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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 511. Thursday, October 16.

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N^o 511. Thursday, October 16.

Quis non in venit turbâ quod amaret in illâ? Ovid.

Dear SPEC.

“FINDING that my last Letter took, I do intend to continue
 “ my epistolary correspondence with thee, on those dear con-
 “ founded creatures, *Women*. Thou knowest, all the little
 “ learning I am master of is upon that subject: I never looked in a book,
 “ but for their fakes. I have lately met with two pure stories for a *Spe-*
 “ *ctator*, which I am sure will please mightily, if they pass through thy
 “ hands. The first of them I found by chance in an *English* book called
 “ *Herodotus*, that lay in my friend *Dapperwit*’s window, as I visited him
 “ one morning. It luckily opened in the place where I met the follow-
 “ ing account. He tells us that it was the manner among the *Persians* to
 “ have several fairs in the kingdom, at which all the young unmarried
 “ women were annually exposed to sale. The men who wanted wives
 “ came hither to provide themselves: every woman was given to the
 “ highest bidder, and the money which she fetched laid aside for the
 “ public use, to be employed as thou shalt hear by and by. By this means
 “ the richest people had the choice of the market, and culled out the
 “ most extraordinary beauties: As soon as the fair was thus picked, the
 “ refuse was to be distributed among the poor, and among those who
 “ could not go to the price of a *Beauty*. Several of these married the
 “ *Agreeables*, without paying a farthing for them, unless somebody chanced
 “ to think it worth his while to bid for them, in which case the best bid-
 “ der was always the purchaser. But now you must know, SPEC, it
 “ happened in *Persia*, as it does in our own country, that there were as
 “ many *ugly women*, as *Beauties* or *Agreeables*; so that by consequence,
 “ after the magistrates had put off a great many, there were still a great
 “ many that stuck upon their hands. In order therefore to clear the
 “ market, the money which the beauties had sold for, was disposed of
 “ among the ugly; so that a poor man, who could not afford to have a
 “ beauty

“ beauty for his wife, was forced to take up with a fortune ; the greatest
“ portion being always given to the most deformed. To this the Author
“ adds, that every poor man was forced to live kindly with his wife, or,
“ in case he repented of his bargain, to return her portion with her to
“ the next publick sale.

“ What I would recommend to thee on this occasion is, to establish
“ such an imaginary fair in *Great Britain* : thou couldst make it very
“ pleasant, by matching women of quality with coblers and carmen, or
“ describing titles and garters leading off in great ceremony shop-keepers
“ and farmers daughters. Though, to tell thee the truth, I am con-
“ foundedly afraid that as the love of money prevails in our Island more
“ than it did in *Persia*, we should find that some of our greatest men
“ would chuse out the portions, and rival one another for the richest
“ piece of deformity ; and that on the contrary, the Toasts and Belles
“ would be bought up by extravagant heirs, gamesters and spendthrifts.
“ Thou couldst make very pretty reflections upon this occasion in ho-
“ nour of the *Persian* Politics, who took care, by such marriages, to
“ beautifie the upper part of the species, and to make the greatest persons
“ in the government the most graceful. But this I shall leave to thy ju-
“ dicious pen.

“ I have another story to tell thee, which I likewise met in a book. It
“ seems the General of the *Tartars*, after having laid siege to a strong
“ town in *China*, and taken it by storm, would set to sale all the women
“ that were found in it. Accordingly, he put each of them into a sack,
“ and after having thorowly considered the value of the woman who
“ was inclosed, marked the price that was demanded for her upon the
“ sack. There were a great confluence of chapmen, that resorted
“ from every part, with a design to purchase, which they were to do
“ *unsight unseen*. The book mentions a Merchant in particular, who
“ observing one of the sacks to be marked pretty high, bargained for it,
“ and carried it off with him to his house. As he was resting with it
“ upon a half-way bridge, he was resolved to take a survey of his pur-
“ chase : upon opening the sack, a little old woman popped her head
“ out of it ; at which the adventurer was in so great a rage, that he was
“ going to shoot her out into the river. The old Lady, however, beg-
“ ged him first of all to hear her story, by which he learned that she
“ was sister to a great *Mandarin*, who would infallibly make the fortune
“ of his brother-in-law as soon as he should know to whose lot she fell.
“ Upon which the Merchant again tied her up in his sack, and carried
“ her

“ her to his house, where she proved an excellent wife, and procured
 “ him all the riches from her brother that she promised him.
 “ I fancy, if I was disposed to dream a second time, I could make a
 “ tolerable vision upon this plan. I would suppose all the unmarried wo-
 “ men in *London* and *Westminster* brought to market in sacks, with their
 “ respective prices on each sack. The first sack that is sold is marked
 “ with five thousand pound: upon the opening of it, I find it filled with
 “ an admirable housewife, of an agreeable countenance: the purchaser,
 “ upon hearing her good qualities, pays down her price very chearfully.
 “ The second I would open, should be a five hundred pound sack: the
 “ Lady in it, to our surprize, has the face and person of a Toast: as we
 “ are wondering how she came to be set at so low a price, we hear that
 “ she would have been valued at ten thousand pound, but that the pub-
 “ lick had made those abatements for her being a Scold. I would after-
 “ wards find some beautiful, modest, and discreet woman, that should
 “ be the top of the market; and perhaps discover half a dozen romps
 “ tied up together in the same sack, at one hundred pound a head. The
 “ Prude and the Coquette should be valued at the same price, though
 “ the first should go off the better of the two. I fancy thou wouldst
 “ like such a vision, had I time to finish it; because, to talk in thy own
 “ way, there is a moral in it. Whatever thou mayest think of it, pr’ythee
 “ do not make any of thy queer apologies for this Letter, as thou didst
 “ for my last. The women love a gay lively fellow, and are never angry
 “ at the railleries of one who is their known admirer. I am always bitter
 “ upon them, but well with them.

Thine, HONEYCOMB.

N^o 512. Friday, October 17.

Lectorem delectando pariterque monendo. Hor.

THERE is nothing which we receive with so much reluctance
 as Advice. We look upon the man who gives it us as offering
 an affront to our understanding, and treating us like children or
 ideots. We consider the instruction as an implicit censure, and the zeal
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