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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 267. Saturday, December 23. 1710.

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

Criminals to button up their bosoms, and, if they pleased, proceed to their Duel. Upon which they both went very quietly out of the Court, and retired to their respective lodgings.

The Court then adjourned till after the Holidays.

Copia Vera,

Charles Lillie.

Sir Richard Steele assisted in this paper.

N^o 267. Saturday, December 23. 1710.

*Qui genus humanum ingenio superavit, et omnes
Restinxit stellas, exortus uti aetherius sol.*

Lucr.

From my own Apartment, December 22.

I Have heard, that it is a rule among the Conventuals of several orders in the *Romish* Church, to shut themselves up at a certain time of the year, not only from the world in general, but from the members of their own Fraternity, and to pass away several days by themselves in settling accounts between their Maker and their own Souls, in cancelling unrepented Crimes, and renewing their Contracts of Obedience for the future. Such stated times for particular Acts of Devotion, or the Exercise of certain religious Duties, have been enjoined in all civil Governments, whatever Deity they worshiped, or whatever Religion they professed. That which may be done at all times is often totally neglected and forgotten, unless fixed and determined to some time more than another; and therefore, though several Duties may be suitable to every day of our lives, they are most likely to be performed if some days are more particularly set apart for the practice of them. Our Church has accordingly instituted several Seasons of Devotion, when
Time,

Time, Custom, Prescription, and (if I may so say) the Fashion it self, call upon a Man to be serious and attentive to the great end of his Being.

I have hinted in some former Papers, that the Greatest and Wisest of Men in all ages and countries, particularly in *Rome* and *Greece*, were renowned for their Piety and Virtue. It is now my intention to show how those in our own Nation, that have been unquestionably the most eminent for Learning and Knowledge, were likewise the most eminent for their adherence to the Religion of their Country.

I might produce very shining Examples from among the Clergy; but because Priestcraft is the common cry of every cavilling empty Scribler, I shall show, that all the Laymen who have exerted a more than ordinary Genius in their writings, and were the Glory of their times, were men whose hopes were filled with Immortality, and the prospect of future Rewards, and men who lived in a dutiful Submission to all the Doctrines of revealed Religion.

I shall in this Paper only instance Sir *Francis Bacon*, a Man who for the Greatness of Genius, and Compass of Knowledge, did Honour to his age and country; I could almost say to Humane Nature it self. He possessed at once all those extraordinary Talents which were divided amongst the greatest Authors of antiquity. He had the sound, distinct, comprehensive Knowledge of *Aristotle*, with all the beautiful Lights, Graces and Embellishments of *Cicero*. One does not know which to admire most in his writings, the strength of Reason, force of Style, or brightness of Imagination.

This Author has remarked in several parts of his works, that a thorough insight into Philosophy makes a good Believer, and that a smattering in it naturally produces such a race of despicable Infidels as the little profligate Writers of the present age, whom (I must confess) I have always accused to my self, not so much for their want of Faith as their want of Learning.

I was infinitely pleased to find among the works of this extraordinary Man a Prayer of his own composing, which, for the Elevation of thought, and Greatness of expression, seems rather the devotion of an Angel than of a Man. His principal fault seems to have been the excess of that Virtue which covers a multitude of faults. This betrayed him to so great an Indulgence towards his servants, who made a corrupt use of it, that it stripped him of all those Riches and Honours which a long series of Merits had heaped upon him. But in this Prayer, at the same

time that we find him prostrating himself before the great Mercy-seat, and humbled under afflictions which at that time lay heavy upon him; we see him supported by the sense of his Integrity, his Zeal, his Devotion, and his Love to mankind, which give him a much higher figure in the minds of thinking men, than that greatness had done from which he was fallen. I shall beg leave to write down the Prayer it self, with the title to it, as it was found among his Lordship's Papers, written in his own hand; not being able to furnish my Reader with an entertainment more suitable to this solemn time.

A Prayer or Psalm made by My Lord Bacon, Chancellor of England.

MOST gracious Lord God, my merciful Father; from my youth up, my Creator, my Redeemer, my Comforter. Thou, O Lord, soundest and searchest the depths and secrets of all hearts; Thou acknowledgest the Upright of heart; Thou judgest the Hypocrite; Thou ponderest men's thoughts and doings as in a balance; Thou measurest their intentions as with a line; vanity and crooked ways cannot be hid from Thee.

Remember, O Lord! how thy Servant hath walked before thee; remember what I have first sought, and what hath been principal in my Intentions. I have loved thy Assemblies, I have mourned for the divisions of thy Church, I have delighted in the brightness of thy Sanctuary. This Vine, which thy Right Hand hath planted in this Nation, I have ever prayed unto Thee, that it might have the first and the latter Rain, and that it might stretch her branches to the seas, and to the floods. The state and bread of the poor and oppressed have been precious in mine eyes; I have hated all cruelty and hardness of heart; I have (though in a despised weed) procured the good of all men. If any have been my Enemies, I thought not of them, neither hath the sun almost set upon my displeasure; but I have been as a Dove, free from superfluity of maliciousness. Thy Creatures have been my Books, but thy Scriptures much more. I have sought Thee in the Courts, Fields and Gardens, but I have found Thee in thy Temples.

Thousands have been my Sins, and ten thousands my Transgressions, but thy Sanctifications have remained with me, and my heart (through thy Grace) hath been an unquenched coal upon thine Altar.

O Lord, my Strength! I have since my youth met with Thee in all my ways, by thy fatherly Compassions, by thy comfortable Chastisements, and by thy most visible Providence. As thy Favours have increased upon me,

so have thy Corrections; so as Thou hast been always near me, O Lord! And ever as my worldly blessings were exalted, so secret darts from Thee have pierced me; and when I have ascended before men, I have descended in humiliation before Thee. And now when I thought most of Peace and Honour, thy hand is heavy upon me, and hath humbled me according to thy former loving-kindness, keeping me still in thy fatherly school, not as a bastard, but as a Child. Just are thy Judgments upon me for my sins, which are more in number than the sands of the sea, but have no proportion to thy Mercies; for what are the sands of the sea? Earth, Heavens, and all these, are nothing to thy Mercies. Besides my innumerable Sins, I confess before Thee, that I am debtor to Thee for the gracious Talent of thy Gifts and Graces, which I have neither put into a napkin, nor put it (as I ought) to Exchangers, where it might have made best profit, but mispent it in things for which I was least fit: So I may truly say, my Soul hath been a stranger in the course of my pilgrimage. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for my Saviour's Sake, and receive me unto thy Bosom, or guide me in thy Ways.



To have for Conscience; for the last time I have
had ever as my country's distress; and the
have passed me; and when I have spent
in imitation of you; and when I have
Honor; my heart is heavy with me, and
the former being kinder, because we
a child; but as a child; and the
which are more in number than the
and to the Minister; for what are
and all these, are nothing to the
that I confess before Thee, that I
love of thy Gifts and Graces, which
not put it (as I ought) to a
profit, but only in the things
for my good had been a
wretched into me, O Lord, for
thy Blessing, or guide me in thy

SPECTATOR

