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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

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*Infert se septis nebula, mirabile dictu  
Per medios, miscetque viris, neque cernitur ulli.* Virg.

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*From my own Apartment, October 27.*

I Have somewhere made mention of Gyges's Ring, and intimated to my Reader, that it was at present in my possession, though I have not since made any use of it. The Tradition concerning this Ring is very romantick, and taken notice of both by *Plato* and *Tully*, who each of them make an admirable use of it for the advancement of Morality. This *Gyges* was the Master Shepherd to King *Candaules*. As he was wandering over the Plains of *Lydia*, he saw a great Chasm in the earth, and had the curiosity to enter it. After having descended pretty far into it, he found the Statue of an Horse in brass, with doors in the sides of it. Upon opening of them, he found the body of a dead man bigger than ordinary, with a Ring upon his finger, which he took off, and put it upon his own. The Virtues of it were much greater than he at first imagined; for upon his going into the assembly of Shepherds, he observed, that he was invisible when he turned the stone of the Ring within the palm of his hand, and visible when he turned it towards his company. Had *Plato* and *Cicero* been as well versed in the occult Sciences as I am, they would have found a great deal of mystick learning in this Tradition; but it is impossible for an Adept to be understood by one who is not an Adept.

As for my self, I have with much study and application arrived at this great secret of making my self invisible, and by that means conveying my self where I please; or to speak in Rosycrucian Lore, I have entered into the Clefts of the earth, discovered the brazen Horse, and robbed the dead Giant of his Ring. The Tradition says further of *Gyges*, that by the means of this Ring he gained admission into the most retired parts of the Court, and made such use of those opportunities, that he at length became

became King of *Lydia*. For my own part, I, who have always rather endeavoured to improve my mind than my fortune, have turned this Ring to no other advantage than to get a thorough insight into the ways of men, and to make such observations upon the errors of others as may be useful to the Publick, whatever effect they may have upon my self.

About a week ago, not being able to sleep, I got up and put on my magical Ring, and with a thought transported my self into a chamber where I saw a light. I found it inhabited by a celebrated Beauty, though she is of that species of women which we call a Slattern. Her Head-dress and one of her Shoes lay upon a chair, her Petticoat in one corner of the room, and her Girdle, that had a copy of verses made upon it but the day before, with her thread Stockings, in the middle of the floor. I was so foolishly officious, that I could not forbear gathering up her clothes together to lay them upon the chair that stood by her bed-side, when, to my great surprize, after a little muttering, she cried out, *What do you do? Let my Petticoat alone.* I was startled at first, but soon found that she was in a dream; being one of those who (to use *Shakespear's* expression) are *so loose of thought*, that they utter in their sleep every thing that passes in their imagination. I left the apartment of this Female Rake, and went into her neighbours, where there lay a Male-coquet. He had a bottle of Salts hanging over his head, and upon the table, by his bed-side, *Suckling's Poems*, with a little heap of black Patches on it. His Snuff-box was within reach on a chair: But while I was admiring the disposition which he made of the several parts of his Dress, his slumber seemed interrupted by a pang, that was accompanied by a sudden Oath, as he turned himself over hastily in his bed. I did not care for seeing him in his nocturnal pains, and left the room.

I was no sooner got into another bed chamber, but I heard very harsh words uttered in a smooth uniform tone. I was amazed to hear so great a volubility in reproach, and thought it too coherent to be spoken by one asleep; but upon looking nearer, I saw the Head-dress of the person who spoke, which shewed her to be a Female with a man lying by her side broad awake, and as quiet as a lamb. I could not but admire his exemplary patience, and discovered by his whole behaviour, that he was then lying under the discipline of a Curtain-lecture.

I was entertained in many other places with this kind of nocturnal Eloquence, but observed, that most of those whom I found awake, were kept so either by Envy or by Love. Some of these were fighting, and others cursing, in Soliloquy; some hugged their pillows, and others gnashed their teeth.

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The Covetous I likewise found to be a very wakeful people. I happened to come into a room where one of them lay sick. His Physician and his Wife were in close whisper near his bed-side. I overheard the Doctor say to the Gentlewoman, He cannot possibly live till five in the morning. She received it like the Mistress of a family prepared for all events. At the same instant came in a Servant maid, who said, *Madam, The Undertaker is below according to your order.* The words were scarce out of her mouth, when the sick man cried out with a feeble voice, Pray, Doctor, how went Bank-stock to day at 'Change? This melancholy object made me too serious for diverting my self further this way; but as I was going home, I saw a light in a Garret, and entering into it, heard a voice crying, *And, Hand, Stand, Band, Fann'd, Tann'd.* I concluded him by this and the Furniture of his room to be a Lunatick; but upon listening a little longer, perceived it was a Poet, writing an Heroick upon the ensuing Peace.

It was now towards morning, an hour when Spirits, Witches, and Conjurers are obliged to retire to their own apartments; and feeling the influence of it, I was hastening home, when I saw a man had got half way into a neighbour's house. I immediately called to him, and turning my Ring, appeared in my proper person. There is something Magisterial in the Aspect of the *Bickerstaffes*, which made him run away in confusion.

As I took a turn or two in my own lodging, I was thinking, that, old as I was, I need not go to bed alone, but that it was in my power to marry the finest Lady in this kingdom, if I would wed her with this Ring. For what a figure would she that should have it make at a visit, with so perfect a knowledge as this would give her of all the scandal in the town? But instead of endeavouring to dispose of my self and it in Matrimony, I resolv'd to lend it to my loving friend the Author of the *Atalantis*, to furnish a new *Secret History of Secret Memoirs.*

