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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^o 216. *Saturday, August 26. 1710.*

-----*Nugis addere pondus.*

From my own Apartment, August 25.

NATURE is full of wonders; every Atom is a standing miracle, and endowed with such qualities, as could not be impressed on it by a power and wisdom less than infinite. For this reason, I would not discourage any Searches that are made into the most minute and trivial parts of the Creation. However, since the world abounds in the noblest fields of speculation, it is, methinks, the mark of a little Genius to be wholly conversant among Insects, Reptiles, Animalcules, and those trifling rarities that furnish out the apartment of a Virtuoso.

There are some men whose heads are so odly turned this way, that though they are utter strangers to the common occurrences of life, they are able to discover the Sex of a Cockle, or describe the Generation of a Mite, in all its circumstances. They are so little versed in the world, that they scarce know a Horse from an Oxe; but at the same time will tell you, with great deal of gravity, that a Flea is a Rhinoceros, and a Snail an Hermaphrodite. I have known one of these whimsical Philosophers who has set a greater value upon a collection of Spiders than he would upon a flock of Sheep, and has sold his Coat off his back to purchase a Tarantula.

I would not have a Scholar wholly unacquainted with these Secrets and Curiosities of Nature; but certainly the mind of man, that is capable of so much higher contemplations, should not be altogether fixed upon such mean and disproportioned objects. Observations of this kind are apt to alienate us too much from the knowledge of the World, and to make us serious upon trifles, by which means they expose Philosophy to the ridicule of the Witty, and the contempt of the Ignorant. In short, studies of this nature should be the Diversions, Relaxations, and Amusements, not the Care, Business, and Concern of Life.

It.

It is indeed wonderful to consider, that there should be a sort of Learned Men who are wholly employed in gathering together the Refuse of Nature, if I may call it so, and hoarding up in their Chests and Cabinets such Creatures as others industriously avoid the sight of. One does not know how to mention some of the most precious parts of their Treasure, without a kind of an Apology for it. I have been shown a Beetle valued at twenty Crowns, and a Toad at an hundred: But we must take this for a general rule, that whatever appears trivial or obscene in the common notions of the world, looks grave and philosophical in the eye of a Virtuoso.

To show this humour in its perfection, I shall present my reader with the Legacy of a certain Virtuoso, who laid out a considerable estate in Natural Rarities and Curiosities, which upon his Death-bed he bequeathed to his relations and friends in the following words:

The Will of a Virtuoso.

I *Nicholas Gimcrack* being in sound Health of Mind, but in great Weakness of Body, do by this my last Will and Testament bestow my worldly Goods and Chattels in manner following:

Imprimis, To my dear Wife,
One Box of Butterflies,
One Drawer of Shells,
A Female Skeleton,
A dried Cockatrice.

Item, To my Daughter *Elizabeth*.
My receipt for preserving dead Caterpillars.
As also my preparations of Winter *May-dew*, and Embrio Pickle.

Item, To my little Daughter *Fanny*,
Three Crocodile's Eggs.

And upon the Birth of her first Child, if she marries with her Mother's consent,

The Nest of an Humming-Bird.

Item, To my eldest Brother, as an acknowledgment for the Lands he has vested in my Son *Charles*, I bequeath
My last year's collection of Grasshoppers.

Item, To his Daughter *Susannah*, being his only Child, I bequeath my
English Weeds pasted on Royal Paper,
With my large Folio of *Indian Cabbage*.

Item,

Item, To my learned and worthy friend Dr. *Johannes Elserickius*, Professor in Anatomy, and my associate in the studies of Nature, as an eternal Monument of my affection and friendship for him, I bequeath

My Rat's Testicles, and

Whale's Pizzle,

To him and his Issue Male; and in default of such Issue in the said Dr. *Elserickius*, then to return to my Executor and his Heirs for ever.

Having fully provided for my Nephew *Isaac*, by making over to him some years since

A horned *Scarabæus*,

The Skin of a Rattle-snake, and

The Mummy of an *Egyptian King*,

I make no further provision for him in this my Will.

My eldest Son *John* having spoken disrespectfully of his little Sister whom I keep by me in Spirits of Wine, and in many other instances behaved himself undutifully towards me, I do disinherit, and wholly cut off from any part of this my personal Estate, by giving him a single Cockle Shell.

To my second Son *Charles* I give and bequeath all my Flowers, Plants, Minerals, Mosses, Shells, Pebbles, Fossils, Beetles, Butterflies, Caterpillars, Grasshoppers, and Vermin, not above specified: As also all my Monsters, both wet and dry, making the said *Charles* whole and sole Executor of this my last Will and Testament; he paying, or causing to be paid, the aforesaid Legacies within the space of six months after my decease. And I do hereby revoke all other Wills whatsoever by me formerly made.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

Whereas an ignorant Upstart in Astrology has publickly endeavoured to persuade the world, that he is the late John Partridge, who died the 28th of March, 1708; These are to certifie all whom it may concern, That the true John Partridge was not only dead at that time, but continues so to this present day.

Beware of Counterfeits, for such are abroad.

Thursday,