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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 163. Thursday, April 25. 1710.

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add, that upon looking into my Catalogue of Subscribers, which I intend to print Alphabetically in the front of my Lucubrations, I find the names of the 'greatest Beauties and Wits in the whole Island of *Great Britain*, which I only mention for the benefit of any of them who have not yet subscribed, it being my design to close the Subscription in a very short time.

N<sup>o</sup> 163. *Thursday, April 25. 1710.*

*Idem inficeto est inficetior rure*

*Simul poemata attigit; neque idem unquam*

*Æquè est beatus, ac poema cum scribit:*

*Tam gaudet in se, tamque se ipse miratur.*

*Nimirum idem omnes fallimur; neque est quisquam*

*Quem non in aliqua re videre Suffenum*

*Possis-----*

Catul. de Suffeno.

*Will's Coffee-house, April 24.*

**I** Yesterday came hither about two hours before the Company generally make their appearance, with a design to read over all the Newspapers; but upon my sitting down, I was accosted by *Ned Softly*, who saw me from a corner in the other end of the room, where I found he had been writing something. *Mr. Bickerstaffe*, says he, I observe by a late paper of yours, that you and I are just of a humour; for you must know, of all impertinencies, there is nothing which I so much hate as News. I never read a *Gazette* in my life; and never trouble my head about our Armies, whether they win or lose, or in what part of the world they lie encamped. Without giving me time to reply, he drew a Paper of Verses out of his pocket, telling me, that he had something which would entertain me more agreeably, and that he would desire my

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judgment upon every line, for that we had time enough before us till the Company came in.

*Ned Softly* is a very pretty Poet, and a great admirer of easie lines. *Waller* is his favourite: And as that admirable writer has the best and worst verses of any among our *English* Poets, *Ned Softly* has got all the bad ones without book, which he repeats upon occasion, to show his reading, and garnish his conversation. *Ned* is indeed a true *English* Reader, incapable of relishing the great and masterly strokes of this art; but wonderfully pleased with the little *Gothick* ornaments of epigrammatical Conceits, Turns, Points, and Quibbles, which are so frequent in the most admired of our *English* Poets, and practised by those who want genius and strength to represent, after the manner of the ancients, simplicity in its naturally beauty and perfection.

Finding my self unavoidably engaged in such a conversation, I was resolv'd to turn my pain into a pleasure, and to divert my self as well as I could with so very odd a Fellow. You must understand, says *Ned*, that the Sonnet I am going to read to you was written upon a Lady, who showed me some verses of her own making, and is perhaps the best Poet of our age. But you shall hear it. Upon which he begun to read as follows:

*To Mira, on her incomparable Poems.*

## I.

*When dress'd in Laurel wreaths you shine,  
And tune your soft melodious notes,  
You seem a Sister of the Nine,  
Or Phoebus self in Petticoats.*

## II.

*I fancy, when your Song you sing,  
(Your Song you sing with so much art)  
Your Pen was pluck'd from Cupid's Wing;  
For ah! it wounds me like his Dart.*

Why, says I, this is a little Nofegay of conceits, a very lump of Salt: Every verse hath something in it that piques; and then the Dart in the last line is certainly as pretty a sting in the tail of an Epigram (for so I think your Criticks call it) as ever entered into the thought of a Poet. Dear Mr. *Bickerstaffe*, says he, shaking me by the hand, every body

body knows you to be a judge of these things; and to tell you truly, I read over *Roscommon's* translation of *Horace's Art of Poetry* three several times, before I sat down to write the Sonnet which I have shown you. But you shall hear it again, and pray observe every line of it, for not one of them shall pass without your approbation.

*When dress'd in Laurel wreaths you shine.*

That is, says he, when you have your Garland on; when you are writing verses. To which I replied, I know your meaning: A Metaphor! The same, said he, and went on:

*And tune your soft melodious notes.*

Pray observe the gliding of that verse; there is scarce a Consonant in it: I took care to make it run upon Liquids. Give me your opinion of it. Truly, said I, I think it as good as the former. I am very glad to hear you say so, says he; but mind the next:

*You seem a Sister of the Nine.*

That is, says he, you seem a Sister of the Muses; for if you look into ancient Authors, you will find it was their opinion, that there were Nine of them. I remember it very well, said I; but pray proceed.

*Or Phœbus self in Petticoats.*

*Phœbus*, says he, was the God of Poetry. These little instances, *Mr. Bickerstaffe*, show a Gentleman's reading. Then to take off from the air of Learning, which *Phœbus* and the Muses have given to this first Stanza, you may observe, how it falls all of a sudden into the familiar; in *Petticoats!*

*Or Phœbus self in Petticoats.*

Let us now, says I, enter upon the second Stanza. I find the first line is still a continuation of the Metaphor.

*I fancy, when your Song you sing.*

It is very right, says he; but pray observe the turn of words in those two Lines. I was a whole hour in adjusting of them, and have still a doubt upon me, whether in the second Line it should be, *Your Song you sing*; or, *You sing your Song*. You shall hear them both:

*I fancy, when your Song you sing,  
(Your Song you sing with so much art.)*

O R,

*I fancy, when your Song you sing,  
(You sing your Song with so much art.)*

Truly, said I, the Turn is so natural either way, that you have made me almost giddy with it. Dear Sir, said he, grasping me by the hand, you have a great deal of patience; but pray what do you think of the next verse?

*Your Pen was pluck'd from Cupid's Wing.*

Think! says I; I think you have made *Cupid* look like a little Goose. That was my meaning, says he; I think the ridicule is well enough hit off. But we now come to the last, which sums up the whole matter.

*For Ah! it wounds me like his Dart.*

Pray how do you like that *Ah!* Doth it not make a pretty figure in that place? *Ah!* It looks as if I felt the Dart, and cried out at being pricked with it.

*For Ah! it wounds me like his Dart.*

My friend *Dick Easy*, continued he, assured me, he would rather have written that *Ah!* than to have been the Author of the *Æneid*. He indeed objected, that I made *Mira's Pen* like a Quill in one of the lines, and like a Dart in the other. But as to that—Oh! as to that, says I, it is but supposing *Cupid* to be like a Porcupine, and his Quills and Darts will be the same thing. He was going to embrace me for the hint; but half a dozen Criticks coming into the room, whose faces he did not like, he conveyed the Sonnet into his pocket, and whispered me in the ear, he would show it me again as soon as his man had written it over fair.

*Saturday*