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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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with their leader, and shrunk into nothing, in proportion as the Goddess disappeared. At the same time the whole Temple sunk, the fish betook themselves to the streams and the wild beasts to the woods, the fountains recovered their murmurs, the birds their voices, the trees their leaves, the flowers their scents, and the whole face of nature its true and genuine appearance. Though I still continued asleep, I fancied my self as it were awakened out of a dream, when I saw this region of Prodigies restored to woods and rivers, fields and meadows.

Upon the removal of that wild scene of wonders, which had very much disturbed my imagination, I took a full survey of the persons of WIT and TRUTH; for indeed it was impossible to look upon the first, without seeing the other at the same time. There was behind them a strong and compact body of Figures. The genius of *Heroick Poetry* appeared with a Sword in her hand, and a Lawrel on her head. *Tragedy* was crowned with Cypress, and covered with robes dipped in blood. *Satyr* had smiles in her look, and a dagger under her garment. *Rhetorick* was known by her Thunderbolt; and *Comedy* by her Mask. After several other figures, *Epigram* marched up in the rear, who had been posted there at the beginning of the expedition, that he might not revolt to the enemy, whom he was suspected to favour in his heart. I was very much awed and delighted with the appearance of the God of *Wit*; there was something so amiable and yet so piercing in his looks, as inspired me at once with love and terror. As I was gazing on him to my unspeakable joy, he took a quiver of arrows from his shoulder, in order to make me a present of it; but as I was reaching out my hand to receive it of him, I knocked it against a chair, and by that means awaked.

N° 68. *Friday, May 18.*

Nos duo turba sumus-----

Ovid.

ONE would think that the larger the company is in which we are engaged, the greater variety of thoughts and subjects would be started in discourse; but instead of this, we find that Conversation

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on is never so much freightned and confined as in numerous Assemblies. When a multitude meet together upon any subject of discourse, their debates are taken up chiefly with forms and general positions; nay, if we come into a more contracted Assembly of men and women, the talk generally runs upon the weather, fashions, news, and the like publick topicks. In proportion, as conversation gets into Clubs and knots of friends, it descends into particulars, and grows more free and communicative: but the most open, instructive, and unreserved discourse, is that which passes between two persons who are familiar and intimate friends. On these occasions, a man gives a loose to every passion and every thought that is uppermost, discovers his most retired opinions of persons and things, tries the beauty and strength of his sentiments, and exposes his whole Soul to the examination of his friend.

Tully was the first who observed, that friendship improves happiness and abates misery, by the doubling of our joy and dividing of our grief; a thought in which he hath been followed by all the essayers upon friendship, that have written since his time. *Sir Francis Bacon* has finely described other advantages, or, as he calls them, fruits of friendship; and indeed there is no subject of Morality which has been better handled and more exhausted than this. Among the several fine things which have been spoken of it, I shall beg leave to quote some out of a very ancient Author, whose book would be regarded by our modern Wits as one of the most shining tracts of Morality that is extant, if it appeared under the name of a *Confucius*, or of any celebrated *Grecian* Philosopher: I mean the little Apocryphal treatise entituled, *The Wisdom of the Son of Sirach*. How finely has he described the art of making friends, by an obliging and affable behaviour? and laid down that precept which a late excellent Author has delivered as his own, "That we should have many
" well-wishers, but few friends. *Sweet language will multiply friends; and a fair speaking tongue will encrease kind greetings. Be in peace with many, nevertheless have but one counsellor of a thousand.* With what prudence does he caution us in the choice of our friends? and with what strokes of nature (I could almost say of humour) has he described the behaviour of a treacherous and self-interested friend? *If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first, and be not hasty to credit him: for some man is a friend for his own occasion, and will not abide in the day of thy trouble. And there is a friend who being turned to enmity and strife, will discover thy reproach.* Again, *Some friend is a companion at the table, and will not continue in the day of thy affliction: but in thy prosperity he*

will be as thy self, and will be bold over thy servants. If thou be brought low, he will be against thee, and hide himself from thy face. What can be more strong and pointed than the following verse? *Separate thy self from thine enemies, and take heed of thy friends.* In the next words he particularizes one of those fruits of friendship which is described at length by the two famous Authors above-mentioned, and falls into a general eulogium of friendship, which is very just as well as very sublime. *A faithful friend is a strong defence; and he that hath found such an one, hath found a treasure. Nothing doth countervail a faithful friend, and his excellency is unvaluable. A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him. Whoso feareth the Lord shall direct his friendship aright; for as he is, so shall his neighbour (that is his friend) be also.* I do not remember to have met with any saying that has pleased me more than that of a friend's being the medicine of life, to express the efficacy of friendship in healing the pains and anguish which naturally cleave to our existence in this world; and am wonderfully pleased with the turn in the last sentence, That a virtuous man shall as a blessing meet with a friend who is as virtuous as himself. There is another saying in the same Author, which would have been very much admired in an heathen writer; *For sake not an old friend, for the new is not comparable to him: A new friend is as new wine; when it is old thou shalt drink it with pleasure.* With what strength of allusion, and force of thought, has he described the breaches and violations of friendship? *Whoso casteth a stone at the birds, frayeth them away; and he that upbraideth his friend, breaketh friendship. Though thou drawest a sword at a friend, yet despair not, for there may be a returning to favour. If thou hast opened thy mouth against thy friend, fear not, for there may be a reconciliation; except for upbraiding, or pride, or disclosing of secrets, or a treacherous wound; for, for these things every friend will depart.* We may observe in this and several other precepts in this Author, those little familiar instances and illustrations which are so much admired in the moral writings of *Horace* and *Epictetus*. There are very beautiful instances of this nature in the following passages, which are likewise written upon the same subject: *Whoso discovereth secrets, loseth his credit, and shall never find a friend to his mind. Love thy friend and be faithful unto him; but if thou bewrayest his secrets, follow no more after him: for as a man hath destroyed his enemy, so hast thou lost the love of thy friend; as one that letteth a bird go out of his hand, so hast thou let thy friend go, and shalt not get him again. Follow after him no more, for he*

is too far off; he is as a roe escaped out of the snare. As for a wound, it may be bound up, and after reviling there may be reconciliation; but he that bewrayeth secrets, is without hope.

Among the several qualifications of a good friend, this wise man has very justly singled out constancy and faithfulness as the principal: to these, others have added virtue, knowledge, discretion, equality in age and fortune, and, as *Cicero* calls it, *morum comitas*, a pleasantness of temper. If I were to give my opinion upon such an exhausted subject, I should join to these other qualifications a certain æquability or evenness of behaviour. A man often contracts a friendship with one whom perhaps he does not find out 'till after a year's conversation; when on a sudden some latent ill humour breaks out upon him, which he never discovered or suspected at his first entring into an intimacy with him. There are several persons who in some certain periods of their lives are inexpressibly agreeable, and in others as odious and detestable. *Martial* has given us a very pretty picture of one of this species in the following Epigram;

*Difficilis, facilis, jucundus, acerbus es idem,
Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te.*

*In all thy humours, whether grave or mellow,
Thou'rt such a touchy, testy, pleasant fellow;
Hast so much wit, and mirth, and spleen about thee,
There is no living with thee, nor without thee.*

It is very unlucky for a man to be entangled in a friendship with one, who by these changes and vicissitudes of humour is some times amiable and sometimes odious: and as most men are at sometimes in an admirable frame and disposition of mind, it should be one of the greatest tasks of wisdom to keep our selves well when we are so, and never to go out of that which is the agreeable part of our character.

