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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> 165. *Saturday, April 29. 1710.*

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*From my own Apartment, April 28.*

**I**T has always been my endeavour to distinguish between Realities and Appearances, and to separate true Merit from the Pretence to it. As it shall ever be my study to make discoveries of this nature in humane life, and to settle the proper distinctions between the Virtues and Perfections of mankind, and those false Colours and Resemblances of them that shine alike in the eyes of the vulgar; so I shall be more particularly careful to seach into the various merits and pretences of the Learned world: This is the more necessary, because there seems to be a general combination among the Pedants to extol one another's labours, and cry up one another's parts; while men of Sense, either through that modesty which is natural to them, or the scorn they have for such trifling commendations, enjoy their stock of knowledge like a hidden treasure with satisfaction and silence. Pedantry indeed in learning is like Hypocrisy in religion, a Form of knowledge without the Power of it, that attracts the eyes of the common people, breaks out in noise and show, and finds its reward not from any inward pleasure that attends it, but from the praises and approbations which it receives from men.

Of this shallow Species there is not a more importunate, empty, and conceited Animal, than that which is generally known by the name of a Critick. This, in the common acceptation of the word, is one that, without entering into the Sense and Soul of an Author, has a few general rules, which, like Mechanical instruments, he applies to the works of every Writer, and as they quadrate with them, pronounces the Author perfect or defective. He is master of a certain set of words, as Unity, Style, Fire, Flegm, Ease, Natural, Turn, Sentiment, and the like; which he varies, compounds, divides, and throws together, in every part of his discourse, without any thought or meaning. The marks you may know him by are, an elevated Eye, and dogmatical Brow, a positive Voice, and a Contempt for every thing that comes out, whether he has read it or not. He dwells altogether in Generals. He praises or dispraises in the lump.

He



He shakes his head very frequently at the Pedantry of Universities, and bursts into laughter when you mention an Author that is known at *Will's*. He hath formed his judgment upon *Homer*, *Horace*, and *Virgil*, not from their own works, but from those of *Rapin* and *Bossu*. He knows his own strength so well, that he never dares praise any thing in which he has not a *French* Author for his voucher.

With these extraordinary Talents and Accomplishments, Sir *Timothy Tittle* puts men in vogue, or condemns them to obscurity, and sits as Judge of Life and Death upon every Author that appears in publick. It is impossible to represent the Pangs, Agonies, and Convulsions, which Sir *Timothy* expresses in every feature of his face, and muscle of his body, upon the reading of a bad Poet.

About a week ago I was engaged at a friend's house of mine in an agreeable conversation with his wife and daughters, when in the height of our mirth, Sir *Timothy*, who makes love to my friend's eldest daughter, came in amongst us puffing and blowing, as if he had been very much out of breath. He immediately called for a Chair, and desired leave to sit down, without any further ceremony. I asked him, Where he had been? Whether he was out of order? He only replied, That he was quite spent, and fell a cursing in Soliloquy. I could hear him cry, *A wicked Rogue—An execrable Wretch—Was there ever such a Monster—* The young Ladies upon this began to be affrighted, and asked, Whether any one had hurt him? he answered nothing, but still talked to himself. *To lay the first Scene*, says he, *in St. James's Park, and the last in Northamptonshire!* Is that all? says I: Then I suppose you have been at the rehearsal of a Play this morning. *Been!* says he; I have been at *Northampton*, in the *Park*, in a Lady's Bed-chamber, in a Dining-room, every where; the Rogue has led me such a dance— Though I could scarce forbear laughing at his discourse, I told him I was glad it was no worse, and that he was only Metaphorically weary. In short, Sir, says he, the Author has not observed a single Unity in his whole Play; the Scene shifts in every Dialogue; the Villain has hurried me up and down at such a rate, that I am tired off my legs. I could not but observe with some pleasure, that the young Lady whom he made love to, conceived a very just aversion towards him, upon seeing him so very passionate in trifles. And as she had that natural Sense which makes her a better Judge than a thousand Criticks, she began to rally him upon this foolish humour. For my part, says she, I never knew a Play take that was written up to your Rules, as you call them. How Madam! says he,

Is



Is that your opinion? I am sure you have a better taste. It is a pretty kind of Magick, says she, the Poets have to transport an Audience from place to place without the help of a coach and horses. I could travel round the world at such a rate. 'Tis such an entertainment as an Enchantress finds when she fancies her self in a wood, or upon a mountain, at a feast, or a solemnity; though at the same time she has never stirr'd out of her Cottage. Your Simile, Madam, says Sir *Timothy*, is by no means just. Pray, says she, let my Similes pass without a Criticism. I must confess, continued she, (for I found she was resolv'd to exasperate him) I laugh'd very heartily at the last New Comedy which you found so much fault with. — But Madam, says he, you ought not to have laugh'd; and I defie any one to show me a single Rule that you could laugh by. Ought not to laugh! says she: Pray who should hinder me. Madam, says he, there are such people in the world as *Rapin*, *Dacier*, and several others, that ought to have spoil'd your mirth. I have heard, says the young Lady, That your great Criticks are always very bad Poets: I fancy there is as much difference between the works of one and the other, as there is between the carriage of a Dancing-master and a Gentleman. I must confess, continued she, I would not be troubled with so fine a judgment as yours is; for I find you feel more vexation in a bad Comedy, than I do in a deep Tragedy. Madam, says Sir *Timothy*, That is not my fault, they should learn the art of writing. For my part, says the young Lady, I should think the greatest art in your writers of Comedies is to please. To please! says Sir *Timothy*; and immediately fell a laughing. Truly, says she, that is my opinion. Upon this, he compos'd his countenance, look'd upon his Watch, and took his leave.

I hear that Sir *Timothy* has not been at my friend's house since this notable conference, to the satisfaction of the young Lady, who by this means has got rid of a very impertinent Fop.

I must confess, I could not but observe, with a great deal of surprize, how this Gentleman, by his ill-nature, folly and affectation, hath made himself capable of suffering so many imaginary pains, and looking with such a senseless severity upon the common diversions of life.