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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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that means at least divert the minds of my Female readers from greater trifles. At the same time, as I would fain give some finishing touches to those which are already the most beautiful pieces in human nature, I shall endeavour to point out all those Imperfections that are the blemishes, as well as those Virtues which are the embellishments of the Sex. In the mean while I hope these my gentle readers, who have so much time on their hands, will not grudge thowing away a quarter of an hour in a day on this paper, since they may do it without any hindrance to business.

I know several of my friends and well-wishers are in great pain for me, lest I should not be able to keep up the spirit of a paper which I oblige my self to furnish every day: But to make them easie in this particular, I will promise them faithfully to give it over as soon as I grow dull. This I know will be matter of great raillery to the small Wits; who will frequently put me in mind of my promise, desire me to keep my word, assure me that it is high time to give over, with many other little pleasantries of the like nature, which men of a little smart Genius cannot forbear throwing out against their best friends, when they have such a handle given them of being witty. But let them remember that I do hereby enter my caveat against this piece of raillery.

N^o 12. *Wednesday, March 14.*

----- *Veteres avias tibi de pulmone revello.*

Per.

AT my coming to *London*, it was some time before I could settle my self in a house to my liking. I was forced to quit my first lodgings, by reason of an officious Landlady, that would be asking me every morning how I had slept. I then fell into an honest family, and lived very happily for above a week; when my Landlord, who was a jolly good-natured man, took it into his head that I wanted company, and therefore would frequently come into my chamber to keep me from being alone. This I bore for two or three days; but telling me one day that

that he was afraid I was melancholy, I thought it was high time for me to be gone, and accordingly took new lodgings that very night. About a week after, I found my jolly Landlord, who, as I said before, was an honest hearty man, had put me into an Advertisement of the *Daily Courant*, in the following words. *Whereas a melancholy man left his Lodgings on Thursday last in the afternoon, and was afterwards seen going towards Islington; If any one can give notice of him to R. B. Fishmonger in the Strand, he shall be very well rewarded for his pains.* As I am the best man in the world to keep my own counsel, and my Landlord the Fishmonger not knowing my name, this accident of my life was never discovered to this very day.

I am now settled with a Widow-woman, who has a great many children, and complies with my humour in every thing. I do not remember that we have exchanged a word together these five years; my Coffee comes into my chamber every morning without asking for it; if I want fire I point to my Chimney, if water to my Basin: Upon which my Landlady nods, as much as to say she takes my meaning, and immediately obeys my signals. She has likewise modeled her family so well, that when her little boy offers to pull me by the coat, or prattle in my face, his elder sister immediately calls him off, and bids him not disturb the Gentleman. At my first entering into the family, I was troubled with the civility of their rising up to me every time I came into the room; but my Landlady observing that upon these occasions I always cried Pish, and went out again, has forbidden any such ceremony to be used in the house; so that at present I walk into the kitchen or parlour without being taken notice of, or giving any interruption to the business or discourse of the family. The maid will ask her mistress (though I am by) whether the Gentleman is ready to go to dinner, as the mistress (who is indeed an excellent housewife) scolds at the servants as heartily before my face as behind my back. In short, I move up and down the house and enter into all companies, with the same liberty as a Cat or any other domestick Animal, and am as little suspected of telling any thing that I hear or see.

I remember last Winter there were several young girls of the neighbourhood sitting about the fire with my Landlady's daughters, and telling stories of Spirits and Apparitions. Upon my opening the door the young women broke off their discourse, but my Landlady's daughters telling them that it was no body but the Gentleman (for that is the name that I go by in the neighbourhood as well as in the family) they went on

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without

without minding me. I seated my self by the candle that stood on a table at one end of the room; and pretending to read a Book that I took out of my pocket, heard several dreadful stories of Ghosts as pale as ashes that had stood at the feet of a bed, or walked over a church-yard by moon-light: and of others that had been conjured into the *Red-Sea*, for disturbing people's rest, and drawing their Curtains at midnight; with many other old womens fables of the like nature. As one Spirit raised another, I observed that at the end of every story the whole company closed their ranks, and crouded about the fire: I took notice in particular of a little boy, who was so attentive to every story, that I am mistaken if he ventures to go to bed by himself this twelve-month. Indeed they talked so long, that the Imaginations of the whole assembly were manifestly crazed, and I am sure will be the worse for it as long as they live. I heard one of the girls, that had looked upon me over her shoulder, asking the company how long I had been in the room, and whether I did not look paler than I used to do. This put me under some apprehensions that I should be forced to explain my self if I did not retire; for which reason I took the Candle in my hand, and went up into my chamber, not without wondering at this unaccountable weakness in reasonable creatures, that they should love to astonish and terrife one another. Were I a Father, I should take a particular care to preserve my children from these little horrors of imagination, which they are apt to contract when they are young, and are not able to shake off when they are in years. I have known a Soldier that has entered a breach, affrighted at his own shadow; and look pale upon a little scratching at his door, who the day before had marched up against a battery of Canon. There are instances of persons, who have been terrified even to distraction, at the figure of a tree, or the shaking of a bull-rush. The truth of it is, I look upon a sound imagination as the greatest blessing of life, next to a clear judgment and a good conscience. In the mean time, since there are very few whose minds are not more or less subject to these dreadful thoughts and apprehensions, we ought to arm our selves against them by the dictates of reason and religion, *to pull the old woman out of our hearts* (as *Persius* expresses it in the Motto of my Paper) and extinguish those impertinent notions which we imbibed at a time that we were not able to judge of their absurdity. Or if we believe, as many wise and good men have done, that there are such Phantoms and Apparitions as those I have been speaking of, let us endeavour to establish to our selves an interest in him who holds the reins of the whole creation in his hand, and

and moderates them after such a manner, that it is impossible for one Being to break loose upon another without his knowledge and permission.

For my own part, I am apt to join in opinion with those who believe that all the regions of nature swarm with Spirits; and that we have multitudes of spectators on all our actions, when we think our selves most alone: But instead of terrifying my self with such a notion, I am wonderfully pleased to think that I am always engaged with such an innumerable Society, in searching out the wonders of the creation, and joining in the same consort of praise and adoration.

Milton has finely described this mixed communion of men and spirits in Paradise; and had doubtless his eye upon a verse in old *Hesiod*, which is almost word for word the same with his third line in the following passage.

—Nor think, though Men were none,
That Heav'n would want spectators, God want praise:
Millions of spiritual creatures walk the earth
Unseen, both when we wake and when we sleep;
All these with ceaseless praise his works behold
Both day and night. How often from the steep
Of echoing hill or thicket, have we heard
Celestial voices to the midnight air,
Sole, or responsive each to others note,
Singing their great Creator? Oft in bands,
While they keep watch, or nightly rounding walk,
With heav'nly touch of instrumental sounds,
In full harmonick number join'd, their songs
Divide the night, and lift our thoughts to Heav'n.



Thursday,