



UNIVERSITÄTS-  
BIBLIOTHEK  
PADERBORN

## Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 153. Saturday, April 1. 1710.

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

I question not but my Reader will be pleas'd with this description of a Future State, represented by such a noble and fruitful imagination, that had nothing to direct it besides the Light of Nature, and the opinions of a dark and ignorant age.

---

N<sup>o</sup> 153. *Saturday, April 1. 1710.*

---

*Bombalio, Clangor, Stridor, Taratantara, Murmur.* Farn. Rhet.

---

*From my own Apartment, March 31.*

I Have heard of a very valuable Picture, wherein all the Painters of the Age in which it was drawn, are represented sitting together in a Circle, and joining in a Consort of Musick. Each of them plays upon such a particular Instrument as is the most suitable to his character, and expresses that style and manner of painting which is peculiar to him. The famous Cupola-painter of those times, to show the grandeur and boldness of his figures, hath a Horn in his mouth, which he seems to wind with great strength and force. On the contrary, an eminent Artist, who wrought up his Pictures with the greatest accuracy, and gave them all those delicate touches which are apt to please the nicest eye, is represented as tuning a Theorbo. The same kind of humour runs through the whole piece.

I have often from this hint imagined to my self, that different talents in discourse might be shadowed out after the same manner by different kinds of musick; and that the several conversable parts of mankind in this great City might be cast into proper characters and divisions, as they resemble several Instruments that are in use among the Masters of Harmony. Of these therefore in their order, and first of the Drum.

Your Drums are the Blusterers in conversation, that with a loud laugh, unnatural mirth, and a torrent of noise, domineer in publick assemblies, over-bear men of sense, stun their companions, and fill the place they are in with a rattling sound, that hath seldom any wit, humour, or good breeding in it. The Drum notwithstanding, by this boisterous vivacity, is very proper

proper to impose upon the ignorant; and in conversation with Ladies, who are not of the finest taste, often passes for a man of mirth and wit, for wonderful pleasant company. I need not observe, that the emptiness of the Drum very much contributes to its noise.

The Lute is a character directly opposite to the Drum, that sounds very finely by it self, or in a very small consort. Its notes are exquisitely sweet, and very low, easily drowned in a multitude of instruments, and even lost among a few, unless you give a particular attention to it. A Lute is seldom heard in a company of more than five, whereas a Drum will show it self to advantage in an assembly of five hundred. The Lutanists therefore are men of a fine Genius, uncommon reflection, great affability, and esteemed chiefly by persons of a good taste, who are the only proper judges of so delightful and soft a melody.

The Trumpet is an Instrument that has in it no compass of musick, or variety of sound, but is notwithstanding very agreeable, so long as it keeps within its pitch. It has not above four or five Notes, which are however very pleasing, and capable of exquisite turns and modulations. The Gentlemen who fall under this denomination, are your men of the most fashionable education and refined breeding, who have learned a certain smoothness of discourse, and sprightliness of air, from the polite company they have kept; but at the same time have shallow Parts, weak Judgments, and a short reach of Understanding; a Play-house, a Drawing-room, a Ball, a Visiting-day, or a Ring at *Hide-park*, are the few notes they are masters of, which they touch upon in all conversations. The Trumpet however is a necessary Instrument about a Court, and a proper enlivener of a Consort, though of no great harmony by it self.

Violins are the lively, forward, importunate Wits, that distinguish themselves by the flourishes of Imagination, sharpness of Repartee, glances of Satyr, and bear away the upper part in every Consort. I cannot however but observe, that when a man is not disposed to hear Musick, there is not a more disagreeable sound in harmony than that of a Violin.

There is another musical instrument, which is more frequent in this nation than any other; I mean your Bass-viol, which grumbles in the bottom of the Consort, and with a surly masculine sound strengthens the harmony, and tempers the sweetness of the several instruments that play along with it. The Bass-viol is an instrument of a quite different nature to the Trumpet, and may signify men of rough sense, and unpolished parts, who do not love to hear themselves talk, but sometimes break out with an agreeable bluntness, unexpected wit, and surly pleasantries, to the

no small diversion of their friends and companions. In short, I look upon every sensible true-born *Briton* to be naturally a Bass-viol.

