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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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No 116. Thursday, January 5. 1709.

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The variety of Images in this passage is infinitely pleasing, and the recapitulation of each particular Image, with a little varying of the Expression, makes one of the finest Turns of Words that I have ever seen: Which I rather mention, because Mr. *Dryden* has said in his Preface to *Juvenal*, That he could meet with no Turn of Words in *Milton*.

It may further be observed, That though the sweetness of these Verses has something in it of a Pastoral, yet it excels the ordinary kind, as much as the Scene of it is above an ordinary Field or Meadow. I might here, since I am accidentally led into this subject, show several passages in *Milton* that have as excellent turns of this nature, as any of our *English* Poets whatsoever; but shall only mention that which follows, in which he describes the fallen Angels engaged in the intricate disputes of Predestination, Free-will, and Fore-knowledge; and to humour the Perplexity, makes a kind of Labyrinth in the very words that describe it.

*Others apart sat on a hill retir'd,
In thoughts more elevate, and reason'd high
Of Providence, Fore-knowledge, Will and Fate,
Fix'd Fate, Free-will, Fore-knowledge absolute,
And found no end in wand'ring Mazes lost.*

Sir Richard Steele assisted in this paper.

N^o 116. *Thursday, January 5. 1709.*

-----*Pars minima est ipsa puella sui.*

Ovid.

Sheer-Lane, January 4.

THE Court being prepared for proceeding on the cause of the *Petticoat*, I gave orders to bring in a Criminal who was taken up as she went out of the Puppet-show about three nights ago, and was now standing in the street with a great concourse of people about her. Word was brought me, that she had endeavoured twice or thrice to come in, but could not do it by reason of her *Petticoat*, which

was

was too large for the Entrance of my house, though I had ordered both the Folding-doors to be thrown open for its reception. Upon this, I desired the Jury of Matrons, who stood at my right hand, to inform themselves of her condition, and know whether there were any private reasons why she might not make her appearance separate from her Petticoat. This was managed with great discretion, and had such an effect, that upon the return of the Verdict from the Bench of Matrons, I issued out an Order forthwith, That the Criminal should be stripped of her incumbrances, till she became little enough to enter my house. I had before given directions for an Engine of several legs, that could contract or open it self like the top of an Umbrello, in order to place the Petticoat upon it, by which means I might take a leisurely survey of it, as it should appear in its proper Dimensions. This was all done accordingly; and forthwith, upon the closing of the Engine, the Petticoat was brought into Court. I then directed the Machine to be set upon the table, and dilated in such a manner as to show the Garment in its utmost Circumference; but my great Hall was too narrow for the Experiment; for before it was half unfolded, it described so immoderate a Circle, that the lower part of it brushed upon my face as I sat in my Chair of Judicature. I then enquired for the Person that belonged to the Petticoat; and to my great surprize, was directed to a very beautiful young Damsel, with so pretty a Face and Shape, that I bid her come out of the crowd, and seated her upon a little Crock at my left hand. " My pretty Maid " (said I) do you own your self to have been the Inhabitant of the Garment before us? The Girl I found had good Sense, and told me with a Smile, That notwithstanding it was her own Petticoat, she should be very glad to see an Example made of it; and that she wore it for no other reason, but that she had a mind to look as big and burly as other persons of her Quality; That she had kept out of it as long as she could, and till she began to appear little in the eyes of all her Acquaintance; That if she laid it aside, people would think she was not made like other women. I always give great allowances to the Fair Sex upon account of the Fashion, and therefore was not displeas'd with the defence of the pretty Criminal. I then ordered the Vest which stood before us to be drawn up by a Pully to the top of my great Hall, and afterwards to be spread open by the Engine it was placed upon, in such a manner, that it formed a very splendid and ample Canopy over our heads, and covered the whole Court of Judicature with a kind of Silken Rotunda, in its form not unlike the Cupola of St. Paul's. I entered upon the whole Cause with great satisfaction as I sat under the shadow of it. The

The Council for the Petticoat was now called in, and ordered to produce what they had to say against the popular cry which was raised against it. They answered the Objections with great strength and solidity of argument, and expatiated in very florid harangues, which they did not fail to set off and furbelow (if I may be allowed the metaphor) with many periodical sentences and turns of oratory. The chief arguments for their Client were taken, first, from the great benefit that might arise to our Woollen Manufactory from this invention, which was calculated as follows: The common Petticoat has not above four yards in the Circumference; whereas this over our heads had more in the Semi-diameter; so that by allowing it twenty-four yards in the Circumference, the five Millions of Woollen Petticoats, which according to Sir *William Petty* (supposing what ought to be supposed in a well-governed State, that all Petticoats are made of that Stuff,) would amount to thirty Millions of those of the ancient Mode. A prodigious improvement of the Woollen trade! and what could not fail to sink the power of *France* in a few years.

To introduce the second Argument, they begged leave to read a Petition of the Rope-makers, wherein it was represented, That the demand for Cords, and the price of them, were much risen since this Fashion came up. At this, all the Company who were present lifted up their eyes into the Vault; and I must confess, we did discover many Traces of Cordage which were interwoven in the Stiffening of the Drapery.

A third Argument was founded upon a Petition of the *Greenland* trade, which likewise represented the great consumption of Whale-bone which would be occasioned by the present Fashion, and the benefit which would thereby accrue to that branch of the *British* trade.

To conclude, they gently touched upon the weight and unweildiness of the garment, which they insinuated might be of great use to preserve the Honour of Families.

These Arguments would have wrought very much upon me, (as I then told the company in a long and elaborate discourse) had I not considered the great and additional expence which such Fashions would bring upon Fathers and Husbands; and therefore by no means to be thought of till some years after a Peace. I further urged, That it would be a prejudice to the Ladies themselves, who could never expect to have any money in the Pocket, if they laid out so much on the Petticoat. To this I added, the great Temptation it might give to Virgins, of acting in Security like married women, and by that means give a check to Matrimony, an Institution always encouraged by wise Societies.

At

At the same time, in answer to the several Petitions produced on that side, I shewed one subscribed by the Women of several persons of Quality, humbly setting forth, That since the introduction of this mode, their respective Ladies had (instead of bestowing on them their Cast-gowns) cut them into shreds, and mixed them with the cordage and buckram, to compleat the stiffening of their Under-petticoats. For which, and fundry other reasons, I pronounced the Petticoat a Forfeiture: But to shew that I did not make that judgment for the sake of filthy lucre, I ordered it to be folded up, and sent it as a present to a Widow-gentlewoman, who has Five Daughters, desiring she would make each of them a Petticoat out of it, and send me back the remainder, which I design to cut into Stomachers, Caps, Facings of my waistcoat-sleeves, and other garnitures suitable to my Age and Quality.

I would not be understood, that (while I discard this monstrous invention) I am an enemy to the proper ornaments of the Fair Sex. On the contrary, as the hand of Nature has poured on them such a profusion of Charms and Graces, and sent them into the world more amiable and finished than the rest of her works; so I would have them bestow upon themselves all the additional Beauties that Art can supply them with, provided it does not interfere with, disguise, or pervert, those of Nature.

I consider Woman as a beautiful Romantick Animal, that may be adorned with Furs and Feathers, Pearls and Diamonds, Ores and Silks. The Lynx shall cast its skin at her feet to make her a Tippet; the Peacock, Parrat, and Swan, shall pay contributions to her Muff; the Sea shall be searched for Shells, and the Rocks for Gems; and every part of Nature furnish out its share towards the embellishment of a Creature that is the most consummate work of it. All this I shall indulge them in; but as for the Petticoat I have been speaking of, I neither can, nor will allow it.

