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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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What then can we think of a party, who would plunge their native country into such evils as these; when the only avowed motive for their proceedings is a point of Theory, that has been already determined by those who are proper judges, and in whose determination we have so many years acquiesced. If the calamities of the nation in general can make no impression on them, let them at least, in pity to themselves, their friends and dependents, forbear all open and secret methods of encouraging a Rebellion, so destructive, and so unprovoked. All human probabilities are against them; and they cannot expect success, but from a miraculous interposition of the Almighty. And this we may with all Christian humility hope, will not turn against us, who observe those oaths which we have made in his presence; who are zealous for the safety of that Religion, which we think most acceptable in his sight; and who endeavour to preserve that constitution which is most conducive to the happiness of our country.

N^o 13. *Friday, February 3.*

Ignavum fucos pecus à præsepibus arcent.

Virg.

THE most common, and indeed the most natural division of all offences, is into those of omission and commission. We may make the same division of that particular set of crimes which regard human society. The greatest crime which can be committed against it is Rebellion; as was shewn in my last paper. The greatest crime of omission, is an indifference in the particular members of a society, when a Rebellion is actually begun among them. In such a juncture, though a man may be innocent of the great breach which is made upon Government, he is highly culpable, if he does not use all the means that are suitable to his Station for reducing the community into its former state of peace and good order.

Our obligation to be active on such an occasion appears from the nature of civil Government; which is an institution, whereby we are all confederated together for our mutual defence and security. Men who profess

profess a state of neutrality in times of publick danger, desert the common interest of their fellow-subjects; and act with independence to that constitution into which they are incorporated. The safety of the whole requires our joint endeavours. When this is at stake, the indifferent are not properly a part of the community; or rather are like dead limbs, which are an incumbrance to the body, instead of being of use to it. Besides that, the protection which all receive from the same Government, justly calls upon the gratitude of all to strengthen it, as well as upon their self-interest to preserve it.

But farther; If men, who in their hearts are friends to a Government, forbear giving it their utmost assistance against its enemies, they put it in the power of a few desperate men to ruin the welfare of those who are much superior to them in strength, number and interest. It was a remarkable law of *Solon*, the great Legislator of the *Athenians*, that any person who in the civil tumults and commotions of the Republick remained neuter, or an indifferent spectator of the contending parties, should, after the re-establishment of the publick peace, forfeit all his possessions, and be condemned to perpetual banishment. This law made it necessary for every Citizen to take his party, because it was highly probable the Majority would be so wise as to espouse that cause which was most agreeable to the publick Weal, and by that means hinder a sedition from making a successful progress. At least, as every prudent and honest man, who might otherwise favour any indolence in his own temper, was hereby engaged to be active, such a one would be sure to join himself to that side which had the good of their country most at heart. For this reason their famous Law-giver condemned the persons who sat idle in divisions so dangerous to the Government, as Aliens to the community, and therefore to be cut off from it as unprofitable members.

Further; Indifference cannot but be criminal, when it is conversant about objects which are so far from being of an indifferent nature, that they are of the highest importance to our selves and our country. If it be indifferent to us whether we are free subjects or slaves; whether our Prince be of our own Religion, or of one that obliges him to extirpate it; we are in the right to give our selves no trouble in the present juncture. A man governs himself by the dictates of virtue and good sense, who acts without zeal or passion in points that are of no consequence: But when the whole community is shaken, and the safety of the publick endangered, the appearance of a Philosophical or an affected indolence must arise either from stupidity, or perfidiousness.

When :

When in the division of parties among us, men only strove for the first place in the Prince's favour; when all were attached to the same form of government, and contended only for the highest offices in it; a prudent and an honest man might look upon the struggle with indifference, and be in no great pain for the success of either side. But at present the contest is not in reality between *Whigs* and *Tories*, but between *Loyalists* and *Rebels*. Our country is not now divided into two parties, who propose the same end by different means; but into such as would preserve, and such as would destroy it. Whatever denominations we might range ourselves under in former times, men who have any natural love to their country, or sense of their duty, should exert their united strength in a cause that is common to all parties, as they are Protestants and *Britons*. In such a case, an avowed indifference is treachery to our fellow-subjects; and a lukewarm allegiance may prove as pernicious in its consequences as treason.

I need not repeat here what I have proved at large in a former paper, that we are obliged to an active obedience by the solemn oaths we have taken to his Majesty; and that the neutral kind of indifference, which is the subject of this paper, falls short of that obligation they lie under, who have taken such oaths; as will easily appear to any one who considers the form of those sacred and religious engagements.

How then can any man answer it to himself, if, for the sake of managing his interest or character among a party, or out of any personal pique to those who are the most conspicuous for their zeal in his Majesty's service, or from any other private and self-interested motive, he stands as a looker-on when the government is attacked by an open rebellion? especially when those engaged in it, cannot have the least prospect of success, but by the assistance of the ancient and hereditary enemies to the *British* nation. It is strange that these lukewarm friends to the government, whose zeal for their Sovereign rises and falls with their credit at Court, do not consider, before it be too late, that as they strengthen the rebels by their present indifference, they at the same time establish the interest of those who are their rivals and competitors for publick posts of honour. When there is an end put to this rebellion, these Gentlemen cannot pretend to have had any merit in so good a work: and they may well believe the nation will never care to see those men in the highest offices of trust, who when they are out of them, will not stir a finger in its defence.

Monday,