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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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No 512. Friday, October 17.

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“ 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
 which

which any one shews for our good on such an occasion as a piece of presumption or impertinence. The truth of it is, the person who pretends to advise, does, in that particular, exercise a superiority over us, and can have no other reason for it, but that, in comparing us with himself, he thinks us defective either in our conduct or our understanding. For these reasons, there is nothing so difficult as the art of making advice agreeable; and indeed all the writers, both ancient and modern, have distinguished themselves among one another, according to the perfection at which they have arrived in this art. How many devices have been made use of, to render this bitter potion palatable? some convey their instructions to us in the best chosen words, others in the most harmonious numbers, some in points of wit, and others in short proverbs.

But among all the different ways of giving counsel, I think the finest, and that which pleases the most universally, is *Fable*, in whatsoever shape it appears. If we consider this way of instructing or giving advice, it excels all others, because it is the least shocking, and the least subject to those exceptions which I have before mentioned.

This will appear to us, if we reflect, in the first place, that upon reading of a Fable we are made to believe we advise our selves. We peruse the Author for the sake of the story, and consider the precepts rather as our own conclusions, than his instructions. The moral insinuates it self imperceptibly, we are taught by surprize, and become wiser and better unawares. In short, by this method a man is so far over-reached as to think he is directing himself, whilst he is following the dictates of another, and consequently is not sensible of that which is the most displeasing circumstance in advice.

In the next place, if we look into human nature, we shall find that the mind is never so much pleased, as when she exerts her self in any action that gives her an idea of her own perfections and abilities. This natural pride and ambition of the Soul is very much gratified in the reading of a fable: for in writings of this kind, the reader comes in for half of the performance; every thing appears to him like a discovery of his own; he is busied all the while in applying characters and circumstances, and is in this respect both a reader and a composer. It is no wonder therefore that on such occasions, when the mind is thus pleased with it self, and amused with its own discoveries, it is highly delighted with the writing which is the occasion of it. For this reason the *Abfalou* and *Achitophel* was one of the most popular Poems that ever appeared in *Englisb*. The Poetry is indeed very fine, but had it been much

finer, it would not have so much pleased, without a plan which gave the reader an opportunity of exerting his own talents.

This oblique manner of giving advice is so inoffensive, that if we look into antient histories, we find the wise men of old very often chose to give counsel to their Kings in fables. To omit many which will occur to every one's memory, there is a pretty instance of this nature in a *Turkish* tale, which I do not like the worse for that little oriental extravagance which is mixed with it.

We are told that the Sultan *Mahmoud*, by his perpetual wars abroad, and his tyranny at home, had filled his dominions with ruin and desolation, and half unpeopled the *Persian* Empire. The Visier to this great Sultan (whether an Humourist or an Enthusiast, we are not informed) pretended to have learned of a certain Dervise to understand the language of birds, so that there was not a bird that could open his mouth but the Visier knew what it was he said. As he was one evening with the Emperor, in their return from hunting, they saw a couple of Owls upon a tree that grew near an old wall out of an heap of rubbish. *I would fain know*, says the Sultan, *what those two Owls are saying to one another; listen to their discourse, and give me an account of it.* The Visier approached the tree, pretending to be very attentive to the two Owls. Upon his return to the Sultan, *Sir*, says he, *I have heard part of their conversation, but dare not tell you what it is.* The Sultan would not be satisfied with such an answer, but forced him to repeat word for word every thing that the Owls had said. *You must know then*, said the Visier, *that one of these Owls has a son, and the other a daughter, between whom they are now upon a treaty of marriage. The father of the son said to the father of the daughter, in my hearing, Brother, I consent to this marriage, provided you will settle upon your daughter fifty ruined villages for her portion. To which the father of the daughter replied, Instead of fifty I will give her five hundred, if you please. God grant a long life to Sultan Mahmoud; whilst he reigns over us, we shall never want ruined villages.*

The story says, the Sultan was so touched with the fable, that he rebuilt the towns and villages which had been destroyed, and from that time forward consulted the good of his people.

To fill up my paper, I shall add a most ridiculous piece of natural Magick, which was taught by no less a Philosopher than *Democritus*, namely, that if the blood of certain birds, which he mentioned, were mixed together, it would produce a serpent of such a wonderful virtue, that
whoever

whoever did eat it should be skilled in the language of birds, and understand every thing they said to one another. Whether the Dervise above-mentioned might not have eaten such a serpent, I shall leave to the determinations of the learned.

N^o 513. *Saturday, October 18.*

----- *Afflata est numine quando*
Jam propiore Dei-----

Virg.

THE following letter comes to me from that excellent man in holy Orders, whom I have mentioned more than once as one of that society who assist me in my Speculations. It is a *Thought in sickness*, and of a very serious nature, for which reason I give it a place in the paper of this day.

SIR,

“THE indisposition which has long hung upon me, is at last grown
“ to such a head, that it must quickly make an end of me, or of
“ it self. You may imagine, that whilst I am in this bad state of health,
“ there are none of your works which I read with greater pleasure than
“ your *Saturday's* papers. I should be very glad if I could furnish you
“ with any hints for that day's entertainment. Were I able to dress up
“ several thoughts of a serious nature, which have made great impressions
“ on my mind during a long fit of sickness, they might not be an im-
“ proper entertainment for that occasion.

“ Among all the reflections which usually rise in the mind of a sick
“ man, who has time and inclination to consider his approaching end,
“ there is none more natural than that of his going to appear naked and
“ unbodied before him who made him. When a man considers, that as
“ soon as the vital union is dissolved, he shall see that supreme Being,
“ whom he now contemplates at a distance, and only in his works; or,
“ to speak more philosophically, when by some faculty in the Soul

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