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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

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 N<sup>o</sup> 10. Monday, January 23.
 

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*Potior visa est periculosa libertas quieto servitio.* Sall.

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ONE may venture to affirm, that all honest and disinterested *Britons* of what party soever, if they understood one another, are of the same opinion in points of Government: and that the gross of the people, who are imposed upon by terms which they do not comprehend, are *Whigs* in their hearts. They are made to believe, that passive obedience and non-resistance, unlimited power and indefeasible right, have something of a venerable and religious meaning in them; whereas in reality they only imply, that a King of *Great Britain* has a right to be a Tyrant, and that his subjects are obliged in conscience to be slaves. Were the case truly and fairly laid before them, they would know, that when they make a profession of such principles, they renounce their legal claim to liberty and property, and unwarily submit to what they really abhor.

It is our happiness, under the present Reign, to hear our King from the throne exhorting us to be *zealous assertors of the liberties of our country*; which exclude all pretensions to an arbitrary, tyrannick, despotick power. Those, who have the misfortune to live under such a power, who have no other law but the will of their Prince, and consequently no privileges, but what are precarious. For though in some arbitrary Governments there may be a body of laws observed in the ordinary forms of justice, they are not sufficient to secure any rights to the people; because they may be dispensed with, or laid aside, at the pleasure of the Sovereign.

And here it very much imports us to consider, that arbitrary power naturally tends to make a man a bad Sovereign, who might possibly have been a good one, had he been invested with an authority limited and circumscribed by laws. None can doubt of this tendency in arbitrary power, who consider, that it fills the mind of man with great and unreasonable conceits of himself; raises him into a belief, that he is of a superior species to his subjects; extinguishes in him the principle of fear, which

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is one of the greatest motives to all duties; and creates an ambition of magnifying himself, by the exertion of such a power in all its instances. So great is the danger, that when a Sovereign can do what he will, he will do what he can.

One of the most arbitrary Princes in our age was *Muley Ishmael*, Emperor of *Morocco*, who, after a long Reign, died about a twelve-month ago. This Prince was a man of much wit and natural sense, of an active temper, undaunted courage, and great application. He was a descendent of *Mahomet*; and so exemplary for his adherence to the law of his Prophet, that he abstained all his life from the taste of wine; began the annual fast, or *Lent of Ramadan* two months before his subjects; was frequent in his prayers; and that he might not want opportunities of kneeling, had fixed in all the spacious courts of his Palace large consecrated stones pointing towards the East, for any occasional exercise of his devotion. What might not have been hoped from a Prince of these endowments, had they not been all rendered useless and ineffectual to the good of his people by the notion of that power which they ascribed to him! This will appear, if we consider how he exercised it towards his subjects in those three great points which are the chief ends of Government, the preservation of their lives, the security of their fortunes, and the determinations of justice between man and man.

Foreign Envoys, who have given an account of their audiences, describe this holy man mounted on horseback in an open court, with several of his *Alcaydes*, or governours of provinces about him, standing bare foot, trembling, bowing to the earth, and at every word he spoke, breaking out into passionate exclamations of Praise, as, *Great is the wisdom of our Lord the King; our Lord the King speaks as an angel from Heaven.* Happy was the man among them, who was so much a favourite as to be sent on an errand to the most remote street in his Capital; which he performed with the greatest alacrity, ran through every puddle that lay in his way, and took care to return out of breath and covered with dirt, that he might shew himself a diligent and faithful Minister. His Majesty at the same time, to exhibit the greatness of his power, and shew his horsemanship, seldom dismissed the foreigner from his presence, 'till he had entertained him with the slaughter of two or three of his liege subjects, whom he very dexterously put to death with the tilt of his lance. *St. Olon*, the *French* Envoy, tells us, that when he had his last audience of him, he received him in robes just stained with an execution; and that he was blooded up to his elbows by a couple of *Moors*,

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whom he had been butchering with his own imperial hands. By the calculation of that Author, and many others, who have since given an account of his exploits, we may reckon that by his own arm he killed above forty thousand of his people. To render himself the more awful, he chose to wear a Garb of a particular colour when he was bent upon executions; so that when he appeared in yellow, his great men hid themselves in corners, and durst not pay their court to him, till he had satiated his thirst of blood by the death of some of his loyal Commoners, or of such unwary officers of State as chanced to come in his way. Upon this account we are told, that the first news enquired after every morning at *Mequinez*, was, Whether the Emperor were stirring, and in a good or bad humour? As this Prince was a great admirer of architecture, and employed many thousands in works of that kind, if he did not approve the plan or the performance, it was usual for him to shew the delicacy of his taste by demolishing the building, and putting to death all that had a hand in it. I have heard but of one instance of his mercy; which was shewn to the master of an *English* vessel. This our Countreyman presented him with a curious hatchet, which he received very graciously; and asking him whether it had a good edge, tried it upon the Donor, who slipping aside from the blow, escaped with the loss only of his right ear; for old *Muley*, upon second thoughts, considering that it was not one of his own subjects, stopped his hand, and would not send him to Paradise. I cannot quit this article of his tenderness for the lives of his people, without mentioning one of his Queens, whom he was remarkably fond of; as also a favourite prime Minister, who was very dear to him. The first died by a kick of her Lord the King, when she was big with child, for having gathered a flower as she was walking with him in his pleasure garden. The other was bastinado'd to death by his Majesty; who, repenting of the drubs he had given him when it was too late, to manifest his esteem for the memory of so worthy a man, executed the Surgeon that could not cure him.

