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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 19. Friday, February 24.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

“ 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^o 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

casuists are of opinion, that in a battel you should discharge upon the gros of the enemy, without levelling your piece at any particular person; so in this kind of combat also, I cannot think it fair to aim at any one man, and make his character the mark of your hostilities. There is now to be seen in the castle of *Milan*, a cannon-bullet, inscribed, *This to the Marechal de Crequi*, which was the very ball that shot him. An Author who points his satyr at a great man, is to be looked upon in the same view with the engineer who signalized himself by this ungenerous practice.

But as the spirit of the *Whigs* and *Tories* shews itself, upon every occasion, to be very widely different from one another; so is it particularly visible in the writings of this kind, which have been published by each party. The latter may, indeed, assign one reason to justify themselves in this practice; that, having nothing of any manner of weight to offer against the principles of their antagonists, if they speak at all, it must be against their persons. When they cannot refute an adversary, the shortest way is to libel him; and to endeavour at the making his person odious, when they cannot represent his notions as absurd.

The *Examiner* was a paper, in the last reign, which was the favourite-work of the party. It was ushered into the world by a Letter from a Secretary of State, setting forth the great genius of the Author, the usefulness of his design, and the mighty consequences that were to be expected from it. It is said to have been written by those among them whom they looked upon as their most celebrated Wits and Politicians, and was dispersed into all quarters of the nation with great industry and expence. Who would not have expected, that at least the rules of decency and candour would be observed in such a performance? but instead of this, you saw all the great men, who had done eminent services to their country but a few years before, draughted out one by one, and baited in their turns. No sanctity of character, or privilege of sex, exempted persons from this barbarous usage. Several of our Prelates were the standing marks of publick raillery, and many Ladies of the first quality branded by name for matters of fact, which as they were false, were not heeded, and if they had been true, were innocent. The dead themselves were not spared. And here I cannot forbear taking notice of a kind of wit which has lately grown into fashion among the Versifiers, Epigrammatists, and other Authors, who think it sufficient to distinguish themselves by their zeal for what they call the High-Church, while they sport with the most tremendous parts of revealed religion. Every one has

has seen Epigrams upon the deceased Fathers of our Church, where the whole thought has turned upon hell-fire. Patriots, who ought to be remembered with honour by their posterity, have been introduced as speakers in a state of torments. There is something dreadful even in repeating these execrable pieces of wit, which no man who really believes another life, can peruse without fear and trembling. It is astonishing to see Readers who call themselves Christians, applauding such diabolical mirth, and seeming to rejoyce in the doom which is pronounced against their enemies, by such abandoned scriblers. A Wit of this kind, may with great truth be compared to the fool in the *Proverbs*, *who plays with arrows, fire-brands and death, and says, Am I not in sport?*

I must, in justice to the more sober and considerate of that party, confess, that many of them were highly scandalized at that personal slander and reflection which was flung out so freely by the libellers of the last reign, as well as by those profane liberties which have been since continued. And as for those who are either the authors or admirers of such compositions, I would have them consider with themselves, whether the name of a good Church-man can atone for the want of that charity which is the most essential part of Christianity. They would likewise do well to reflect, how, by these methods, the poison has run freely into the minds of the weak and ignorant; heightened their rage against many of their fellow-subjects; and almost divested them of the common sentiments of humanity.

In the former part of this paper, I have hinted that the design of it is to oppose the principles of those who are enemies to the present government, and the main body of that party who espouse those principles. But even in such general attacks there are certain measures to be kept, which may have a tendency rather to gain, than to irritate those who differ with you in their sentiments. The *Examiner* would not allow such as were of a contrary opinion to him, to be either Christians or fellow-subjects. With him they were all Atheists, Deists, or Apostates, and a separate common-wealth among themselves, that ought either to be extirpated, or, when he was in a better humour, only to be banished out of their native country. They were often put in mind of some approaching execution, and therefore all of them advised to prepare themselves for it, as men who had then nothing to take care of, but how to die decently. In short, the *Examiner* seemed to make no distinction between conquest and destruction.

The conduct of this work has hitherto been regulated by different views, and shall continue to be so; unless the party it has to deal with, draw upon themselves another kind of treatment. For if they shall persist in pointing their batteries against particular persons, there are no laws of war, that forbid the making of reprisals. In the mean time, this undertaking shall be managed with that generous spirit which was so remarkable among the *Romans*, who did not subdue a country in order to put the inhabitants to fire and sword, but to incorporate them into their own community, and make them happy in the same government with themselves.

N^o 20. *Monday, February 27.*

*Privatus illis census erat brevis,
Commune magnum-----*

Hor.

IT is very unlucky for those who make it their business to raise popular murmurs and discontents against his Majesty's government, that they find so very few and so very improper occasions for them. To shew how hard they are set in this particular, there are several, who for want of other materials, are forced to represent the bill which has passed this Session, for laying an additional tax of two shillings in the pound upon Land, as a kind of grievance upon the subject. If this be a matter of complaint, it ought in justice to fall upon those who have made it necessary. Had there been no rebellion, there would have been no increase of the Land-tax; so that in proportion as a man declares his aversion to the one, he ought to testify his abhorrence of the other. But it is very remarkable that those, who would persuade the people that they are aggrieved by this additional burthen, are the very persons who endeavour, in their ordinary conversation, to extenuate the heinousness of the rebellion, and who express the greatest tenderness for the persons of the rebels. They shew a particular indulgence for that unnatural insurrection which has drawn this load upon us, and are angry at the means which were necessary for suppressing it. There needs no clearer proof of the
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