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**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

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N<sup>o</sup> 119. *Thursday, January 12. 1709.*

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*In tenui labor.*-----

Virg.

*Sheer-Lane, January 11.*

I Have lately applied my self with much satisfaction to the curious Discoveries that have been made by the help of Microscopes, as they are related by Authors of our own and other Nations. There is a great deal of pleasure in prying into this World of Wonders, which Nature has laid out of sight, and seems industrious to conceal from us. Philosophy had ranged over all the Visible creation, and began to want objects for her enquiries, when the present age, by the invention of Glasses, opened a new and inexhaustible Magazine of Rarities, more wonderful and amazing than any of those which astonish'd our Forefathers. I was yesterday amusing my self with Speculations of this kind, and reflecting upon Myriads of Animals that swim in those little Seas of Juices that are contained in the several Vessels of an humane Body. While my Mind was thus filled with that secret wonder and delight, I could not but look upon my self as in an Act of Devotion, and am very well pleas'd with the thought of the great Heathen Anatomist, who calls his description of the parts of an humane Body, *An Hymn to the Supreme Being*. The reading of the day produced in my Imagination an agreeable Morning's Dream, if I may call it such; for I am still in doubt, whether it pass'd in my sleeping or waking thoughts. However it was, I fancied that my good Genius stood at my bed's-head, and entertained me with the following Discourse; for upon my rising, it dwelt so strongly upon me, that I writ down the substance of it, if not the very words.

If (said he) you can be so transported with those Productions of Nature which are discovered to You by those Artificial eyes that are the works of humane Invention, how great will your surprize be, when you shall have it in your power to model your Own eye as you please, and adapt



adapt it to the bulk of objects, which, with all these helps, are by infinite degrees too minute for your perception. We who are unbodied Spirits, can sharpen our sight to what degree we think fit, and make the least work of the Creation distinct and visible. This gives us such Idea's as cannot possibly enter into your present Conceptions. There is not the least Particle of Matter which may not furnish one of us sufficient Employment for a whole Eternity. We can still divide it, and still open it, and still discover new Wonders of Providence, as we look into the different Texture of its parts, and meet with beds of Vegetables, Mineral and Metallick Mixtures, and several kinds of Animals that lie hid, and as it were lost in such an endless Fund of Matter. I find you are surpris'd at this discourse; but as your Reason tells you there are infinite parts in the smallest portion of matter, it will likewise convince you, that there is as great a variety of secrets, and as much room for discoveries, in a particle no bigger than the point of a pin, as in the globe of the whole earth. Your Microscopes bring to sight shoals of living Creatures in a spoonful of Vinegar; but we, who can distinguish them in their different magnitudes, see among them several huge *Leviathans*, that terrify the little Fry of Animals about them, and take their pastime as in an Ocean, or the great Deep. I could not but smile at this part of his relation, and told him, I doubted not but he could give me the history of severable invisible Giants, accompanied with their respective Dwarfs, in case that any of these little Beings are of an humane shape. You may assure your self (said he) that we see in these little Animals different Natures, Instincts and Modes of life, which correspond to what you observe in Creatures of bigger dimensions. We descry millions of Species subsisted on a green Leaf, which your Glasses represent only in crowds and swarms. What appears to your eye but as Hair or Down rising on the surface of it, we find to be Woods and Forrests, inhabited by Beasts of Prey, that are as dreadful in those their haunts, as Lions and Tigers in the deserts of *Libya*. I was much delighted with his discourse, and could not forbear telling him, that I should be wonderfully pleas'd to see a natural History of Imperceptibles, containing a true account of such Vegetables and Animals as grow and live out of sight. Such Disquisitions (answered he) are very suitable to reasonable Creatures; and you may be sure, there are many curious Spirits amongst us who employ themselves in such amusements. For as our hands, and all our senses, may be formed to what degree of strength and delicacy we please, in the same manner as our sight, we can make what experiments we are inclined



inclined to, how small soever the matter be in which we make them. I have been present at the dissection of a Mite, and have seen the Skeleton of a Flea. I have been shown a Forrest of numberless trees, which has been picked out of an Acorn. Your Microscope can show you in it a compleat Oak in miniature; and could you suit all your Organs as we do, you might pluck an Acorn from this little Oak, which contains another tree; and so proceed from tree to tree, as long as you would think fit to continue your disquisitions. It is almost impossible (added he) to talk of things so remote from common life, and the ordinary notions which Mankind receive from blunt and gross organs of Sense, without appearing extravagant and ridiculous. You have often seen a Dog opened, to observe the Circulation of the blood, or make any other useful enquiry; and yet would be tempted to laugh if I should tell you, that a circle of much greater Philosophers than any of the Royal Society, were present at the cutting up of one of those little Animals which we find in the Blue of a plumb; that it was tyed down alive before them; and that they observed the palpitations of the Heart, the course of the Blood, the working of the Muscles, and the convulsions in the several Limbs, with great accuracy and improvement. I must confess, said I, for my own part, I go along with you in all your discoveries with great pleasure; but it is certain, they are too fine for the gross of mankind, who are more struck with the description of every thing that is great and bulky. Accordingly we find the best judge of humane Nature setting forth his wisdom, not in the formation of these Minute Animals, (though indeed no less wonderful than the other) but in that of the *Leviathan* and *Behemoth*, the *Horse* and the *Crocodile*. Your observation (said he) is very just; and I must acknowledge for my own part, that although it is with much delight that I see the traces of Providence in these instances, I still take greater pleasure in considering the works of the Creation in their Immenfity, than in their Minuteness. For this reason, I rejoice when I strengthen my sight so as to make it pierce into the most remote spaces, and take a view of those heavenly bodies which lie out of the reach of humane eyes though assisted by Telescopes. What you look upon as one confused White in the Milky-way, appears to me a long tract of Heavens, distinguished by Stars that are ranged in proper figures and constellations. While you are admiring the Sky in a starry night, I am entertained with a variety of Worlds and Suns placed one above another, and rising up to such an immense distance, that no created eye can see an end of them.

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The latter part of his discourse flung me into such an astonishment, that he had been silent for some time before I took notice of it; when on a sudden I started up and drew my curtains, to look if any one was near me, but saw no-body, and cannot tell to this moment, whether it was my good Genius or a Dream that left me.

N<sup>o</sup> 120. Saturday, January 14. 1709.

---- *Velut silvis, ubi passim*

*Palantes error certo de tramite pellit;*

*Ille sinistrorsum, hic dextorsum abit.*

Hor.

Sheer-Lane, January 13.

**I**Nstead of considering any particular Passion or Character in any one Set of men, my thoughts were last night employed on the contemplation of humane life in general; and truly it appears to me, that the whole Species are hurried on by the same desires, and engaged in the same pursuits, according to the different stages and divisions of Life. Youth is devoted to Lust, Middle-age to Ambition, Old age to Avarice. These are the three general motives and principles of action both in good and bad men; though it must be acknowledged, that they change their names, and refine their natures, according to the temper of the person whom they direct and animate. For with the Good, Lust becomes Virtuous Love; Ambition, true Honour; and Avarice, the Care of posterity. This scheme of thought amused me very agreeably till I retired to rest, and afterwards formed it self into a pleasing and regular Vision, which I shall describe in all its circumstances, as the objects presented themselves, whether in a serious or ridiculous manner.

I dreamed that I was in a Wood, of so prodigious an extent, and cut into such a variety of walks and allies, that all Mankind were lost and bewildered in it. After having wandered up and down some time, I came into the Centre of it, which opened into a wide Plain, filled with