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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 189. Saturday, October 6.

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“ repugnant to their schemes of natural philosophy, they contented themselves with the denial of a Providence, asserting at the same time the existence of Gods in general; because they would not shock the common belief of mankind, and the religion of their country.

N<sup>o</sup> 189. *Saturday, October 6.*

---- *Patrie pietatis imago.*

Virg.

**T**HE following letter being written to my bookseller, upon a subject of which I treated some time since, I shall publish it in this paper, together with the letter that was inclosed in it.

Mr. *Buckley,*

“ **M**R. SPECTATOR having of late descanted upon the cruelty of parents to their children, I have been induced (at the request of several of Mr. SPECTATOR’s admirers) to inclose this letter, which I assure you is the original from a father to his son, notwithstanding the latter gave but little or no provocation. It would be wonderfully obliging to the world, if Mr. SPECTATOR would give his opinion of it in some of his Speculations, and particularly to

(Mr. *Buckley*) *Your humble Servant.*

SIRRAH,

“ **Y**OU are a sawcy audacious rascal, and both fool and mad, and I care not a farthing whether you comply or no; that does not raze out my impressions of your insolence, going about railing at me, and the next day to sollicit my favour: these are inconsistencies, such as discover thy Reason depraved. To be brief, I never desire to see your face; and, Sirrah, if you go to the work-house, it is no disgrace to me for you to be supported there; and if you starve in the streets, I’ll never give any thing underhand in your behalf. If I have any more of your scribbling nonsense, I will break your head the first time I set fight on you. You are a stubborn beast; is this your gratitude for my giving

“ing you money? You Rogue, I'll better your judgment, and give  
“you a greater sense of your duty to (I regret to say) your father, &c.

“P. S. It is prudence for you to keep out of my sight; for to reproach  
“me, that Might overcomes Right, on the outside of your letter, I shall  
“give you a great knock on the skull for it.

Was there ever such an image of paternal tenderneſs! It was uſual among ſome of the *Greeks* to make their ſlaves drink to exceſs, and then expoſe them to their children, who by that means conceived an early averſion to a vice which makes men appear ſo monſtrous and irrational. I have expoſed this picture of an unnatural father with the ſame intention, that its deformity may deter others from its reſemblance. If the Reader has a mind to ſee a father of the ſame ſtamp repreſented in the moſt exquisite ſtrokes of humour, he may meet with it in one of the fineſt Comedies that ever appeared upon the *English* ſtage: I mean the part of *Sir Sampſon* in *Love for Love*.

I muſt not however engage my ſelf blindly on the ſide of the ſon, to whom the fond letter above-written was directed. His father calls him a *ſawcy and audacious Rascal* in the firſt line, and I am afraid upon examination he will prove but an ungracious youth. To go about railing at his father, and to find no other place but *the outside of his letter* to tell him *that might overcomes right*, if it does not discover *his reaſon to be depraved*, and *that he is either fool or mad*, as the choleric old Gentleman tells him, we may at leaſt allow that the father will do very well in endeavouring to *better his judgment, and give him a greater ſenſe of his duty*. But whether this may be brought about *by breaking his head, or giving him a great knock on the ſkull*, ought I think to be well conſidered. Upon the whole, I wiſh the father has not met with his match, and that he may not be as equally paired with a ſon, as the mother in *Virgil*.

— *Crudelis tu quoque mater:*

*Crudelis mater magis an puer improbus ille?*

*Improbus ille puer, crudelis tu quoque mater.*

Or like the crow and her egg in the *Greek* proverb,

Κακὸς ἄβροχὸς κακὸν ὄν.

I muſt here take notice of a letter which I have received from an unknown correſpondent, upon the ſubject of my paper, upon which the foregoing letter is likewiſe founded. The writer of it ſeems very much concerned leaſt that paper ſhould ſeem to give encouragement to the diſobedience

obedience of children towards their parents; but if the writer of it will take the pains to read it over again attentively, I dare say his apprehension will vanish. Pardon and reconciliation are all the penitent daughter requests, and all that I contend for in her behalf; and in this case I may use the saying of an eminent Wit, who upon some great mens pressing him to forgive his daughter who had married against his consent, told them he could refuse nothing to their instances, but that he would have them remember there was difference between *Giving* and *Forgiving*.

I must confess, in all controversies between parents and their children, I am naturally prejudiced in favour of the former. The obligations on that side can never be acquitted, and I think it is one of the greatest reflections upon humane nature, that paternal instinct should be a stronger motive to love than filial gratitude; that the receiving of favours should be a less inducement to good-will, tenderness and commiseration, than the conferring of them; and that the taking care of any person should endear the child or dependant more to the parent or benefactor, than the parent or benefactor to the child or dependant; yet so it happens, that for one cruel parent we meet with a thousand undutiful children. This is indeed wonderfully contrived (as I have formerly observed) for the support of every living species; but at the same time that it shews the wisdom of the Creator, it discovers the imperfection and degeneracy of the creature.

The obedience of children to their parents is the basis of all government, and is set forth as the measure of that obedience which we owe to those whom Providence hath placed over us.

It is Father *le Comte*, if I am not mistaken, who tells us how want of duty in this particular is punished among the *Chinese*, insomuch that if a son should be known to kill or so much as to strike his father, not only the criminal but his whole family would be rooted out, nay the inhabitants of the place where he lived would be put to the sword, nay the place it self would be razed to the ground, and its foundations sown with salt: For, say they, there must have been an utter depravation of manners in that clan or society of people, who could have bred up among them so horrible an offender. To this I shall add a passage out of the first book of *Herodotus*. That historian in his account of the *Persian* customs and religion tells us, it is their opinion that no man ever killed his father, or that it is possible such a crime should be in nature; but that if any thing like it should ever happen, they conclude that the reputed son must have been illegitimate, supposititious, or begotten in adultery.

adultery. Their opinion in this particular shews sufficiently what a notion they must have had of undutifulness in general.

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N<sup>o</sup> 191. Tuesday, October 9.

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— ἔλον ὀνειρεν.

Hom.

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SOME ludicrous Schoolmen have put the case, that if an ass were placed between two bundles of hay, which affected his senses equally on each side, and tempted him in the very same degree, whether it would be possible for him to eat of either. They generally determine this question to the disadvantage of the ass, who they say would starve in the midst of plenty, as not having a single grain of free-will to determine him more to the one than to the other. The bundle of hay on either side striking his sight and smell in the same proportion, would keep him in a perpetual suspense, like the two Magnets which travellers have told us, are placed one of them in the roof, and the other in the floor of *Mahomet's* burying-place at *Mecca*, and by that means, say they, pull the Impostor's iron coffin with such an equal attraction, that it hangs in the air between both of them. As for the ass's behaviour in such nice circumstances, whether he would starve sooner than violate his neutrality to the two bundles of hay, I shall not presume to determine; but only take notice of the conduct of our own species in the same perplexity. When a man has a mind to venture his money in a Lottery, every figure of it appears equally alluring, and as likely to succeed as any of its fellows. They all of them have the same pretensions to good luck, stand upon the same foot of competition, and no manner of reason can be given why a man should prefer one to the other before the Lottery is drawn. In this case therefore Caprice very often acts in the place of Reason, and forms to its self some groundless imaginary motive, where real and substantial ones are wanting. I know a well-meaning man that is very well pleased to risque his good fortune upon the number 1711, because it is the year of our Lord. I am acquainted with a Tacker that would give a good deal for the number 134. On the contrary I have been told  
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