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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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 N^o 529. Thursday, November 6.

Singula queque locum teneant sortita decenter. Hor.

UPON the hearing of several late disputes concerning rank and precedence, I could not forbear amusing my self with some observations, which I have made upon the learned world, as to this great particular. By the learned world I here mean at large, all those who are any way concerned in works of Literature, whether in the writing, printing, or repeating part. To begin with the writers; I have observed that the Author of a *Folio*, in all companies and conversations, sets himself above the Author of a *Quarto*; the Author of a *Quarto* above the Author of an *Octavo*; and so on, by a gradual descent and subordination, to an Author in *Twenty Fours*. This distinction is so well observed, that in an assembly of the Learned, I have seen a *Folio* writer place himself in an elbow-chair, when the Author of a *Duo-decimo* has, out of a just deference to his superior quality, seated himself upon a squab. In a word, Authors are usually ranged in company after the same manner as their works are upon a shelf.

The most minute pocket-author, hath beneath him the writers of all pamphlets, or works that are only stitched. As for a Pamphleteer, he takes place of none but of the Authors of single sheets, and of that fraternity who publish their labours on certain days, or on every day of the week. I do not find that the precedency among the individuals, in this latter class of writers, is yet settled.

For my own part, I have had so strict a regard to the ceremonial which prevails in the learned world, that I never presumed to take place of a Pamphleteer till my daily papers were gathered into those two first volumes, which have already appeared. After which I naturally jumped over the heads not only of all Pamphleteers, but of every *Octavo* writer in *Great Britain*, that had written but one book. I am also informed by my bookseller, that six *Octavo*'s have at all times been looked upon as an equivalent to a *Folio*, which I take notice of the rather, because I would

not have the learned world surprized, if after the publication of half a dozen volumes I take my place accordingly. When my scattered forces are thus rallied, and reduced into regular bodies, I flatter my self that I shall make no despicable figure at the head of them.

Whether these rules, which have been received time out of mind in the commonwealth of letters, were not originally established with an eye to our paper manufacture, I shall leave to the discussion of others, and shall only remark further in this place, that all printers and bookfellers take the wall of one another, according to the abovementioned merits of the Authors to whom they respectively belong.

I come now to that point of precedency which is settled among the three learned professions, by the wisdom of our laws. I need not here take notice of the rank which is allotted to every Doctor in each of these professions, who are all of them, though not so high as Knights, yet a degree above Squires; this last order of men being the illiterate body of the nation, are consequently thrown together into a class below the three learned professions. I mention this for the sake of several rural Squires, whose reading does not rise so high as to *the present state of England*, and who are often apt to usurp that precedency which by the laws of their country is not due to them. Their want of learning, which has planted them in this station, may in some measure extenuate their misdemeanour; and our professors ought to pardon them when they offend in this particular, considering that they are in a state of ignorance, or, as we usually say, do not know their right hand from their left.

There is another tribe of persons who are retainers to the learned world, and who regulate themselves upon all occasions by several laws peculiar to their body. I mean the players or actors of both sexes. Among these it is a standing and uncontroverted principle, that a Tragedian always takes place of a Comedian; and it is very well known the merry drolls who make us laugh are always placed at the lower end of the table, and in every entertainment give way to the dignity of the buskin. It is a Stage maxim, *Once a King and always a King*. For this reason it would be thought very absurd in Mr. Bullock, notwithstanding the height and gracefulness of his person, to sit at the right hand of a Hero, though he were but five foot high. The same distinction is observed among the Ladies of the Theatre. Queens and Heroines preserve their rank in private conversation, while those who are waiting-women and maids of honour upon the Stage, keep their distance also behind the Scenes.

I shall only add, that by a parity of reason, all writers of Tragedy look upon it as their due to be seated, served, or saluted before Comic writers: those who deal in Tragi-Comedy usually taking their seats between the Authors of either side. There has been a long dispute for precedency between the Tragic and Heroic Poets. *Aristotle* would have the latter yield the *Pas* to the former, but *Mr. Dryden* and many others would never submit to this decision. Burlesque writers pay the same deference to the Heroic, as Comic writers to their serious brothers in the Drama. By this short table of laws, order is kept up, and distinction preserved in the whole republic of letters.

N^o 530.

Friday, November 7.

*Sic visum Veneri; cui placet impares
Formas atque animos sub juga abenea
Sævo mittere cum joco.*

Hor.

IT is very usual for those who have been severe upon marriage, in some part or other of their lives to enter into the fraternity which they have ridiculed, and to see their raillery return upon their own heads. I scarce ever knew a woman-hater that did not, sooner or later, pay for it. Marriage, which is a blessing to another man, falls upon such an one as a judgment. *Mr. Congreve's Old Batchelor* is set forth to us with much wit and humour, as an example of this kind. In short, those who have most distinguished themselves by railing at the sex in general, very often make an honourable amends, by chusing one of the most worthless persons of it, for a companion and yoke-fellow. *Hymen* takes his revenge in kind, on those who turn his mysteries into ridicule.

My friend *Will. Honeycomb*, who was so unmercifully witty upon the women, in a couple of Letters, which I lately communicated to the public, has given the Ladies ample satisfaction by marrying a farmer's daughter; a piece of news which came to our Club by the last post. The *Templer* is very positive that he has married a dairy-maid: but *Will*, in his Letter to me on this occasion, sets the best face upon the matter that

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