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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 249. Saturday, November 11. 1710.

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

N^o 249. *Saturday, November 11. 1710.*

*Per varios casus, per tot discrimina rerum,
Tendimus. -----*

Virg.

From my own Apartment, November 10.

I Was last night visited by a friend of mine who has an inexhaustible fund of discourse, and never fails to entertain his company with a variety of thoughts and hints that are altogether new and uncommon. Whether it were in complaisance to my way of living, or his real opinion, he advanced the following Paradox, That it required much greater talents to fill up and become a Retired life, than a life of Business. Upon this occasion he rallied very agreeably the Busy men of the age, who only valued themselves for being in motion, and passing through a series of trifling and insignificant Actions. In the heat of his discourse, seeing a piece of money lying on my table, I desie (says he) any of these active persons to produce half the Adventures that this Twelvepeny-piece has been engaged in, were it possible for him to give us an account of his Life.

My friend's talk made so odd an impresson upon my mind, that soon after I was a-bed I fell insensibly into a most unaccountable *Resverie*, that had neither Moral nor Design in it, and cannot be so properly called a Dream as a Delirium.

Methoughts the Shilling that lay upon the table reared it self upon its edge, and turning the face towards me, opened its mouth, and in a soft silver sound gave me the following account of his Life and Adventures:

I was born, says he, on the side of a mountain, near a little village of *Peru*, and made a voyage to *England* in an Ingot, under the Convoy of Sir *Francis Drake*. I was, soon after my arrival, taken out of my *Indian* habit, refined, naturalized, and put into the *British* Mode, with the face of Queen *Elizabeth* on one side, and the Arms of the Country on the

the other. Being thus equipped, I found in me a wonderful inclination to ramble, and visit all the parts of the new world into which I was brought. The people very much favoured my natural disposition, and shifted me so fast from hand to hand, that before I was five years old, I had travelled into almost every corner of the nation. But in the beginning of my sixth year, to my unspeakable grief, I fell into the hands of a miserable old fellow, who clapped me into an Iron Chest, where I found five hundred more of my own quality who lay under the same confinement. The only relief we had, was to be taken out and counted over in the fresh air every morning and evening. After an imprisonment of several years, we heard some body knocking at our Chest, and breaking it open with an Hammer. This we found was the old man's heir, who, as his Father lay a dying, was so good as to come to our release: He separated us that very day. What was the fate of my companions I know not: As for my self, I was sent to the Apothecary's shop for a pint of Sack. The Apothecary gave me to an Herb-woman, the Herb-woman to a Butcher, the Butcher to a Brewer, and the Brewer to his Wife, who made a present of me to a Nonconformist Preacher. After this manner I made my way merrily through the world; for, as I told you before, we Shillings love nothing so much as travelling. I sometimes fetched in a Shoulder of Mutton, sometimes a Play-book, and often had the satisfaction to treat a Templer at a twelve-peny Ordinary, or carry him with three friends to *Westminster-Hall*.

In the midst of this pleasant progress which I made from place to place, I was arrested by a superstitious old woman, who shut me up in a greazy purse, in pursuance of a foolish saying, That while she kept a *Queen Elizabeth's Shilling* about her, she should never be without Money. I continued here a close Prisoner for many months, till at last I was exchanged for eight and forty Farthings.

I thus rambled from Pocket to Pocket till the beginning of the Civil Wars, when, to my shame be it spoken, I was employed in raising Soldiers against the King: For being of a very tempting breadth, a Serjeant made use of me to inveigle Country Fellows, and list them in the service of the Parliament.

As soon as he had made one man sure, his way was to oblige him to take a Shilling of a more homely figure, and then practise the same trick upon another. Thus I continued doing great mischief to the Crown, till my Officer chancing one morning to walk abroad earlier than ordinary, sacrificed me to his pleasures, and made use of me to seduce a Milk-

maid. This wench bent me, and gave me to her Sweetheart, applying more properly than she intended the usual form of, *To my Love and from my Love*. This ungenerous Gallant marrying her within few days after, pawned me for a dram of Brandy, and drinking me out next day, I was beaten flat with an hammer, and again set a running.

After many adventures, which it would be tedious to relate, I was sent to a young Spendthrift, in company with the Will of his deceased Father. The young Fellow, who I found was very extravagant, gave great demonstrations of joy at the receiving of the Will: but opening it, he found himself disinherited and cut off from the possession of a fair Estate, by virtue of my being made a present to him. This put him into such a passion, that after having taken me in his hand, and cursed me, he squirred me away from him as far as he could fling me. I chanced to light in an unfrequented place under a dead wall, where I lay undiscovered and useles, during the Usurpation of *Oliver Cromwell*.

About a year after the King's return, a poor Cavalier that was walking there about dinner-time fortunately cast his eye upon me, and, to the great joy of us both, carried me to a Cook's shop, where he dined upon me, and drank the King's health. When I came again into the world, I found that I had been happier in my retirement than I thought, having probably by that means escaped wearing a monstrous pair of Breeches.

Being now of great credit and antiquity, I was rather looked upon as a Medal than an ordinary Coin; for which reason a Gamester laid hold of me, and converted me to a Counter, having got together some dozens of us for that use. We led a melancholy life in his possession, being buffe at those hours wherein current coin is at rest, and partaking the fate of our Master, being in a few moments valued at a Crown, a Pound, or a Sixpence, according to the situation in which the fortune of the Cards placed us. I had at length the good luck to see my Master break, by which means I was again sent abroad under my primitive denomination of a Shilling.

I shall pass over many other accidents of less moment, and hasten to that fatal Catastrophe when I fell into the hands of an Artist who conveyed me under ground, and with an unmerciful pair of Sheers cut off my Titles, clipped my Brims, retrenched my Shape, rubbed me to my inmost Ring, and, in short, so spoiled and pillaged me, that he did not leave me worth a Groat. You may think what a confusion I was in to see my self thus curtailed and disfigured. I should have been ashamed to have shown my head, had not all my old acquaintance been reduced

to

to the same shameful figure, excepting some few that were punched through the belly. In the midst of this general calamity, when every body thought our misfortune irretrievable, and our case desperate, we were thrown into the Furnace together, and (as it often happens with cities rising out of a fire) appeared with greater beauty and lustre than we could ever boast of before. What has happened to me since this change of Sex which you now see, I shall take some other opportunity to relate. In the mean time I shall only repeat two Adventures, as being very extraordinary, and neither of them having ever happened to me above once in my Life. The first was, my being in a Poet's Pocket, who was so taken with the brightness and novelty of my appearance, that it gave occasion to the finest Burlesque Poem in the *British Language*, entituled from me, *The splendid Shilling*. The second Adventure, which I must not omit, happened to me in the year 1703, when I was given away in charity to a blind man; but indeed this was by a mistake, the person who gave me having heedlessly thrown me into the Hat among a penyworth of Farthings.

N^o 250. *Tuesday, November 14. 1710.*

Scis etenim justum gemina suspendere lance

Ancipitis libræ.-----

Perf.

From my own Apartment, November 13.

I Last Winter erected a Court of Justice for the correcting of several Enormities in Dress and Behaviour, which are not cognizable in any other Courts of this Realm. The Vintner's case, which I there tried, is still fresh in every Man's memory. That of the Petticoat gave also a general satisfaction, not to mention the more important points of the Cane and Perspective; in which, if I did not give Judgments and Decrees according to the strictest Rules of Equity and Justice, I can safely say, I acted according to the best of my Understanding. But as for the

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