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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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As for the persons concerned in this work, the names of all of them, or at least of such as desire it, shall be published hereafter: 'till which time I must entreat the courteous reader to suspend his curiosity, and rather to consider what is written, than who they are that write it.

Having thus adjusted all necessary preliminaries with my Reader, I shall not trouble him with any more prefatory discourses, but proceed in my old method, and entertain him with Speculations on every useful subject that falls in my way.

N^o 557. Monday, June 30.

Quippe domum timet ambiguum, Tyriosque bilingues. Virg.

THERE is nothing, says Plato, so delightful, as the hearing or the speaking of truth. For this reason there is no conversation so agreeable as that of the man of integrity, who hears without any intention to betray, and speaks without any intention to deceive.

Among all the accounts which are given of *Cato*, I do not remember one that more redounds to his honour than the following passage related by *Plutarch*. As an advocate was pleading the cause of his client before one of the Prætors, he could only produce a single witness in a point where the law required the testimony of two persons; upon which the advocate insisted on the integrity of that person whom he had produced; but the Prætor told him, That where the law required two witnesses, he would not accept of one, though it were *Cato* himself. Such a speech from a person who sat at the head of a court of Justice, while *Cato* was still living, shews us, more than a thousand examples, the high reputation this great man had gained among his contemporaries upon the account of his sincerity.

When such an inflexible integrity is a little softened and qualified by the rules of conversation and good-breeding, there is not a more shining virtue in the whole catalogue of social duties. A man however ought to take great care not to polish himself out of his veracity, nor to refine his behaviour to the prejudice of his virtue. This

This subject is exquisitely treated in the most elegant Sermon of the great *British* preacher. I shall beg leave to transcribe out of it two or three sentences, as a proper introduction to a very curious letter, which I shall make the chief entertainment of this Speculation.

“ The old *English* plainness and sincerity, that generous integrity of nature, and honesty of disposition, which always argues true greatness of mind, and is usually accompanied with undaunted courage and resolution, is in a great measure lost among us.

“ The dialect of conversation is now-a-days so swelled with vanity and compliment, and so surfeited (as I may say) of expressions of kindness and respect, that if a man that lived an age or two ago should return into the world again, he would really want a Dictionary to help him to understand his own language, and to know the true intrinsic value of the phrase in fashion; and would hardly, at first, believe at what a low rate the highest strains and expressions of kindness imaginable do commonly pass in current payment; and when he should come to understand it, it would be a great while before he could bring himself with a good countenance and a good conscience, to converse with men upon equal terms and in their own way.

I have by me a letter which I look upon as a great curiosity, and which may serve as an exemplification to the foregoing passage, cited out of this most excellent Prelate. It is said to have been written in King *Charles the Second's* reign by the Ambassador of *Bantam*, a little after his arrival in *England*.

Master,

“ THE people, where I now am, have tongues further from their hearts than from *London* to *Bantam*, and thou knowest the inhabitants of one of these places do not know what is done in the other. They call thee and thy subjects Barbarians, because we speak what we mean; and account themselves a civilized people, because they speak one thing and mean another: Truth they call barbarity, and falsehood politeness. Upon my first landing, one who was sent from the King of this place to meet me, told me, *That he was extremely sorry for the storm I had met with just before my arrival.* I was troubled to hear him grieve and afflict himself upon my account; but in less than a quarter of an hour he smiled, and was as merry as if nothing had happened. Another who came with him told me by my interpreter, *He should be glad to do me any service that lay in his power.* Upon which

“ which I desired him to carry one of my portmanteaus for me; but instead of serving me according to his promise, he laughed, and bid another do it. I lodged, the first week, at the house of one, who desired me *to think my self at home, and to consider his house as my own*. Accordingly, I the next morning began to knock down one of the walls of it, in order to let in the fresh air, and had packed up some of the household-goods, of which I intended to have made thee a present: but the false Varlet no sooner saw me falling to work, but he sent word to desire me to give over, for that he would have no such doings in his house. I had not been long in this nation, before I was told by one, for whom I had asked a certain favour from the chief of the King’s servants, whom they here call the Lord-treasurer, That I had *eternally obliged him*. I was so surprized at his gratitude, that I could not forbear saying, What service is there which one man can do for another, that can oblige him to all eternity! However I only asked him for my reward, that he would lend me his eldest daughter during my stay in this country; but I quickly found that he was as treacherous as the rest of his countrymen.

“ At my first going to Court, one of the great men almost put me out of countenance, by asking *ten thousand pardons* of me for only treading by accident upon my toe. They call this kind of lye a compliment; for when they are civil to a great man, they tell him untruths, for which thou wouldest order any of thy officers of State to receive a hundred blows upon his foot. I do not know how I shall negotiate any thing with this people, since there is so little credit to be given to them. When I go to see the King’s Scribe, I am generally told that he is not at home, though perhaps I saw him go into his house almost the very moment before. Thou wouldest fancy that the whole nation are Physicians, for the first question they always ask me, is, *How I do?* I have this question put to me above an hundred times a day. Nay, they are not only thus inquisitive after my health, but wish it in a more solemn manner, with a full glass in their hands, every time I sit with them at table, though at the same time they would persuade me to drink their liquors in such quantities as I have found by experience will make me sick. They often pretend to pray for thy health also in the same manner; but I have more reason to expect it from the goodness of thy constitution, than the sincerity of their wishes. May thy slave escape in safety from this double-tongued race of men, and live to lay himself once more at thy feet in thy royal city of *Bantam*.

Wednes