As for your Rural Wits, who talk with great eloquence and alacrity of Foxes, Hounds, Horses, Quickset-hedges, and Six-bar gates, Double ditches, and Broken necks, I am in doubt, whether I should give them a place in the conversable world. However, if they will content themselves with being raised to the dignity of Hunting-horns, I shall desire for the future that they may be known by that name.

I must not here omit the Bagpipe Species, that will entertain you from morning to night with the repetition of a few Notes, which are played over and over, with the perpetual humming of a Drone running underneath them. These are your dull, heavy, tedious Story-tellers, the load and burthen of conversations, that set up for men of importance, by knowing secret history, and giving an account of transactions, that whether they ever passed in the world or not, doth not signify an half-penny to its instruction, or its welfare. Some have observed, that the *Northern* parts of this Island are more particularly fruitful in Bagpipes.

There are so very few persons who are masters in every kind of conversation, and can talk on all subjects, that I do not know whether we should make a distinct species of them: Nevertheless, that my scheme may not be defective, for the sake of those few who are endowed with such extraordinary talents, I shall allow them to be Harpsicords, a kind of Musick which every one knows is a Confort by it self.

As for your Passing-bells, who look upon mirth as criminal, and talk of nothing but what is melancholy in it self, and mortifying to humane nature, I shall not mention them.

I shall likewise pass over in silence all the rabble of mankind, that crowd our streets, coffee-houses, feasts, and publick tables. I cannot call their discourse conversation, but rather something that is practised in imitation of it. For which reason, if I would describe them by any musical instrument, it should be by those modern inventions of the Bladder and String, Tongs and Key, Marrow-bone and Cleaver.

My Reader will doubtless observe, that I have only touched here upon Male Instruments, having reserved my Female Confort to another occasion. If he has a mind to know where these several characters are to be met with, I could direct him to a whole club of Drums; not to mention another of Bagpipes, which I have before given some account of in my description of our nightly meetings in *Sheer-lane*. The Lutes may often be met with in couples upon the banks of a chrystal stream, or in the

retreats of shady woods and flowry meadows; which for different reasons are likewise the great resort of your Hunting-horns. Bass-violis are frequently to be found over a glass of Stale-beer, and a pipe of Tobacco; whereas those who set up for Violins, seldom fail to make their appearance at *Will's* once every evening. You may meet with a Trumpet any where on the other side of *Charing-cross*.

That we may draw something for our advantage in life out of the foregoing discourse, I must intreat my Reader to make a narrow search into his life and conversation, and upon his leaving any company, to examine himself seriously, whether he has behaved himself in it like a Drum or a Trumpet, a Violin or a Bass-viol; and accordingly endeavour to mend his musick for the future. For my own part, I must confess, I was a Drum for many years; nay, and a very noisy one, till having polished my self a little in good company, I threw as much of the Trumpet into my conversation as was possible for a man of an impetuous temper, by which mixture of different musicks, I look upon my self, during the course of many years, to have resembled a Tabor and Pipe. I have since very much endeavoured at the sweetness of the Lute; but in spite of all my resolutions, I must confess with great confusion, that I find my self daily degenerating into a Bagpipe; whether it be the effect of my old age, or of the company I keep, I know not. All that I can do, is to keep a watch over my conversation, and to silence the Drone as soon as I find it begin to hum in my discourse, being determin'd rather to hear the notes of others, than to play out of time, and encroach upon their parts in the consort by the noise of so tiresome an instrument.

I shall conclude this paper with a letter which I received last night from a friend of mine, who knows very well my notions upon this subject, and invites me to pass the evening at his house, with a select company of friends, in the following words:

*Dear Isaac,*

“ I Intend to have a Confort at my house this evening, having by great  
“ chance got a Harpsicord, which I am sure will entertain you ve-  
“ ry agreeably. There will be likewise two Lutes and a Trumpet: Let  
“ me beg you to put your self in tune, and believe me

*Your very faithful Servant,*  
Nicholas Humdrum.

*Tuesday,*