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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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To run from those th' hadst overcome
 Thus cowardly? quoth Echo, Mum.
 But what a-vengeance makes thee fly
 From me too, as thine enemy?
 Or if thou hadst no thought of me,
 Nor what I have endur'd for thee,
 Yet shame and honour might prevail
 To keep thee thus from turning tail:
 For who wou'd grudge to spend his blood in
 His honour's cause? quoth she, A pudding.

N^o 60. Wednesday, May 9.

Hoc est quod palles? cur quis non prandeat, hoc est? Per. Sat. 3.

SEVERAL kinds of false wit that vanished in the refined ages of the world, discovered themselves again in the times of monkish ignorance.

As the Monks were the masters of all that little learning which was then extant, and had their whole lives entirely disengaged from business, it is no wonder that several of them, who wanted genius for higher performances, employed many hours in the composition of such tricks in writing as required much time and little capacity. I have seen half the *Aeneid* turned into *Latin* rhymes by one of the *Beaux Esprits* of that dark age; who says in his preface to it, that the *Aeneid* wanted nothing but the sweets of rhyme to make it the most perfect work in its kind. I have likewise seen an Hymn in Hexameters to the *Virgin Mary*, which filled a whole book, tho' it consisted but of the eight following words;

Tot, tibi, sunt, Virgo, dotes, quot, sidera, caelo.

Thou hast as many virtues, O Virgin, as there are stars in Heaven.

The Poet rung the changes upon these eight several words, and by that means made his verses almost as numerous as the virtues and the stars which they celebrated. It is no wonder that men who had so much time upon

upon their hands, did not only restore all the antiquated pieces of false wit, but enriched the world with inventions of their own. It was to this age that we owe the production of Anagrams, which is nothing else but a transmutation of one word into another, or the turning of the same set of letters into different words; which may change night into day, or black into white, if Chance, who is the Goddess that presides over these sorts of composition, shall so direct. I remember a witty Author, in allusion to this kind of writing, calls his Rival, who (it seems) was distorted, and had his limbs set in places that did not properly belong to them, *The Anagram of a man.*

When the Anagrammatist takes a name to work upon, he considers it at first as a Mine not broken up, which will not shew the treasure it contains till he shall have spent many hours in the search of it: For it is his business to find out one word that conceals it self in another, and to examine the letters in all the variety of stations in which they can possibly be ranged. I have heard of a Gentleman who, when this kind of wit was in fashion, endeavoured to gain his Mistress's heart by it. She was one of the finest women of her age, and known by the name of the Lady *Mary Boon*. The Lover not being able to make any thing of *Mary*, by certain liberties indulged to this kind of writing converted it into *Moll*; and after having shut himself up for half a year, with indefatigable industry produced an Anagram. Upon the presenting it to his Mistress, who was a little vexed in her heart to see her self degraded into *Moll Boon*, she told him, to his infinite surprize, that he had mistaken her Surname, for that it was not *Boon* but *Bobun*.

————— *Ibi omnis*
Effusus labor —————

The Lover was thunder-struck with his misfortune, insomuch that in a little time after he lost his senses, which indeed had been very much impaired by that continual application he had given to his Anagram.

The Acrostick was probably invented about the same time with the Anagram, though it is impossible to decide whether the inventor of the one or the other were the greater blockhead. The *Simple* Acrostick is nothing but the name or title of a person or thing made out of the initial letters of several verses, and by that means written, after the manner of the *Chinese*, in a perpendicular line. But besides these there are *Compound* Acrosticks, when the principal Letters stand two or three deep. I have seen some of them where the Verses have not only been

edged by a name at each extremity, but have had the same name running down like a seam through the middle of the Poem.

There is another near relation of the Anagrams and Acrosticks, which is commonly called a Chronogram. This kind of wit appears very often on many modern Medals, especially those of *Germany*, when they represent in the Inscription the year in which they were coined. Thus we see on a Medal of *Gustaphus Adolphus* the following words, CHRISTVS DUX ERGO TRIUMPHVS. If you take the pains to pick the figures out of the several words, and range them in their proper order, you will find they amount to MDCXVVII, or 1617, the year in which the Medal was stamped: For as some of the Letters distinguish themselves from the rest, and over-top their fellows, they are to be considered in a double capacity, both as Letters and as Figures. Your laborious *German* Wits will turn over a whole Dictionary for one of these ingenious devices. A man would think they were searching after an apt classical term; but instead of that, they are looking out a word that has an L, an M, or a D in it. When therefore we meet with any of these Inscriptions, we are not so much to look in them for the thought, as for the year of the Lord.

