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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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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^o 120. *Wednesday, July 18.*

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

Virg.

MY 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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upon this occasion the several remarks which I have met with in Authors, and comparing them with what falls under my own observation: the arguments for Providence drawn from the natural history of animals being in my opinion demonstrative.

The make of every kind of animal is different from that of every other kind; and yet there is not the least turn in the muscles or twist in the fibres of any one, which does not render them more proper for that particular animal's way of life than any other cast or texture of them would have been.

The most violent appetites in all creatures are *Lust* and *Hunger*: the first is a perpetual call upon them to propagate their kind; the latter, to preserve themselves.

It is astonishing to consider the different degrees of care that descend from the parent to the young, so far as is absolutely necessary for the leaving a posterity. Some creatures cast their eggs as chance directs them, and think of them no farther, as insects and several kinds of fish: others of a nicer frame, find out proper beds to deposit them in, and there leave them; as the Serpent, the Crocodile, and Ostrich: others hatch their eggs and tend the birth, 'till it is able to shift for its self.

What can we call the principle which directs every different kind of bird to observe a particular plan in the structure of its nest, and directs all of the same species to work after the same model? It cannot be *Imitation*; for though you hatch a Crow under a Hen, and never let it see any of the works of its own kind, the nest it makes shall be the same, to the laying of a stick, with all the other nests of the same species. It cannot be *Reason*; for were animals indued with it to as great a degree as man, their buildings would be as different as ours, according to the different conveniences that they would propose to themselves.

Is it not remarkable, that the same temper of weather which raises this genial warmth in animals, should cover the trees with leaves, and the fields with grass, for their security and concealment, and produce such infinite swarms of insects for the support and sustenance of their respective broods?

Is it not wonderful, that the love of the parent should be so violent while it lasts; and that it should last no longer than is necessary for the preservation of the young?

The violence of this natural love is exemplified by a very barbarous experiment; which I shall quote at length as I find it in an excellent Author, and hope my Readers will pardon the mentioning such an instance

stance of cruelty, because there is nothing can so effectually shew the strength of that principle in animals, of which I am here speaking. " A person who was well skilled in dissections opened a bitch, and as she lay in the most exquisite tortures, offered her one of her young puppies, which she immediately fell a licking; and for the time seemed insensible of her own pain: on the removal, she kept her eyes fixt on it, and began a wailing sort of cry, which seemed rather to proceed from the loss of her young one, than the sense of her own torments.

But notwithstanding this natural love in brutes is much more violent and intense than in rational creatures, Providence has taken care that it should be no longer troublesome to the parent than it is useful to the young; for so soon as the wants of the latter cease, the mother withdraws her fondness, and leaves them to provide for themselves: and what is a very remarkable circumstance in this part of instinct, we find that the love of the parent may be lengthened out beyond its usual time, if the preservation of the species requires it; as we may see in birds that drive away their young as soon as they are able to get their livelihood, but continue to feed them if they are tied to the nest, or confined within a cage, or by any other means appear to be out of a condition of supplying their own necessities.

This natural love is not observed in animals to ascend from the young to the parent, which is not at all necessary for the continuance of the species: nor indeed in reasonable creatures does it rise in any proportion, as it spreads it self downwards; for in all family-affection, we find protection granted and favours bestowed, are greater motives to love and tenderness; than safety, benefits, or life received.

One would wonder to hear sceptical men disputing for the Reason of animals, and telling us it is only our pride and prejudices that will not allow them the use of that faculty.

Reason shews it self in all occurrences of life; whereas the brute makes no discovery of such a talent, but in what immediately regards his own preservation, or the continuance of his species. Animals in their generation are wiser than the sons of men; but their wisdom is confined to a few particulars, and lyes in a very narrow compass. Take a brute out of his instinct, and you find him wholly deprived of understanding. To use an instance that comes often under observation.

With what caution does the hen provide her self a nest in places unfrequented, and free from noise and disturbance? When she has laid her eggs in such a manner that she can cover them, what care does she take

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in turning them frequently, that all parts may partake of the vital warmth? When she leaves them to provide for her necessary sustenance, how punctually does she return before they have time to cool, and become incapable of producing an animal? In the summer you see her giving herself greater freedoms, and quitting her care for above two hours together; but in winter, when the rigour of the season would chill the principles of life, and destroy the young one, she grows more assiduous in her attendance, and stays away but half the time. When the birth approaches, with how much nicety and attention does she help the chick to break its prison? Not to take notice of her covering it from the injuries of the weather, providing it proper nourishment, and teaching it to help itself; nor to mention her forsaking the nest, if after the usual time of reckoning the young one does not make its appearance. A Chymical operation could not be followed with greater art or diligence, than is seen in the hatching of a chick; though there are many other birds that shew an infinitely greater sagacity in all the forementioned particulars.

But at the same time the hen, that has all this seeming ingenuity, (which is indeed absolutely necessary for the propagation of the species) considered in other respects, is without the least glimmerings of thought or common sense. She mistakes a piece of chalk for an egg, and sits upon it in the same manner: she is insensible of an increase or diminution in the number of those she lays: she does not distinguish between her own and those of another species; and when the birth appears of never so different a bird, will cherish it for her own. In all these circumstances, which do not carry an immediate regard to the subsistence of her self or her species, she is a very idiot.

There is not in my opinion any thing more mysterious in nature than this Instinct in Animals, which thus rises above Reason, and falls infinitely short of it. It cannot be accounted for by any properties in matter, and at the same time works after so odd a manner, that one cannot think it the faculty of an intellectual Being. For my own part, I look upon it as upon the principle of gravitation in bodies, which is not to be explained by any known qualities inherent in the bodies themselves, nor from any laws of mechanism, but, according to the best notions of the greatest Philosophers, is an immediate impression from the first mover, and the Divine energy acting in the creatures.

Thursday,