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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 119. Tuesday, July 17.

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 N<sup>o</sup> 119. *Tuesday, July 17.*


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*Urbem quam dicunt Romam, Melibœe, putavi  
Stultus ego huic nostræ similem-----*

Virg.

**T**HE first and most obvious reflections which arise in a man who changes the city for the country, are upon the different manners of the people whom he meets with in those two different scenes of life. By manners I do not mean morals, but behaviour and good breeding, as they shew themselves in the town and in the country.

And here, in the first place, I must observe a very great revolution that has happened in this article of good breeding. Several obliging deferences, condescensions and submissions, with many outward forms and ceremonies that accompany them, were first of all brought up among the politer part of mankind, who lived in courts and cities, and distinguished themselves from the rustick part of the species (who on all occasions acted bluntly and naturally) by such a mutual complaisance and intercourse of civilities. These forms of conversation by degrees multiplied and grew troublesome; the modish world found too great a constraint in them, and have therefore thrown most of them aside. Conversation, like the *Romish* religion, was so encumbered with show and ceremony, that it stood in need of a reformation to retrench its superfluities, and restore it to its natural good sense and beauty. At present therefore an unconstrained carriage, and a certain openness of behaviour, are the height of good breeding. The fashionable world is grown free and easie; our manners sit more loose upon us: nothing is so modish as an agreeable negligence. In a word, good breeding shews it self most, where to an ordinary eye it appears the least.

If after this we look on the people of mode in the country, we find in them the manners of the last age. They have no sooner fetched themselves up to the fashion of the polite world, but the town has dropped them, and are nearer to the first state of nature, than to those refinements which formerly reigned in the court, and still prevail in the country.

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One may now know a man that never conversed in the world by his excess of good breeding. A polite country Squire shall make you as many bows in half an hour, as would serve a Courtier for a week. There is infinitely more to do about place and precedency in a meeting of Justices wives, than in an assembly of Dutcheffes.

This rural politeness is very troublesome to a man of my temper, who generally take the chair that is next me, and walk first or last, in the front or in the rear, as chance directs. I have known my friend Sir ROGER's dinner almost cold before the company could adjust the ceremonial, and be prevailed upon to sit down; and have heartily pitied my old friend, when I have seen him forced to pick and cull his guests, as they sat at the several parts of his table, that he might drink their healths according to their respective ranks and qualities. Honest *Will Wimble*, who I should have thought had been altogether uninfected with ceremony, gives me abundance of trouble in this particular. Though he has been fishing all the morning, he will not help himself at dinner 'till I am served. When we are going out of the hall, he runs behind me; and last night, as we were walking in the fields, stopped short at a stile 'till I came up to it, and upon my making signs to him to get over, told me, with a serious smile, that sure I believed they had no manners in the country.

There has happened another revolution in the point of good breeding, which relates to the conversation among men of mode, and which I cannot but look upon as very extraordinary. It was certainly one of the first distinctions of a well-bred man, to express every thing that had the most remote appearance of being obscene, in modest terms and distant phrases; whilst the clown, who had no such delicacy of conception and expression, clothed his *ideas* in those plain homely terms that are the most obvious and natural. This kind of good manners was perhaps carried to an excess, so as to make conversation too stiff, formal and precise; for which reason (as hypocrisy in one age is generally succeeded by atheism in another) conversation is in a great measure relapsed into the first extremity; so that at present several of our men of the town, and particularly those who have been polished in *France*, make use of the most coarse uncivilized words in our language, and utter themselves often in such a manner as a clown would blush to hear.

This infamous piece of good-breeding, which reigns among the coxcombs of the town, has not yet made its way into the country; and as it is impossible for such an irrational way of conversation to last long among



mong a people that makes any profession of religion, or show of modesty, if the country Gentlemen get into it, they will certainly be left in the lurch. Their good-breeding will come too late to them, and they will be thought a parcel of lewd clowns, while they fancy themselves talking together like men of wit and pleasure.

As the two points of good breeding, which I have hitherto insisted upon, regard behaviour and conversation, there is a third which turns upon dress. In this too the country are very much behind hand. The rural Beaus are not yet got out of the fashion that took place at the time of the Revolution, but ride about the country in red coats and laced hats, while the women in many parts are still trying to outvie one another in the height of their head-dresses.

But a friend of mine, who is now upon the western circuit, having promised to give me an account of the several modes and fashions that prevail in the different parts of the nation through which he passes, I shall defer the enlarging upon this last topick 'till I have received a letter from him, which I expect every post.

N<sup>o</sup> 120. *Wednesday, July 18.*

-----*Equidem credo, quia sit divinitus illis*  
*Ingenium*-----

Virg.

**M**Y friend Sir ROGER is very often merry with me, upon my passing so much of my time among his poultry: he has caught me twice or thrice looking after a bird's nest, and several times sitting an hour or two together near an hen and a chicken. He tells me he believes I am personally acquainted with every fowl about his house; calls such a particular cock my favourite, and frequently complains that his ducks and geese have more of my company than himself.

I must confess I am infinitely delighted with those speculations of nature which are to be made in a country-life; and as my reading has very much lain among books of natural history, I cannot forbear recollecting  
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