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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N^o 128. Friday, July 27.-----*Concordia discors.*

Luc.

WOMEN in their nature are much more gay and joyous than men; whether it be that their blood is more refined, their fibres more delicate, and their animal spirits more light and volatile; or whether, as some have imagined, there may not be a kind of sex in the very Soul, I shall not pretend to determine. As vivacity is the gift of women, gravity is that of men. They should each of them therefore keep a watch upon the particular biases which nature has fixed in their minds, that it may not *draw* too much, and lead them out of the paths of reason. This will certainly happen, if the one in every word and action affects the character of being rigid and severe, and the other of being brisk and airy. Men should beware of being captivated by a kind of savage Philofophy, women by a thoughtless gallantry. Where these precautions are not observed, the man often degenerates into a Cynick, the woman into a Coquette; the man grows fullen and morose, the woman impertinent and fantastical.

By what I have said we may conclude, men and women were made as counterparts to one another, that the pains and anxieties of the husband might be relieved by the sprightliness and good humour of the wife. When these are rightly tempered, care and chearfulness go hand in hand; and the family, like a ship that is duly trimmed, wants neither sail nor ballast.

Natural Historians observe, (for whilst I am in the country I must fetch my allusions from thence) that only the male birds have voices; that their songs begin a little before breeding-time, and end a little after: that whilst the hen is covering her eggs, the male generally takes his stand upon a neighbouring bough within her hearing; and by that means amuses and diverts her with his songs during the whole time of her sitting.

This contract among birds lasts no longer than till a brood of young ones arises from it; so that in the feathered kind, the cares and fatigues
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of the married state, if I may so call it, lie principally upon the female. On the contrary, as in our species the man and the woman are joined together for life, and the main burden rests upon the former, Nature has given all the little arts of soothing and blandishment to the female, that she may cheer and animate her companion in a constant and assiduous application to the making a provision for his family, and the educating of their common children. This however is not to be taken so strictly, as if the same duties were not often reciprocal, and incumbent on both parties; but only to set forth what seems to have been the general intention of nature, in the different inclinations and endowments which are bestowed on the different sexes.

But whatever was the reason that man and woman were made with this variety of temper, if we observe the conduct of the fair sex, we find that they chuse rather to associate themselves with a person who resembles them in that light and volatile humour which is natural to them, than to such as are qualified to moderate and counter-balance it. It has been an old complaint, that the coxcomb carries it with them before the man of sense. When we see a fellow loud and talkative, full of insipid life and laughter, we may venture to pronounce him a female favourite: Noise and flutter are such accomplishments as they cannot withstand. To be short, the passion of an ordinary woman for a man, is nothing else but self-love diverted upon another object: she would have the Lover a woman in every thing but the sex. I do not know a finer piece of satyr on this part of womankind, than those lines of Mr. *Dryden*.

*Our thoughtless sex is caught by outward form
And empty noise, and loves it self in man.*

This is a source of infinite calamities to the sex, as it frequently joins them to men who in their own thoughts are as fine creatures as themselves; or if they chance to be good-humoured, serve only to dissipate their fortunes, inflame their follies, and aggravate their indiscretions.

The same female levity is no less fatal to them after marriage than before: It represents to their imaginations the faithful prudent husband as an honest tractable and domestick animal; and turns their thoughts upon the fine gay Gentleman that laughs, sings, and dresses so much more agreeably.

As this irregular vivacity of temper leads astray the hearts of ordinary women in the choice of their lovers and the treatment of their husbands, it operates with the same pernicious influence towards their children,

who are taught to accomplish themselves in all those sublime perfections that appear captivating in the eye of their mother. She admires in her Son what she loved in her Gallant; and by that means contributes all she can to perpetuate her self in a worthless progeny.

The younger *Faustina* was a lively instance of this sort of women. Notwithstanding she was married to *Marcus Aurelius*, one of the greatest, wisest, and best of the *Roman* Emperors, she thought a common Gladiator much the prettier Gentleman; and had taken such care to accomplish her son *Commodus* according to her own notions of a fine man, that when he ascended the Throne of his father, he became the most foolish and abandoned tyrant that was ever placed at the head of the *Roman* Empire, signaling himself in nothing but the fighting of prizes, and knocking out mens brains. As he had no taste of true Glory, we see him in several Medals and Statues which are still extant of him, equipped like an *Hercules* with a Club and a Lion's skin.

I have been led into this Speculation by the characters I have heard of a Country-gentleman and his Lady, who do not live many miles from Sir ROGER. The wife is an old Coquette, that is always hankering after the diversions of the town; the husband a morose rustick, that frowns and frets at the name of it. The wife is over-run with affectation, the husband sunk into brutality: the Lady cannot bear the noise of the Larks and Nightingales, hates your tedious summer-days, and is sick at the sight of shady woods and purling streams; the husband wonders how any one can be pleased with the fooleries of Plays and Operas, and rails from morning to night at essenced Fops and tawdry Courtiers. The children are educated in these different notions of their parents. The sons follow the father about his grounds, while the daughters read volumes of love-letters and romances to their mother. By this means it comes to pass that the girls look upon their father as a clown, and the boys think their mother no better than she should be.

How different are the lives of *Aristus* and *Aspatia*? The innocent vivacity of the one is tempered and composed by the chearful gravity of the other. The wife grows wise by the discourses of the husband, and the husband good-humoured by the conversations of the wife. *Aristus* would not be so amiable were it not for his *Aspatia*, nor *Aspatia* so much to be esteemed were it not for her *Aristus*. Their virtues are blended in their children, and diffuse through the whole family a perpetual spirit of benevolence, complacency, and satisfaction.

Saturday,