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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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Faciunt ne intelligendo, ut nihil intelligant.

Ter.

From my own Apartment, April 12.

TOM Folio is a Broker in learning, employed to get together good Editions, and stock the Libraries of great men. There is not a Sale of books begins till *Tom Folio* is seen at the door. There is not an Auction where his name is not heard, and that too in the very nick of time, in the critical moment, before the last decisive stroke of the hammer. There is not a Subscription goes forward, in which *Tom* is not privy to the first rough draught of the Proposals; nor a Catalogue printed, that doth not come to him wet from the Press. He is an universal scholar, so far as the Title-page of all Authors, knows the Manuscripts in which they were discovered, the Editions through which they have passed, with the praises or censures which they have received from the several members of the learned world. He has a greater esteem for *Aldus* and *Elzevir*, than for *Virgil* and *Horace*. If you talk of *Herodotus*, he breaks out into a Panegyrick upon *Harry Stephens*. He thinks he gives you an account of an Author, when he tells the Subject he treats of, the Name of the Editor, and the Year in which it was printed. Or if you draw him into further particulars, he cries up the goodness of the Paper, extols the diligence of the Corrector, and is transported with the beauty of the Letter. This he looks upon to be sound Learning and substantial Criticism. As for those who talk of the Fineness of style, and the Justness of thought, or describe the Brightness of any particular passages; nay, though they write themselves in the Genius and Spirit of the Author they admire, *Tom* looks upon them as men of superficial learning, and flashy parts.

I had yesterday morning a visit from this learned Idiot, (for that is the light in which I consider every Pedant) when I discovered in him some
little

little touches of the Coxcomb, which I had not before observed. Being very full of the figure which he makes in the Republick of Letters, and wonderfully satisfied with his great stock of knowledge, he gave me broad intimations, that he did not *believe* in all points as his forefathers had done. He then communicated to me a thought of a certain Author upon a passage of *Virgil's* account of the dead, which I made the subject of a late paper. This thought hath taken very much among men of *Tom's* pitch and understanding, though universally exploded by all that know how to construe *Virgil*, or have any relish of Antiquity. Not to trouble my Reader with it, I found upon the whole, that *Tom* did not believe a future state of Rewards and Punishments, because *Aeneas*, at his leaving the Empire of the dead, passed through the gate of Ivory, and not through that of Horn. Knowing that *Tom* had not sense enough to give up an opinion which he had once received, that he might avoid wrangling, I told him, that *Virgil* possibly had his oversights as well as another Author. Ah! Mr. *Bickerstaffe*, says he, you would have another opinion of him, if you would read him in *Daniel Heinsius's* Edition. I have perused him my self several times in that Edition, continued he; and after the strictest and most malicious examination, could find but two faults in him: One of them is in the *Aeneid*, where there are two Comma's instead of a Parenthesis; and another in the third *Georgick*, where you may find a Semicolon turned upside down. Perhaps, said I, these were not *Virgil's* thoughts, but those of the Transcriber. I do not design it, says *Tom*, as a reflection on *Virgil*: On the contrary, I know that all the Manuscripts *reclaim* against such a Punctuation. Oh! Mr. *Bickerstaffe*, says he, what would a man give to see one Simile of *Virgil* writ in his own hand? I asked him which was the Simile he meant; but was answered, Any Simile in *Virgil*. He then told me all the secret history in the Commonwealth of learning; of modern pieces that had the names of ancient Authors annexed to them; of all the books that were now writing or printing in the several parts of *Europe*; of many amendments which are made, and not yet published; and a thousand other particulars, which I would not have my memory burthened with for a Vatican.

At length, being fully perswaded that I thoroughly admired him, and looked upon him as a prodigy of learning, he took his leave. I know several of *Tom's* Class who are professed admirers of *Tasso* without understanding a word of *Italian*; and one in particular, that carries a *Pastor-fido* in his pocket, in which I am sure he is acquainted with no other beauty but the Clearness of the character.

There

There is another kind of Pedant, who, with all *Tom Folio's* impertinencies, hath greater superstructures and embellishments of *Greek* and *Latin*, and is still more insupportable than the other, in the same degree as he is more learned. Of this kind very often are Editors, Commentators, Interpreters, Scholiasts, and Criticks; and in short, all men of deep learning without common sense. These persons set a greater value on themselves for having found out the meaning of a passage in *Greek*, than upon the Author for having written it; nay, will allow the passage it self not to have any beauty in it, at the same time that they would be considered as the greatest men of the age for having interpreted it. They will look with contempt upon the most beautiful Poems that have been composed by any of their Contemporaries; but will lock themselves up in their studies for a twelvemonth together, to correct, publish, and expound, such trifles of Antiquity as a modern Author would be contemned for. Men of the strictest morals, severest lives, and the gravest professions, will write Volumes upon an idle Sonnet that is originally in *Greek* or *Latin*; give Editions of the most immoral Authors, and spin out whole pages upon the various readings of a lewd expression. All that can be said in excuse for them, is, that their works sufficiently show they have no taste of their Authors; and that what they do in this kind, is out of their great learning, and not out of any levity or lasciviousness of temper.

A Pedant of this nature is wonderfully well described in six lines of *Boileau*, with which I shall conclude his character:

*Un Pédant enyvré de sa vaine science,
 Tout herissé de Grec, tout bouffi d'arrogance,
 Et qui de mille Auteurs retenus mot pour mot,
 Dans sa tête entassez n'a souvent fait qu'un Sot,
 Croit qu'un Livre fait tout, et que sans Aristote
 La Raison ne voit goutte, et le bon Sens radote.*