The *Bouts Rimez* were the favourites of the *French* nation for a whole age together, and that at a time when it abounded in wit and learning. They were a list of words that rhyme to one another, drawn up by another hand, and given to a Poet, who was to make a Poem to the Rhymes in the same order that they were placed upon the list: The more uncommon the Rhymes were, the more extraordinary was the genius of the Poet that could accommodate his verses to them. I do not know any greater instance of the decay of wit and learning among the *French* (which generally follows the declension of Empire) than the endeavouring to restore this foolish kind of wit. If the Reader will be at the trouble to see examples of it, let him look into the new *Mercurè Gallant*; where the Author every month gives a list of Rhymes to be filled up by the Ingenious, in order to be communicated to the publick in the *Mercurè* for the succeeding month. That for the month of *November* last, which now lies before me, is as follows.

----- *Lauriers*
 ----- *Guerriers*
 ----- *Musette*
 ----- *Lisette*

----- Cefars
 ----- Etendars
 ----- Houlette
 ----- Folette

One would be amazed to see so learned a man as *Menage* talking seriously on this kind of trifle in the following passage.

Monfieur de la Chambre has told me, that he never knew what he was going to write when he took his pen into his hand; but that one sentence always produced another. For my own part, I never knew what I should write next when I was making verses. In the first place I got all my rhymes together, and was afterwards perhaps three or four months in filling them up. I one day shewed Monsieur Gombaud a composition of this nature, in which among others I had made use of the four following rhymes, Amaryllis, Phyllis, Marne, Arne, desiring him to give me his opinion of it. He told me immediately, that my verses were good for nothing. And upon my asking his reason, he said, because the rhymes are too common; and for that reason easie to be put into verse. Marry, says I, if it be so, I am very well rewarded for all the pains I have been at. But by Monsieur Gombaud's leave, notwithstanding the severity of the criticism, the verses were good. Vid. MENAGIANA. Thus far the learned *Menage*, whom I have translated word for word.

The first occasion of these *Bouts Rimez* made them in some manner excusable, as they were tasks which the *French Ladies* used to impose on their Lovers. But when a grave Author, like him above-mentioned, tasked himself, could there be any thing more ridiculous? or would not one be apt to believe that the Author played booty, and did not make his list of rhymes till he had finished his Poem?

I shall only add, that this piece of false Wit has been finely ridiculed by Monsieur *Sarasin*, in a Poem entituled, *La Defaite des Bouts-Rimez, the Rout of the Bouts-Rimez.*

I must subjoin to this last kind of wit the Double rhymes, which are used in doggerel Poetry, and generally applauded by ignorant readers. If the thought of the couplet in such compositions is good, the rhyme adds little to it; and if bad, it will not be in the power of the rhyme to recommend it. I am afraid that great Numbers of those who admire the incomparable *Hudibras*, do it more on account of these doggerel rhymes, than of the parts that really deserve admiration. I am sure I have heard the

Y y 2

Pulpit,

*Pulpit, drum ecclesiastick,
Was beat with fist instead of a stick;*

and

*There was an antient sage Philosopher
Who had read Alexander Ross over,*

more frequently quoted, than the finest pieces of Wit in the whole Poem.

N^o 61.

Thursday, May 10.

*Non equidem studeo, bullatis ut mihi nugis
Pagina turgescat, dare pondus idonea fumo.*

Perf.

THERE is no kind of false Wit which has been so recommended by the practice of all ages, as that which consists in a jingle of words, and is comprehended under the general name of *Punning*. It is indeed impossible to kill a weed, which the soil has a natural disposition to produce. The seeds of *Punning* are in the minds of all men, and though they may be subdued by reason, reflection, and good sense, they will be very apt to shoot up in the greatest genius, that is not broken and cultivated by the rules of art. Imitation is natural to us, and when it does not raise the mind to Poetry, Painting, Musick, or other more noble arts, it often breaks out in Punns and Quibbles.

Aristotle, in the eleventh chapter of his book of Rhetorick, describes two or three kinds of Punns, which he calls Paragrams, among the beauties of good writing, and produces instances of them out of some of the greatest Authors in the *Greek* tongue. *Cicero* has sprinkled several of his works with Punns, and in his book where he lays down the rules of Oratory, quotes abundance of sayings as pieces of Wit, which also upon examination prove arrant Punns. But the age in which *the Punn* chiefly flourished, was the reign of King *James* the First. That learned Monarch was himself a tolerable Punnster, and made very few Bishops or Privy-