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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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to his honour and advantage. The reasonable and unprejudiced part of mankind will be of his side, and rejoice 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 burnt 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° 18. Friday, February 20.

— In opem 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 mony. The ways and means for raisng 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 virtue 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;

each; so that four *Livres* in the score by this means accrue to his Majesty out of all the mony in the kingdom of *France*.

This method of raising mony is consisttent with that form of government, and with the repeated practice of their late *grand Monarque*; so that I shall not here consider the many evil consequences which it must have upon their trade, their exchange, and publick credit: I shall only take notice of the whimsical circumstances a people must lie under, who can be thus made poor or rich by an Edict, which can throw an alloy into a *Louis d'Or*, and debase it into half its former value, or, if his Majesty pleases, raise the price of it, not by the accession of metal, but of a mark. By the present Edict many a man in *France* will swell into a plumb, who fell several thousand pounds short of it the day before its publication. This conveys a kind of *Fairy* treasure into their chests, even whilst they are under lock and key; and is a secret of multiplication without addition. It is natural enough however for the vanity of the *French* nation to grow insolent upon this imaginary wealth, not considering that their neighbours think them no more rich by vertue of an Edict to make fourteen twenty, than they would think them more formidable should there be another Edict to make every man in the kingdom seven foot high.

It was usual for his late most christian Majesty to sink the value of their *Louis d'Ors* about the time he was to receive the taxes of his good people, and to raise them when he had got them safe into his coffers. And there is no question but the present government in that kingdom will so far observe this kind of conduct, as to reduce the twenty *Livres* to their old number of fourteen, when they have paid them out of their hands; which will immediately sink the prefent timpany of wealth, and re-establish the natural poverty of the *Gallick* nation.

One cannot but pity the melancholy condition of a miser in this country, who is perpetually telling his *Livres*, without being able to know how rich he is. He is as ridiculously puzzled and perplexed as a man that counts the stones on *Salisbury-plain*, which can never be settled to any certain number, but are more or fewer every time he reckons them.

I have heard of a young *French* Lady, a subject of *Louis the Fourteenth*, who was contracted to a Marquis upon the foot of a five thousand pound fortune, which she had by her in specie; but one of these unlucky Edicts coming out a week before the intended marriage, she lost a thousand pound, and her bridegroom into the bargain.

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The uncertainty of riches is a subject much discoursed of in all countries, but may be insisted on more emphatically in *France* than any other. A man is here under such a kind of situation, as one who is managed by a jugler. He fancies he has so many pieces of money in his hand ; but let him grasp them never so carefully, upon a word or two of the artist they increase or dwindle to what number the Doctor is pleased to name.

This method of lowering or advancing money, we, who have the happiness to be in another form of government, should look upon as unwarrantable kind of clipping and coining. However, as it is an expedient that is often practised, and may be justified in that constitution which has been so thoroughly studied by the Pretender to his Majesty's crown, I do not see what should have hindered him from making use of so expeditious a method for raising a supply, if he had succeeded in his late attempt to dethrone his Majesty, and subvert our constitution. I shall leave it to the consideration of the Reader, if in such a case the following edict, or something very like it, might not have been expected.

“ Whereas these our kingdoms have long groaned under an expensive and consuming land-war, which has very much exhausted the treasure of the nation, we, being willing to increase the wealth of our people, and not thinking it advisable for this purpose to make use of the tedious methods of merchandise and commerce, which have been always promoted by a faction among the worst of our subjects, and were so wisely discountenanced by the best of them in the late reign, do hereby enact by our sole Will and Pleasure, that every shilling in Great-Britain shall pass in all payments for the sum of fourteen pence, till the first of September next, and that every other piece of money shall rise and pass in current payment in the same proportion. The advantage which will accrue to these nations by this our Royal donative, will visibly appear to all men of sound principles, who are so justly famous for their antipathy to strangers, and would not see the landed interest of their country weakened by the importations of foreign gold and silver. But since by reason of the great debts which we have contracted abroad, during our fifteen years reign, as well as of our present exigencies, it will be necessary to fill our Exchequer by the most prudent and expeditious methods, we do also hereby order every one of our subjects to bring in these his fourteen-penny pieces, and all the other current cash of this kingdom, by what new titles soever dignified or distinguished, to the master of our mint, who, after having

" having set a mark upon them, shall deliver out to them, on or after the
 " first of September aforesaid, their respective sums, taking only four
 " pence for our self for such his mark on every fourteen penny piece,
 " which from henceforth shall pass in payment for eighteen pence, and
 " so in proportion for the rest. By this method, the money of this na-
 " tion will be more by one third than it is at present; and we shall
 " content our selves with not quite one fifth part of the current cash of
 " our loving subjects; which will but barely suffice to clear the interest
 " of those sums in which we stand indebted to our most dear brother
 " and ancient ally. We are glad of this opportunity of shewing such
 " an instance of our goodness to our subjects, by this our Royal edict,
 " which shall be read in every parish Church of Great-Britain, imme-
 " diately after the celebration of high Mass. *For such is our Pleasure.*

N° 19. *Friday, February 24.*

*Pulchrum est bene facere reipublicæ; etiam bene dicere haud
 absurdum est.* Sall.

IT has been usual these many years for writers, who have approved the scheme of government which has taken place, to explain to the people the reasonableness of those principles which have prevailed, and to justify the conduct of those, who act in conformity to such principles. It therefore happens well for the party which is undermost, when a work of this nature falls into the hands of those who content themselves to attack their principles, without exposing their persons, or singling out any particular objects for satyr and ridicule. This manner of proceeding is no inconsiderable piece of merit in writers, who are often more influenced by a desire of fame, than a regard to the publick good; and who, by this means, lose many fair opportunities of shewing their own wit, or of gratifying the ill-nature of their Readers.

When a man thinks a party engaged in such measures as tend to the ruin of his country, it is certainly a very laudable and virtuous action in him to make war after this manner upon the whole body. But as several

VOL. IV.

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