Society construed to be, according to former Edicts, a State of Death, and demanded an order for the Interment of the said *Rebecca*.

I looked upon the Maid with great humanity, and desired her to make answer to what was said against her. She said, It was indeed true, that

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she had practis'd all the arts and means she could to dispose of her self happily in marriage, but thought she did not come under the censure expressed in my writings for the same; and humbly hoped, I would not condemn her for the ignorance of her Accusers, who, according to their own words, had rather represented her Killing, than Dead. She further alledged, That the Expressions mentioned in the papers written to her, were become meer words, and that she had been always ready to marry any of those who said they Died for her; but that they made their escape as soon as they found themselves pitied or believed. She ended her discourse, by desiring I would for the future settle the meaning of the words, *I die*, in Letters of Love.

Mrs. *Pindust* behaved her self with such an Air of Innocence, that she easily gained credit, and was acquitted. Upon which occasion, I gave it as a standing Rule, That any persons, who in any Letter, Billet, or Discourse, should tell a Woman he Died for her, should, if she pleased, be obliged to Live with her, or be immediately Interred upon such their own confession, without Bail or Mainprize.

It happened, that the very next who was brought before me was one of her Admirers, who was indicted upon that very head. A Letter, which he acknowledged to be his own hand, was read; in which were the following words; *Cruel Creature, I die for you*. It was observable that he took Snuff all the time his Accusation was reading. I asked him, How he came to use these words, if he were not a dead Man? He told me, He was in love with a Lady, and did not know any other way of telling her so; and that all his acquaintance took the same method. Though I was moved with compassion towards him by reason of the weakness of his parts, yet for Example's-sake, I was forced to answer, Your Sentence shall be a warning to all the rest of your Companions; not to tell lies for want of wit. Upon this, he began to beat his Snuff-box with a very sawcy Air; and opening it again, Faith *Isaac*, said he, thou art a very unaccountable old Fellow—Pr'ythee, who gave thee Power of Life and Death? What-a-pox hast thou to do with Ladies and Lovers? I suppose thou wouldst have a Man be in company with his Mistrefs, and say nothing to her. Dost thou call breaking a Jest, telling a Lie? Ha! Is that thy Wisdom, old Stiffump, ha? He was going on with this insipid common-place mirth, sometimes opening his Box, sometimes shutting it, then viewing the Picture on the Lid, and then the workmanship of the Hinge, when, in the midst of his Eloquence, I ordered his Box to be taken from him; upon which he was immediately struck speechless, and carried off stone dead. The

The next who appeared, was a hale old Fellow of sixty. He was brought in by his Relations, who desired leave to bury him. Upon requiring a distinct account of the Prisoner, a credible Witness deposed, That he always rose at ten of the Clock, played with his Cat till twelve, smoked Tobacco till one, was at Dinner till two, then took another Pipe, played at Backgammon till six, talked of one Madam *Frances*, an old Mistress of his, till eight, repeated the same account at the Tavern till ten, then returned home, took the other Pipe, and then to Bed. I asked him, what he had to say for himself? As to what (said he) they mention concerning Madam *Frances*—I did not care for hearing a *Canterbury* Tale, and therefore thought my self seasonably interrupted by a young Gentleman who appeared in the behalf of the old Man, and prayed an Arrest of Judgment; for that he the said young Man held certain lands by his the said old Man's life. Upon this, the Solicitor of the Upholders took an occasion to demand him also, and thereupon produced several Evidences that witnessed to his Life and Conversation. It appeared, that each of them divided their hours in matters of equal moment and importance to themselves and to the publick. They rose at the same hour: while the old Man was playing with his Cat, the young one was looking out of his Window; while the old Man was smoking his Pipe, the young Man was rubbing his Teeth; while one was at dinner, the other was dressing; while one was at Backgammon, the other was at dinner; while the old Fellow was talking of Madam *Frances*, the young one was either at Play, or toasting Women whom he never conversed with. The only difference was, That the young Man had never been good for any thing; the old Man, a Man of worth before he knew Madam *Frances*. Upon the whole, I ordered them to be both interred together, with Inscriptions proper to their Characters, signifying, That the old Man died in the year 1689, and was buried in the year 1709. And over the young one it was said, That he departed this world in the 25th year of his Death.

The next Class of Criminals, were Authors in Prose and Verse. Those of them who had produced any still-born work were immediately dismissed to their Burial, and were followed by others, who, notwithstanding some sprightly Issue in their Life-time, had given proofs of their Death, by some Posthumous Children, that bore no resemblance to their elder Brethren. As for those who were the Fathers of a mixed Progeny, provided always they could prove the last to be a live Child, they
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escaped with life, but not without loss of limbs; for in this case, I was satisfied with Amputation of the Parts which were mortified.

These were followed by a great crowd of superannuated Benchers of the Inns of Court, Senior Fellows of Colleges, and defunct Statesmen; all whom I ordered to be decimated indifferently, allowing the rest a Reprieve for one year, with a promise of a free Pardon in case of Resuscitation.

There were still great Multitudes to be examined; but finding it very late, I adjourned the Court; not without the secret pleasure that I had done my Duty, and furnished out an handsome Execution.

Going out of the Court, I received a Letter, informing me, That in pursuance of the Edict of Justice in one of my late Visions, all those of the Fair Sex began to appear Pregnant who had ran any hazard of it; as was manifest by a particular Swelling in the Petticoats of several Ladies in and about this great City. I must confess, I do not attribute the Rising of this part of the Dress to this occasion, yet must own, that I am very much disposed to be offended with such a new and unaccountable Fashion. I shall however pronounce nothing upon it, till I have examined all that can be said for and against it. And in the mean time, think fit to give this notice to the Fair Ladies who are now making up their Winter-suits, that they may abstain from all Dresses of that kind, till they shall find what Judgment will be passed upon them; for it would very much trouble me, that they should put themselves to an unnecessary Expence; and I could not but think myself to blame, if I should hereafter forbid them the wearing of such Garments, when they have laid out Money upon them, without having given them any previous Admonitions.

Sir Richard Steele joined in this paper.



Saturday,