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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 1. Friday, December 23. 1715.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)



N^o I. *Friday, December 23. 1715.*

*Rara temporum felicitas, ubi sentire quæ velis, et quæ sentias
dicere licet.* Tacit.



THE arguments of an Author lose a great deal of their weight, when we are persuaded that he only writes for argument's sake, and has no real concern in the cause which he espoufes. This is the case of one, who draws his pen in the defence of property, without having any; except, perhaps, in the copy of a libel, or a ballad. One is apt to suspect, that the passion for liberty, which appears in a grub-street patriot, arises only from his apprehensions of a goal; and that, whatever he may pretend, he does not write to secure, but to get something of his own.

own. Should the Government be overturned, he has nothing to lose but an old standish.

I question not but the Reader will conceive a respect for the Author of this paper, from the title of it; since, he may be sure, I am so considerable a man, that I cannot have less than forty shillings a year.

I have rather chosen this title than any other, because it is what I most glory in, and what most effectually calls to my mind the happiness of that Government under which I live. As a *British* Free-holder, I should not scruple taking place of a *French* Marquis; and when I see one of my countrymen amusing himself in his little cabbage-garden, I naturally look upon him as a greater person than the owner of the richest vineyard in *Champagne*.

The House of Commons is the representative of men in my condition. I consider my self as one who give my consent to every law which passes: a Free-holder in our Government being of the nature of a Citizen of *Rome* in that famous Common-wealth; who, by the election of a Tribune, had a kind of remote voice in every law that was enacted. So that a Free-holder is but one remove from a Legislator, and for that reason ought to stand up in the defence of those laws, which are in some degree of his own making. For such is the nature of our happy constitution, that the bulk of the people virtually give their approbation to every thing they are bound to obey, and prescribe to themselves those rules by which they are to walk.

At the same time that I declare I am a Free-holder, I do not exclude my self from any other title. A Free-holder may be either a Voter, or a Knight of the shire; a Wit, or a Fox-hunter; a Scholar, or a Soldier; an Alderman, or a Courtier; a Patriot, or a Stock-jobber. But I chuse to be distinguished by this denomination, as the Free-holder is the basis of all other titles. Dignities may be grafted upon it; but this is the substantial stock, that conveys to them their life, taste, and beauty; and without which they are no more than blossoms, that would fall away with every shake of wind.

And here I cannot but take occasion to congratulate my country upon the increase of this happy tribe of men, since, by the wisdom of the present Parliament, I find the race of Free-holders spreading into the remotest corners of the Island. I mean that Act which passed in the late Session for the encouragement of loyalty in *Scotland*: by which it is provided, *That all and every Vassal and Vassals in Scotland, who shall continue peaceable, and in dutiful allegiance to his Majesty, his Heirs and Successors,*

cessors, holding lands or tenements of any offender [guilty of High-treason] who holds such lands or tenements immediately of the Crown, shall be vested and seized, and are hereby enacted and ordained to hold the said lands or tenements of his Majesty, his Heirs and Successors, in fee and heritage for ever, by such manner of holding, as any such offender held such lands or tenements of the Crown, &c.

By this means it will be in the power of a Highlander to be at all times a good tenant, without being a rebel; and to deserve the character of a faithful servant, without thinking himself obliged to follow his Master to the gallows.

How can we sufficiently extol the goodness of his present Majesty, who is not willing to have a single slave in his dominions! or enough to rejoice in the exercise of that loyalty, which, instead of betraying a man into the most ignominious servitude, (as it does in some of our neighbouring kingdoms) entitles him to the highest privileges of freedom and property! It is now to be hoped, that we shall have few Vassals, but to the laws of our country.

When these men have a taste of property, they will naturally love that constitution from which they derive so great a blessing. There is an unspeakable pleasure in calling any thing one's own. A Free-hold, though it be but in ice and snow, will make the owner pleased in the possession, and stout in the defence of it; and is a very proper reward of our allegiance to our present King, who (by an unparalleled instance of goodness in a Sovereign, and infatuation in subjects) contends for the freedom of his people against themselves; and will not suffer many of them to fall into a state of slavery, which they are bent upon with so much eagerness and obstinacy.

A Free-holder of *Great Britain* is bred with an aversion to every thing that tends to bring him under a subjection to the arbitrary will of another. Of this we find frequent instances in all our histories; where the persons, whose characters are the most amiable, and strike us with the highest veneration, are those who stood up manfully against the invasions of civil liberty, and the complicated tyranny which Popery imposes upon our bodies, our fortunes, and our minds. What a despicable figure then must the present mock-patriots make in the eyes of posterity, who venture to be hanged, drawn and quartered, for the ruin of those civil rights which their ancestors rather than part with, chose to be cut to pieces in the field of battle? And what an opinion will after-ages entertain of their religion

religion who bid fair for a gibbet, by endeavouring to bring in a superstition, which their forefathers perished in flames to keep out?

But how instructive soever the folly of these men may prove to future times, it will be my business more immediately to consult the happiness of the age in which I live. And since so many profligate writers have endeavoured to varnish over a bad cause, I shall do all in my power to recommend a good one, which indeed requires no more than barely to explain what it is. While many of my gallant countrymen are employed in pursuing rebels half discomfited through the consciousness of their guilt, I shall labour to improve those victories to the good of my fellow-subjects; by carrying on our successes over the minds of men, and by reconciling them to the cause of their King, their Country, and their Religion.

To this end, I shall in the course of this paper (to be published every *Monday* and *Friday*) endeavour to open the eyes of my countrymen to their own interest, to shew them the privileges of an *English* Free-holder, which they enjoy in common with my self, and to make them sensible how these blessings are secured to us by his Majesty's title, his administration, and his personal character.

I have only one request to make to my Readers, that they will peruse these papers with the same candour and impartiality in which they are written; and shall hope for no other prepossession in favour of them, than what one would think should be natural to every man, a desire to be happy, and a good will towards those, who are the instruments of making them so.



Monday,