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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 239. Thursday, October 19. 1710.

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

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N° 239. Thursday, October 19. 1710.

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-----*Mecum certasse feretur.*

Ovid.

*From my own Apartment, October 18.*

**I**T is ridiculous for any man to criticise on the works of another, who has not distinguished himself by his own Performances. A Judge would make but an indifferent figure who had never been known at the Bar. *Cicero* was reputed the greatest Orator of his age and country before he wrote a book *De Oratore*; and *Horace* the greatest Poet before he published his *Art of Poetry*. The observation arises naturally in any one who casts his eye upon this last mentioned Author, where he will find the Criticisms placed in the latter end of his book, that is, after the finest Odes and Satyrs in the *Latin Tongue*.

A Modern, whose name I shall not mention, because I would not make a silly paper sell, was born a Critick and an Examiner, and, like one of the race of the Serpent's teeth, came into the world with a Sword in his hand. His works put me in mind of the story that is told of a *German Monk*, who was taking a Catalogue of a friend's Library, and meeting with a *Hebrew* book in it, entered it under the title of, *A Book that has the Beginning where the End should be*. This Author, in the last of his Crudities, has amassed together a heap of Quotations, to prove that *Horace* and *Virgil* were both of them modester men than my self, and if his works were to live as long as mine, they might possibly give posterity a notion, that *Isaac Bickerstaffe* was a very conceited old Fellow, and as vain a man as either *Tully* or *Sir Francis Bacon*. Had this serious writer fallen upon me only, I could have overlooked it; but to see *Cicero* abused, is, I must confess, what I cannot bear. The censure he passes upon this great Man runs thus; *The Itch of being very abusive, is almost inseparable from vain-glory. Tully has these two faults in so high a degree, that nothing but his being the best writer in the world can make amends*  
for



for them. The scurrilous wretch goes on to say I am as bad as *Tully*. His words are these; and yet the *Tatler*, in his paper of September 26, has outdone him in both. He speaks of himself with more arrogance, and with more insolence of others. I am afraid, by his discourse, this Gentleman has no more read *Plutarch* than he has *Tully*. If he had, he would have observed a passage in that Historian, wherein he has with great delicacy distinguished between two Passions which are usually complicated in humane nature, and which an ordinary writer would not have thought of separating. Not having my *Greek Spectacles* by me, I shall quote the passage word for word as I find it translated to my hand. *Nevertheless, though he was intemperately fond of his own praise, yet he was very free from envying others, and most liberally profuse in commending both the Antients and his Contemporaries, as is to be understood by his writings; and many of those sayings are still recorded, as that concerning Aristotle, That he was a river of flowing Gold: Of Plato's Dialogue, That if Jupiter were to speak, he would discourse as he did. Theophrastus he was wont to call his peculiar delight; and being asked, Which of Demosthenes his Orations he liked best? He answered, The longest.*

*And as for Eminent men of his own time, either for Eloquence or Philosophy, there was not one of them whom he did not, by writing or speaking favourably of, render more illustrious.*

Thus the Critick tells us, That *Cicero* was excessively vain-glorious and abusive; *Plutarch*, that he was vain, but not abusive. Let the Reader believe which of them he pleases.

After this he complains to the world, that I call him names; and that in my passion I said, He was a *Flea, a Louse, an Owl, a Bat, a small Wit, a Scribler, and a Nibler*. When he has thus bespoken his Reader's pity, he falls into that admirable vein of mirth, which I shall set down at length, it being an exquisite piece of Raillery, and written in great gaiety of heart. *After this List of names, (viz. Flea, Louse, Owl, Bat, &c.) I was surpris'd to hear him say, that he has hitherto kept his temper pretty well; I wonder how he will write when he has lost his temper? I suppose, as he now is very angry and unmannerly, he will then be exceeding courteous and good-humoured.* If I can outlive this Raillery, I shall be able to bear any thing.

There is a method of Criticism made use of by this Author, (for I shall take care how I call him a Scribler again) which may turn into Ridicule any work that was ever written, wherein there is a variety of thoughts: This the Reader will observe in the following words; *He (meaning me)*



is so intent upon being something extraordinary, that he scarce knows what he would be; and is as fruitful in his Similes, as a Brother of his whom I lately took notice of. In the compass of a few lines he compares himself to a Fox, to Daniel Burges, to the Knight of the Red Cross, to an Oak with Ivy about it, and to a Great man with an Equipage. I think myself as much honoured by being joined in this part of his paper with the Gentleman whom he here calls my Brother, as I am in the beginning of it, by being mentioned with *Horace* and *Virgil*.

It is very hard that a man cannot publish ten papers without stealing from himself; but to show you that this is only a knack of writing, and that the Author is got into a certain road of Criticism, I shall set down his Remarks on the works of the Gentleman whom he here glances upon, as they stand in his 6th paper, and desire the Reader to compare them with the foregoing passage upon mine.

*In thirty lines his Patron is a River, the Primum Mobile, a Pilot, a Victim, the Sun, any Thing, and Nothing. He bestows increase, conceals his source, makes the Machine move, teaches to steer, expiates our offences, raises vapours, and looks larger as he sets.*

What Poem can be safe from this sort of Criticism? I think I was never in my life so much offended as at a Wag whom I once met with in a Coffee-house: He had in his hand one of the Miscellanies, and was reading the following short copy of verses, which, without flattery to the Author, is (I think) as beautiful in its kind as any one in the *English* Tongue.

*Flavia the least and slightest toy  
Can with resistless Art employ.  
This Fan in meaner hands would prove  
An Engine of small force in love;  
But she with such an Air and Mien,  
Not to be told, or safely seen,  
Directs its wanton motions so,  
That it wounds more than Cupid's Bow;  
Gives coolness to the matchless Dame,  
To ev'ry other breast a flame.*

When this Coxcomb had done reading them, Heyday! says he, What Instrument is this that *Flavia* employs in such a manner as is not to be told, or safely seen? In ten lines it is a Toy, a *Cupid's* Bow, a Fan, and an Engine in love. It has wanton motions, it wounds, it cools, and inflames.  
Such



Such Criticisms make a man of Sense sick, and a Fool merry.

The next Paragraph of the paper we are talking of, falls upon some body whom I am at a loss to guess at: But I find the whole invective turns upon a man who (it seems) has been imprisoned for debt. Whoever he was, I most heartily pity him; but at the same time must put the *Examiner* in mind, that notwithstanding he is a Critick, he still ought to remember he is a Christian. Poverty was never thought a proper subject for ridicule; and I do not remember that I ever met with a Satyr upon a Beggar.

As for those little Retortings of my own expressions, of *being dull by design, witty in October, shining, excelling*, and so forth; they are the common Cavils of every Witlin, who has no other method of showing his Parts, but by little variations and repetitions of the man's words whom he attacks.

But the truth of it is, the paper before me, not only in this particular, but in its very essence, is like *Ovid's Echo*:

— *Quæ nec reticere loquenti,*  
*Nec prior ipsa loqui didicit.* —

I should not have deserved the character of a *Censor*, had I not animadverted upon the above-mentioned Author by a gentle chastisement: But I know my Reader will not pardon me, unless I declare, that nothing of this nature for the future (unless it be written with some Wit) shall divert me from my care of the publick.

N<sup>o</sup> 240. Saturday, October 21. 1710.

*Ad populum phaleras.* —

Perf.

*From my own Apartment, October 20.*

I DO not remember that in any of my Lucubrations I have touched upon that useful Science of Physick, notwithstanding I have declared my self more than once a Professor of it. I have indeed joined the study of Astrology with it, because I never knew a Physician recommend

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