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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 124. Monday, July 23.

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N<sup>o</sup> 124. Monday, July 23.

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Μέγα βιβλίον, μέγα κακόν.

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A MAN who publishes his works in a Volume, has an infinite advantage over one who communicates his writings to the world in loose Tracts and single Pieces. We do not expect to meet with any thing in a bulky volume, till after some heavy preamble, and several words of course, to prepare the Reader for what follows: nay, Authors have established it as a kind of rule, that a man ought to be dull sometimes; as the most severe Reader makes allowances for many rests and nodding-places in a voluminous writer. This gave occasion to the famous Greek proverb which I have chosen for my motto, *That a great book is a great evil.*

On the contrary, those who publish their thoughts in distinct sheets, and as it were by piece-meal, have none of these advantages. We must immediately fall into our subject, and treat every part of it in a lively manner, or our papers are thrown by as dull and insipid: our matter must lye close together, and either be wholly new in it self, or in the turn it receives from our expressions. Were the books of our best Authors thus to be retailed to the publick, and every page submitted to the taste of forty or fifty thousand Readers, I am afraid we should complain of many flat expressions, trivial observations, beaten topicks, and common thoughts, which go off very well in the lump. At the same time, notwithstanding some papers may be made up of broken hints and irregular sketches, it is often expected that every sheet should be a kind of treatise, and make out in thought what it wants in bulk: that a point of humour should be worked up in all its parts; and a subject touched upon in its most essential articles, without the repetitions, tautologies, and enlargements that are indulged to longer labours. The ordinary writers of morality prescribe to their Readers after the Galenick way; their medicines are made up in large quantities. An Essay writer must practise in the chymical method, and give the virtue of a full draught in a few drops. Were all  
books

books reduced thus to their quintessence, many a bulky Author would make his appearance in a penny paper: there would be scarce such a thing in nature as a folio: the works of an age would be contained on a few shelves; not to mention millions of volumes that would be utterly annihilated.

I cannot think that the difficulty of furnishing out separate papers of this nature, has hindered Authors from communicating their thoughts to the world after such a manner: though I must confess I am amazed that the press should be only made use of in this way by news-writers, and the zealots of parties: as if it were not more advantageous to mankind, to be instructed in wisdom and virtue, than in politicks; and to be made good fathers, husbands, and sons, than counsellors and statesmen. Had the Philosophers and great men of antiquity, who took so much pains in order to instruct mankind, and leave the world wiser and better than they found it; had they, I say, been possessed of the art of printing, there is no question but they would have made such an advantage of it, in dealing out their lectures to the publick. Our common prints would be of great use, were they thus calculated to diffuse good sense through the bulk of a people, to clear up their understandings, animate their minds with virtue, dissipate the sorrows of a heavy heart, or unbend the mind from its more severe employments with innocent amusements. When knowledge, instead of being bound up in books, and kept in libraries and retirements, is thus obtruded upon the publick; when it is canvassed in every assembly, and exposed upon every table; I cannot forbear reflecting upon that passage in the *Proverbs, Wisdom cryeth without: She uttereth her voice in the streets: she cryeth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates. In the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorner's delight in their scorning? and fools hate knowledge?*

The many letters which come to me from persons of the best sense in both sexes, (for I may pronounce their characters from their way of writing) do not a little encourage me in the prosecution of this my undertaking: besides that, my bookseller tells me, the demand for these my papers increaseth daily. It is at his instance that I shall continue my *rural Speculations* to the end of this month; several having made up separate sets of them, as they have done before of those relating to Wit, to Operas, to points of Morality, or subjects of Humour.

I am not at all mortified, when sometimes I see my works thrown aside by men of no taste nor learning. There is a kind of heaviness and  
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ignorance that hangs upon the minds of ordinary men, which is too thick for knowledge to break through: their souls are not to be enlightned,

—*Nox atra cava circumvolat umbra.*

To these I must apply the fable of the Mole, That after having consulted many Oculists for the bettering of his sight, was at last provided with a good pair of spectacles; but upon his endeavouring to make use of them, his mother told him very prudently, “That spectacles, though they might help the eye of a man, could be of no use to a Mole.” It is not therefore for the benefit of Moles that I publish these my daily Effays.

But besides such as are Moles through ignorance, there are others who are Moles through envy. As it is said in the Latin proverb, “That one man is a wolf to another;” so, generally speaking, one Author is a Mole to another Author. It is impossible for them to discover beauties in one another's works; they have eyes only for spots and blemishes: they can indeed see the light, as it is said of the animals which are their namesakes, but the idea of it is painful to them; they immediately shut their eyes upon it, and withdraw themselves into a wilful obscurity. I have already caught two or three of these dark undermining vermin, and intend to make a string of them, in order to hang them up in one of my papers, as an example to all such voluntary Moles.

N<sup>o</sup> 125. *Tuesday, July 24.*

*Ne pueri, ne tanta animis affuescite bella:  
Neu patriæ validas in viscera vertite vires.*

Virg.

**M**Y worthy friend Sir ROGER, when we are talking of the malice of parties, very frequently tells us an accident that happened to him when he was a school-boy, which was at a time when the feuds ran high between the Round-heads and Cavaliers. This worthy Knight being then but a stripling, had occasion to enquire which was the