This absolute Monarch was as notable a Guardian of the fortunes, as of the lives of his subjects. When any man among his people grew rich, in order to keep him from being dangerous to the State, he used to send for all his goods and chattels. His Governours of Towns and Provinces, who formed themselves upon the example of their *Grand Monarque*, practised rapine, violence, extortion, and all the arts of despotick Government in their respective districts, that they might be the better enabled to make him their yearly presents. For the greatest of his Viceroy's could only

only propose to himself a comfortable subsistence out of the plunder of his province, and was in certain danger of being recalled or hanged, if he did not remit the bulk of it to his dread Sovereign. That he might make a right use of these prodigious treasures, which flowed in to him from all the parts of his wide Empire, he took care to bury them under ground, by the hands of his most trusty slaves, and then cut their throats, as the most effectual method to keep them from making discoveries. These were his *Ways* and *Means* for raising mony, by which he weakened the hands of the factious, and in any case of emergency, could employ the whole wealth of his Empire, which he had thus amassed together in his subterraneous Exchequer.

As there is no such thing as property under an arbitrary government, you may learn what was *Muley Ishmael's* notion of it from the following story. Being upon the road, amidst his life-guards, a little before the time of the *Ram-feast*, he met one of his *Alcaydes* at the head of his servants, who were driving a great flock of sheep to market. The Emperor asked whose they were: the *Alcayde* answered with profound submission, *They are mine, O Ishmael, Son of Elcherif, of the line of Hassan. Thine! thou son of a cuckold*, said this SERVANT OF THE LORD; *I thought I had been the only proprietor in this country*; upon which he run him through the body with his lance, and very piously distributed the sheep among his guards, for the celebration of the feast.

His determinations of justice between man and man, were indeed very summary and decisive, and generally put an end to the vexations of a lawsuit, by the ruin both of Plaintiff and Defendant. Travellers have recorded some samples of this kind, which may give us an idea of the blessings of his Administration. One of his *Alcaydes* complaining to him of a wife, whom he had received from his Majesty's hands, and therefore could not divorce her, that she used to pull him by the beard; the Emperor to redress this grievance, ordered his beard to be plucked up by the roots, that he might not be liable to any more such affronts. A country Farmer having accused some of his Negro guards for robbing him of a drove of oxen, the Emperor readily shot the offenders: but afterwards demanding reparation of the accuser, for the loss of so many brave fellows, and finding him insolvent, compounded the matter with him by taking away his life. There are many other instances of the same kind. I must observe however under this head, that the only good thing he is celebrated for, during his whole reign, was the clearing of the roads and high-ways of robbers, with which they used to be very much infested. But his method

thod was to slay man, woman and child, who lived within a certain distance from the place, where the robbery was committed. This extraordinary piece of justice could not but have its effect, by making every road in his Empire unsafe for the profession of a free-booter.

I must not omit this Emperor's reply to Sir *Cloudesly Shovel*, who had taken several of his subjects by way of reprisal for the *English* captives that were detained in his dominions. Upon the Admiral's offering to exchange them on very advantageous terms, this good Emperor sent him word, The subjects he had taken were poor men, not worth the ransoming; and that he might throw them over board, or destroy them otherwise as he pleased.

Such was the government of *Muley Ishmael, the servant of God, the Emperor of the faithful, who was courageous in the way of the Lord, the noble, the good.*

To conclude this account, which is extracted from the best authorities, I shall only observe that he was a great admirer of his late most Christian Majesty. In a letter to him, he compliments him with the title of *Sovereign Arbiter of the actions and wills of his people.* And in a book published by a *French* man, who was sent to him as an Ambassador, is the following passage, *He is absolute in his States, and often compares himself to the Emperor of France, who he says is the only person that knows how to reign like himself, and to make his will the law.*

This was that Emperor of *France* to whom the person who has a great mind to be King of these realms owed his education, and from whom he learned his notions of government. What should hinder one, whose mind is so well seasoned with such prepossessions, from attempting to copy after his patron, in the exercise of such a power; especially considering that the party who espouse his interest, never fail to compliment a Prince that distributes all his places among them, with unlimited power on his part, and unconditional obedience on that of his subjects.



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