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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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In answer to the Gentleman, who tempers his health by ounces and by scruples, and instead of complying with those natural solicitations of hunger and thirst, drowsiness or love of exercise, governs himself by the prescriptions of his Chair, I shall tell him a short fable. *Jupiter*, says the Mythologist, to reward the piety of a certain countryman, promised to give him whatever he would ask. The countryman desired that he might have the management of the weather in his own estate: He obtained his request, and immediately distributed rain, snow, and sunshine among his several fields, as he thought the nature of the soil required. At the end of the year, when he expected to see a more than ordinary crop, his harvest fell infinitely short of that of his neighbours: Upon which (says the fable) he desired *Jupiter* to take the weather again into his own hands, or that otherwise he should utterly ruine himself.

N^o 26. *Friday, March 30.*

*Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres, O beate Sexti.*

Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam:

Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,

Et domus exilis Plutonia-----

Hor.

WHEN I am in a serious humour, I very often walk by my self in *Westminster* Abby; where the gloominess of the place, and the use to which it is applied, with the solemnity of the building, and the condition of the people who lye in it, are apt to fill the mind with a kind of melancholy, or rather thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable. I yesterday passed a whole afternoon in the Church-yard, the Cloysters, and the Church, amusing my self with the Tombstones and Inscriptions that I met with in those several regions of the dead. Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried person, but that he was born upon one day, and died upon another: The whole history of his life being

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comprehended in those two circumstances, that are common to all mankind. I could not but look upon these Registers of existence, whether of Brass or Marble, as a kind of Satyr upon the departed persons; who had left no other memorial of them, but that they were born and that they died. They put me in mind of several persons mentioned in the battels of Heroic Poems, who have founding names given them, for no other reason but that they may be killed, and are celebrated for nothing but being knocked on the head.

Γλαυκόν τε Μεδονία τε Θερσίλοχόν τε.

Hom.

Glancumque, Medontaque, Therfilochemque.

Virg.

The life of these men is finely described in Holy Writ by *the Path of an Arrow*, which is immediately closed up and lost.

Upon my going into the Church, I entertained my self with the digging of a grave; and saw in every shovel-full of it that was thrown up, the fragment of a bone or skull intermixt with a kind of fresh mouldering earth, that some time or other had a place in the composition of an humane body. Upon this, I began to consider with my self what innumerable multitudes of people lay confus'd together under the pavement of that ancient Cathedral; how Men and Women, Friends and Enemies, Priests and Soldiers, Monks and Prebendaries, were crumbled amongst one another, and blended together in the same common mass; how beauty, strength, and youth, with old-age, weakness and deformity, lay undistinguished in the same promiscuous heap of matter.

After having thus survey'd this great Magazine of Mortality, as it were, in the lump; I examined it more particularly by the accounts which I found on several of the Monuments which are rais'd in every quarter of that ancient fabrick. Some of them were covered with such extravagant Epitaphs, that, if it were possible for the dead person to be acquainted with them, he would blush at the praises which his friends have bestowed upon him. There are others so excessively modest, that they deliver the character of the person departed in *Greek* or *Hebrew*, and by that means are not understood once in a twelvemonth. In the poetical quarter, I found there were Poets who had no Monuments, and Monuments which had no Poets. I observ'd indeed that the present War had fill'd the Church with many of these uninhabited monuments, which had been erected to the memory of persons whose bodies were perhaps buried in the plains of *Blenheim*, or in the bosom of the Ocean.

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I could not but be very much delighted with several modern Epitaphs, which are written with great elegance of expression and justness of thought, and therefore do honour to the living as well as to the dead. As a Foreigner is very apt to conceive an idea of the ignorance or politeness of a Nation, from the turn of their publick monuments and inscriptions, they should be submitted to the perusal of men of learning and genius, before they are put in execution. Sir *Cloudestly Shovel's* monument has very often given me great offence: Instead of the brave rough *English* Admiral, which was the distinguishing character of that plain gallant man, he is represented on his Tomb by the figure of a Beau, dressed in a long Perriwig, and reposing himself upon Velvet Cushions under a Canopy of State. The Inscription is answerable to the Monument; for instead of celebrating the many remarkable actions he had performed in the service of his country, it acquaints us only with the manner of his death, in which it was impossible for him to reap any honour. The *Dutch*, whom we are apt to despise for want of genius, shew an infinitely greater taste of antiquity and politeness in their buildings and works of this nature, than what we meet with in those of our own country. The monuments of their Admirals, which have been erected at the publick expence, represent them like themselves; and are adorned with rostral crowns and naval ornaments, with beautiful festoons of sea-weed, shells, and coral.

But to return to our subject. I have left the repository of our *English* Kings for the contemplation of another day, when I shall find my mind disposed for so serious an amusement. I know that entertainments of this nature are apt to raise dark and dismal thoughts in timorous minds, and gloomy imaginations; but for my own part, though I am always serious, I do not know what it is to be melancholy; and can therefore take a view of Nature in her deep and solemn scenes, with the same pleasure as in her most gay and delightful ones. By this means I can improve myself with those objects, which others consider with terror. When I look upon the tombs of the Great, every emotion of envy dies in me; when I read the epitaphs of the Beautiful, every inordinate desire goes out; when I meet with the grief of Parents upon a tomb-stone, my heart melts with compassion; when I see the tomb of the Parents themselves, I consider the vanity of grieving for those whom we must quickly follow: When I see Kings lying by those who deposed them, when I consider rival wits placed side by side, or the holy men that divided the world with their contests and disputes, I reflect with sorrow and
astonish-

astonishment on the little competitions, factions and debates of mankind. When I read the several dates of the tombs, of some that died yesterday, and some six hundred years ago, I consider that great day when we shall all of us be contemporaries, and make our appearance together.

N^o 28. *Monday, April 2.*

-----*Neque semper arcum
Tendit Apollo.*

Hor.

I Shall here present my reader with a Letter from a Projector, concerning a new Office which he thinks may very much contribute to the embellishment of the City, and to the driving barbarity out of our streets. I consider it as a Satyr upon Projectors in general, and a lively picture of the whole art of modern Criticism.

S I R,

“ **O**bserving that you have thoughts of creating certain Officers
 “ under you, for the inspection of several petty enormities
 “ which you your self cannot attend to; and finding daily absurdities
 “ hung out upon the sign-posts of this city, to the great scandal of fo-
 “ reigners, as well as those of our own country, who are curious specta-
 “ tors of the same: I do humbly propose, that you would be pleased
 “ to make me your Superintendent of all such figures and devices as are
 “ or shall be made use of on this occasion; with full powers to rectifie or
 “ expunge whatever I shall find irregular or defective. For want of such
 “ an Officer, there is nothing like found literature and good sense to be met
 “ with in those objects, that are every where thrusting themselves out to
 “ the eye, and endeavouring to become visible. Our streets are filled
 “ with blue Boars, black Swans, and red Lions; not to mention flying
 “ Pigs, and Hogs in armour, with many other creatures more extraor-
 “ dinary than any in the desarts of *Africk*. Strange! that one who has
 “ all