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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

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N<sup>o</sup> 23. *Tuesday, March 27.*

*Sevit atrox Volsens, nec teli conspicit usquam  
Auctorem, nec quo se ardens immittere possit.* Virg.

**T**HERE is nothing that more betrays a base ungenerous Spirit, than the giving of secret stabs to a man's reputation. Lampoons and Satyrs, that are written with Wit and Spirit, are like poisoned Darts, which not only inflict a wound, but make it incurable. For this reason I am very much troubled when I see the talents of humour and ridicule in the possession of an ill-natured man. There cannot be a greater gratification to a barbarous and inhuman Wit, than to stir up sorrow in the heart of a private person, to raise uneasiness among near relations, and to expose whole families to derision, at the same time that he remains unseen and undiscovered. If, besides the accomplishments of being witty and ill-natured, a man is vicious into the bargain; he is one of the most mischievous creatures that can enter into a civil Society. His Satyr will then chiefly fall upon those who ought to be the most exempt from it. Virtue, Merit, and every thing that is praise-worthy, will be made the subject of ridicule and buffoonery. It is impossible to enumerate the evils which arise from these Arrows that fly in the dark; and I know no other excuse that is or can be made for them, than that the wounds they give are only imaginary, and produce nothing more than a secret shame or sorrow in the mind of the suffering person. It must indeed be confessed, that a Lampoon or a Satyr do not carry in them robbery or murder; but at the same time, how many are there that would not rather lose a considerable sum of money, or even life it self, than be set up as mark of infamy and derision? And in this case a man should consider, that an injury is not to be measured by the notions of him that gives, but of him that receives it.

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Those who can put the best countenance upon the outrages of this nature which are offered them, are not without their secret anguish. I have often observed a passage in *Socrates's* behaviour at his death, in a light wherein none of the Criticks have considered it. That excellent man, entertaining his friends, a little before he drank the bowl of poison, with a discourse on the Immortality of the Soul, at his entering upon it says, that he does not believe any the most Comick genius can censure him for talking upon such a subject at such a time. This passage, I think, evidently glances upon *Aristophanes*, who writ a Comedy on purpose to ridicule the discourses of that Divine Philosopher. It has been observed by many writers, that *Socrates* was so little moved at this piece of buffoonery, that he was several times present at its being acted upon the Stage, and never expressed the least resentment of it. But with submission, I think the remark I have here made shews us that this unworthy treatment made an impression upon his mind, though he had been too wise to discover it.

When *Julius Caesar* was lampooned by *Catullus*, he invited him to a supper, and treated him with such a generous civility, that he made the Poet his friend ever after. Cardinal *Mazarin* gave the same kind of treatment to the learned *Quillet*, who had reflected upon his Eminence in a famous *Latin Poem*. The Cardinal sent for him, and after some kind expostulations upon what he had written, assured him of his esteem, and dismissed him with a promise of the next good Abby that should fall, which he accordingly conferred upon him in a few months after. This had so good an effect upon the Author, that he dedicated the second edition of his book to the Cardinal, after having expunged the passages which had given him offence.

*Sextus Quintus* was not of so generous and forgiving a temper. Upon his being made Pope, the statue *Pasquin* was one night dressed in a very dirty shirt, with an excuse written under it, that he was forced to wear foul linen because his Laundress was made a Princess. This was a reflection upon the Pope's Sister, who, before the promotion of her Brother, was in those mean circumstances that *Pasquin* represented her. As this Pasquinade made a great noise in *Rome*, the Pope offered a considerable sum of money to any person that should discover the Author of it. The Author relying upon his Holiness's Generosity, as also on some private overtures which he had received from him, made the discovery himself; upon which the Pope gave him the reward he had promised,

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but at the same time, to disable the Satyrift for the future, ordered his tongue to be cut out, and both his hands to be chopped off. *Aretine* is too trite an instance. Every one knows that all the Kings of *Europe* were his tributaries. Nay, there is a Letter of his extant, in which he makes his boasts that he had laid the Sophy of *Persia* under contribution.

Though in the various examples which I have here drawn together, these several great Men behaved themselves very differently towards the wits of the Age who had reproached them; they all of them plainly shewed that they were very sensible of their reproaches, and consequently that they received them as very great injuries. For my own part, I would never trust a man that I thought was capable of giving these secret wounds; and cannot but think that he would hurt the person, whose reputation he thus assaults, in his body or in his fortune, could he do it with the same security. There is indeed something very barbarous and inhuman in the ordinary Scriblers of Lampoons. An innocent young Lady shall be exposed, for an unhappy feature. A Father of a family turned to ridicule, for some domestick calamity. A Wife be made uneasy all her life, for a misinterpreted word or action. Nay, a good, a temperate, and a just man, shall be put out of countenance, by the representation of those qualities that should do him honour. So pernicious a thing is Wit, when it is not tempered with Virtue and Humanity.

I have indeed heard of heedless inconsiderate writers, that without any malice have sacrificed the reputation of their friends and acquaintance, to a certain levity of temper, and a silly ambition, of distinguishing themselves by a spirit of Raillery and Satyr: As if it were not infinitely more honourable to be a Good-natured man, than a Wit. Where there is this little petulant humour in an Author, he is often very mischievous without designing to be so. For which reason I always lay it down as a rule, that an indiscreet man is more hurtful than an ill-natured one; for as the one will only attack his enemies, and those he wishes ill to; the other injures indifferently both friends and foes. I cannot forbear, on this occasion, transcribing a Fable out of *Sir Roger l'Estrange*, which accidentally lies before me. "A company of waggish Boys were watching of Frogs at the side of a Pond, and still as any of them put up their heads, they'd be pelting them down again with stones. *Children* (says one of the Frogs) *you never consider that though this be Play to you, 'tis Death to us.*

As this week is in a manner set apart and dedicated to serious thoughts, I shall indulge my self in such Speculations as may not be altogether un-  
suitable

suitable to the season; and in the mean time, as the setting in our selves a charitable frame of mind is a work very proper for the time, I have in this paper endeavoured to expose that particular breach of Charity which has been generally over-looked by Divines, because they are but few who can be guilty of it.

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N<sup>o</sup> 25. *Thursday, March 29.*

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----- *Ægrescitque medendo.*

Virg.

THE following Letter will explain it self, and needs no apology.

SIR,

“ I Am one of that sickly tribe who are commonly known by the name  
 “ of *Valetudinarians*; and do confes to you, that I first contra-  
 “ cted this ill habit of body, or rather of mind, by the study of  
 “ Physick. I no sooner began to peruse books of this nature, but I found  
 “ my pulse was irregular; and scarce ever read the account of any dis-  
 “ ease that I did not fancy my self afflicted with. Doctor *Sydenham's*  
 “ learned treatise of Fevers threw me into a lingering Hectick, which hung  
 “ upon me all the while I was reading that excellent piece. I then ap-  
 “ plied my self to the study of several Authors, who have written upon  
 “ Phthysical distempers, and by that means fell into a Consumption; till at  
 “ length, growing very fat, I was in a manner shamed out of that Imagi-  
 “ nation. Not long after this I found in my self all the symptoms of  
 “ the Gout, except pain; but was cured of it by a Treatise upon the  
 “ Gravel, written by a very ingenious Author, who (as it is usual for  
 “ Physicians to convert one distemper into another) eased me of the  
 “ Gout by giving me the Stone. I at length studied my self into a com-  
 “ plication of distempers; but, accidentally taking into my hand that in-  
 “ genious discourse written by *Sanctorius*, I was resolved to direct my  
 “ self by a scheme of Rules, which I had collected from his observati-  
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