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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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they not, in a case of such great necessity, made use of this customary, legal and reasonable method for securing his Majesty on the Throne, and their Country from misery or ruin.

N^o 17. *Friday, February 17.*

— *Hic niger est: hunc tu, Romane, caveto.* Hor.

WE are told that in *Turkey*, when any man is the Author of notorious falsehoods, it is usual to blacken the whole front of his house: Nay we have sometimes heard, that an Ambassador whose *business it is* (if I may quote his character in Sir *Henry Wotton's* words) *to lye for the good of his countrey*, has sometimes had this mark set upon his house; when he has been detected in any piece of feigned intelligence, that has prejudiced the Government, and mis-led the minds of the people. One could almost wish that the habitations of such of our own countrymen as deal in forgeries detrimental to the publick, were distinguished in the same manner; that their fellow-subjects might be cautioned not to be too easy in giving credit to them. Were such a method put in practice, this Metropolis would be strangely checquered; some entire parishes would be in mourning, and several streets darkned from one end to the other.

But I have given my thoughts in two preceding papers, both on the inventors and the believers of these publick falsehoods and calumnies, and shall here speak of that contempt with which they are and ought to be received by those in high stations, at whom they are levelled. Any person indeed, who is zealous for promoting the interest of his country, must conquer all that tenderness and delicacy which may make him afraid of being ill spoken of; or his endeavours will often produce no less uneasiness to himself, than benefit to the publick. Among a people who indulge themselves in the utmost freedoms of thought and speech, a man must either be insignificant, or able to bear an undeserved reproach. A true Patriot may comfort himself under the attacks of falsehood and obloquy, from several motives and reflections.

In the first place he should consider, that the chief of his antagonists are generally acted by a spirit of envy; which would not rise against him, if it were not provoked by his desert. A Statesman, who is possess'd of real merit, should look upon his political censurers with the same neglect, that a good writer regards his Criticks; who are generally a race of men that are not able to discover the beauties of a work they examine, and deny that approbation to others, which they never met with themselves. Patriots therefore should rather rejoice in the success of their honest designs, than be mortified by those who misrepresent them.

They should likewise consider, that not only envy, but vanity has a share in the detraction of their adversaries. Such aspersions therefore do them honour at the same time that they are intended to lessen their reputation. They should reflect, That those who endeavour to stir up the multitude against them, do it to be thought considerable; and not a little applaud themselves in a talent that can raise clamours out of nothing, and throw a ferment among the people, by murmurs or complaints, which they know in their own hearts are altogether groundless. There is a pleasant instance of this nature recorded at length in the first book of the *Annals of Tacitus*. When a great part of the *Roman* legions were in a disposition to mutiny, an impudent varlet, who was a private Centinel, being mounted upon the shoulders of his Fellow-soldiers, and resolved to try the power of his eloquence, addressed himself to the army, in all the postures of an Orator, after the following manner: *You have given liberty to these miserable men,* said he, (pointing to some criminals whom they had rescued) *but which of you can restore life to my brother? Who can give me back my brother? He was murdered no longer ago than last night, by the hands of those ruffians, who are entertained by the General to butcher the poor Soldiery. Tell me, Blæsus, (for that was the name of the General, who was then sitting on the Tribunal) tell me, where hast thou cast his dead body? An enemy does not grudge the Rites of burial. When I have tired my self with kissing his cold corps, and weeping over it, order me to be slain upon it. All I ask of my fellow-soldiers, since we both die in their cause, is, that they would lay me in the same grave with my brother.* The whole army was in an uproar at this moving speech, and resolved to do the speaker justice, when, upon enquiry, they found that he never had a brother in his life; and that he had stirred up the sedition only to shew his parts.

Publick Ministers would likewise do well to consider, that the principal Authors of such reproaches as are cast upon them, are those who have

a mind to get their places: and as for a censure arising from this motive, it is in their power to escape it when they please, and turn it upon their competitors. Malecontents of an inferiour character are acted by the same principle; for so long as there are employments of all sizes, there will be murmurers of all degrees. I have heard of a Country-gentleman, who made a very long and melancholy complaint to the late Duke of *Buckingham*, when he was in great power at Court, of several publick grievances. The Duke, after having given him a very patient hearing, *My dear friend*, says he, *this is but too true; but I have thought of an expedient which will set all things right, and that very soon.* His country friend asked him, what it was. *You must know*, says the Duke, *there's a place of five hundred pounds a year fallen this very morning, which I intend to put you in possession of.* The Gentleman thanked his Grace, went away satisfied, and thought the nation the happiest under Heaven, during that whole Ministry.

But farther, every man in a publick station ought to consider, that when there are two different parties in a nation, they will see things in different lights. An action, however conducive to the good of their country, will be represented by the artful and appear to the ignorant as prejudicial to it. Since I have here, according to the usual liberty of Essay-writers, rambled into several stories, I shall fetch one to my present purpose out of the *Persian* history. We there read of a virtuous young Emperor, who was very much afflicted to find his actions misconstrued and defamed by a party among his subjects that favoured another interest. As he was one day sitting among the Ministers of his *Divan*, and amusing himself after the *Eastern* manner, with the solution of difficult Problems and *Ænigma's*, he proposed to them in his turn the following one. *What is the tree that bears three hundred and sixty five leaves, which are all black on the one side, and white on the other?* His Grand Vizier immediately replied, it was the year which consisted of three hundred and sixty five days and nights: *But Sir*, says he, *permit me at the same time to take notice, that these leaves represent your actions, which carry different faces to your friends and enemies, and will always appear black to those who are resolved only to look upon the wrong side of them.*

A virtuous man therefore who lays out his endeavours for the good of his country, should never be troubled at the reports which are made of him, so long as he is conscious of his own integrity. He should rather be pleased to find people descanting upon his actions, because when they are thoroughly canvassed and examined, they are sure in the end to turn

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to his honour and advantage. The reasonable and unprejudiced part of mankind will be of his side, and rejoyce to see their common interest lodged in such honest hands. A strict examination of a great man's character, is like the trial of a suspected chastity, which was made among the *Jews* by the waters of jealousy. *Moses* assures us that the criminal burit upon the drinking of them; but if she was accused wrongfully, the *Rabbins* tell us, they heightened her charms, and made her much more amiable than before: so that they destroyed the guilty, but beautified the innocent.

N^o 18. *Friday, February 20.*

----- *Inopem me copia fecit.*

Ovid.

EVery *Englishman* will be a good subject to King *George*, in proportion as he is a good *Englishman*, and a lover of the constitution of his country. In order to awaken in my Readers the love of this their constitution, it may be necessary to set forth its superior excellency to that form of government, which many wicked and ignorant men have of late years endeavoured to introduce among us. I shall not therefore think it improper to take notice from time to time of any particular act of power, exerted by those among whom the Pretender to his Majesty's Crown has been educated; which would prove fatal to this nation, should it be conquered and governed by a person, who, in all probability, would put in practice the politicks in which he has been so long instructed.

There has been nothing more observable in the reign of his present *Gallick* Majesty, than the method he has taken for supplying his Exchequer with a necessary sum of money. The ways and means for raising it has been an edict, or a command in writing signed by himself, to encrease the value of *Louis d'Ors* from fourteen to sixteen *Livres*, by vertue of a new stamp which shall be struck upon them. As this method will bring all the gold of the kingdom into his hands, it is provided by the same edict that they shall be payed out again to the people at twenty *Livres* each;