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**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 99. Saturday, June 23.

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N<sup>o</sup> 99. Saturday, June 23.

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-----*Turpi secernis Honestum.*

Hor.

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**T**HE Club, of which I have often declared my self a member, were last night engaged in a discourse upon that which passes for the chief point of honour among men and women; and started a great many hints upon the subject, which I thought were entirely new. I shall therefore methodize the several reflections that arose upon this occasion, and present my Reader with them for the Speculation of this day; after having premised, that if there is any thing in this paper which seems to differ with any passage of last *Thursday's*, the Reader will consider this as the sentiments of the Club, and the other as my own private thoughts, or rather those of *Pharamond*.

The great point of honour in men is Courage, and in women Chastity. If a man loses his honour in one rencounter, it is not impossible for him to regain it in another; a slip in a woman's honour is irrecoverable. I can give no reason for fixing the point of honour to these two qualities, unless it be that each sex sets the greatest value on the qualification which renders them the most amiable in the eyes of the contrary sex. Had men chosen for themselves, without regard to the opinions of the fair sex, I should believe the choice would have fallen on wisdom or virtue; or had women determined their own point of honour, it is probable that wit or good-nature would have carried it against Chastity.

Nothing recommends a man more to the female sex than Courage; whether it be that they are pleased to see one who is a terror to others fall like a slave at their feet, or that this quality supplies their own principal defect, in guarding them from insults, and avenging their quarrels, or that Courage is a natural indication of a strong and sprightly constitution. On the other side, nothing makes a woman more esteemed by the opposite sex than Chastity; whether it be that we always prize those most who are hardest to come at, or that nothing besides Chastity, with

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its collateral attendants, truth, fidelity, and constancy, gives the man a property in the person he loves, and consequently endears her to him above all things.

I am very much pleased with a passage in the inscription on a monument erected in *Westminster* Abby to the late Duke and Dutchess of *Newcastle*: " Her name was *Margaret Lucas*, youngest sister to the " *Lord Lucas of Colchester*; a noble family, for all the brothers were " *valiant, and all the sisters virtuous*.

In books of chivalry, where the point of honour is strained to madness, the whole story runs on Chastity and Courage. The damsel is mounted on a white palfry, as an emblem of her innocence; and, to avoid scandal, must have a dwarf for her page. She is not to think of a man, till some misfortune has brought a Knight-errant to her relief. The Knight falls in love, and did not gratitude restrain her from murdering her deliverer, would die at her feet by her disdain. However, he must waste many years in the desert, before her Virgin-heart can think of a surrender. The Knight goes off, attacks every thing he meets that is bigger and stronger than himself, seeks all opportunities of being knocked on the head, and after seven years rambling returns to his mistress, whose Chastity has been attacked in the mean time by giants and tyrants, and undergone as many trials as her lover's valour.

In *Spain*, where there are still great remains of this romantick humour, it is a transporting favour for a lady to cast an accidental glance on her lover from a window, though it be two or three stories high; as it is usual for a lover to assert his passion for his mistress, in single combat with a mad bull.

The great violation of the point of honour from man to man, is giving the lie. One may tell another he whores, drinks, blasphemes, and it may pass unrepented; but to say he lies, though but in jest, is an affront that nothing but blood can expiate. The reason perhaps may be, because no other vice implies a want of courage so much as the making of a lie; and therefore telling a man he lies, is touching him in the most sensible part of honour, and indirectly calling him a coward. I cannot omit under this head what *Herodotus* tells us of the ancient *Persians*, that from the age of five years to twenty they instruct their sons only in three things, to manage the horse, to make use of the bow, and to speak truth.

The placing the point of honour in this false kind of courage, has given occasion to the very refuse of mankind, who have neither virtue nor  
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common sense, to set up for men of honour. An *English* Peer, who has not been long dead, used to tell a pleasant story of a *French* Gentleman that visited him early one morning at *Paris*, and after great professions of respect, let him know that he had it in his power to oblige him; which in short, amounted to this, that he believed he could tell his Lordship the person's name who jostled him as he came out from the Opera; but before he would proceed, he begged his Lordship that he would not deny him the honour of making him his second. The *English* Lord, to avoid being drawn into a very foolish affair, told him that he was under engagements for his two next Duels to a couple of particular friends. Upon which the Gentleman immediately withdrew, hoping his Lordship would not take it ill if he meddled no farther in an affair from whence he himself was to receive no advantage.

The beating down this false notion of honour, in so vain and lively a people as those of *France*, is deservedly looked upon as one of the most glorious parts of their present King's reign. It is pity but the punishment of these mischievous notions should have in it some particular circumstances of shame and infamy; that those who are slaves to them may see, that instead of advancing their reputations, they lead them to ignominy and dishonour.

Death is not sufficient to deter men, who make it their glory to despise it; but if every one that fought a Duel were to stand in the pillory, it would quickly lessen the number of these imaginary men of honour, and put an end to so absurd a practice.

When honour is a support to virtuous principles, and runs parallel with the Laws of God and our country, it cannot be too much cherished and encouraged: but when the dictates of honour are contrary to those of religion and equity, they are the greatest deprivations of humane nature, by giving wrong ambitions and false ideas of what is good and laudable; and should therefore be exploded by all Governments, and driven out as the bane and plague of human society.



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