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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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prove of my actions, I know not; but this I am sure of, that I have at all times made it my endeavour to please him, and I have a good hope that this my endeavour will be accepted by him. We find in these words of that great man the habitual good intention which I would here inculcate, and with which that divine Philosopher always acted. I shall only add, that *Erasmus*, who was an unbigotted Roman Catholick, was so much transported with this passage of *Socrates*, that he could scarce forbear looking upon him as a Saint, and desiring him to pray for him; or as that ingenious and learned writer has expressed himself in a much more lively manner, *When I reflect on such a speech pronounced by such a person, I can scarce forbear crying out, Sancte Socrates, ora pro nobis. O holy Socrates, pray for us.*

N^o 215. Tuesday, November 6.

----- *Ingenuas didicisse fideliter artes*
Emollit mores, nec sinit esse feros.

Ov.

I Consider an humane Soul without education like marble in the quarry, which shews none of its inherent beauties, till the skill of the polisher fetches out the colours, makes the surface shine, and discovers every ornamental cloud, spot and vein that runs through the body of it. Education, after the same manner, when it works upon a noble mind, draws out to view every latent virtue and perfection, which without such helps are never able to make their appearance.

If my Reader will give me leave to change the allusion so soon upon him, I shall make use of the same instance to illustrate the force of education, which *Aristotle* has brought to explain his doctrine of substantial forms, when he tells us that a statue lies hid in a block of marble; and that the art of the statuary only clears away the superfluous matter, and removes the rubbish. The figure is in the stone, the Sculptor only finds it. What Sculpture is to a block of marble, Education is to an humane Soul. The Philosopher, the Saint, or the Hero, the wise, the good, or the

the great man, very often lie hid and concealed in a Plebeian, which a proper education might have dif-interred, and have brought to light. I am therefore much delighted with reading the accounts of savage nations, and with contemplating those virtues which are wild and uncultivated; to see courage exerting it self in fierceness, resolution in obstinacy, wisdom in cunning, patience in fullness and despair.

Mens passions operate variously, and appear in different kinds of actions, according as they are more or less rectified and sway'd by reason. When one hears of Negroes, who upon the death of their masters, or upon changing their service, hang themselves upon the next tree, as it frequently happens in our *American* plantations, who can forbear admiring their fidelity, though it expresses it self in so dreadful a manner? What might not that savage greatness of soul which appears in these poor wretches on many occasions, be raised to, were it rightly cultivated? and what colour of excuse can there be for the contempt with which we treat this part of our species; that we should not put them upon the common foot of humanity, that we should only set an insignificant fine upon the man who murders them; nay, that we should, as much as in us lies, cut them off from the prospect of happiness in another world as well as in this, and deny them that which we look upon as the proper means for attaining it?

Since I am engaged on this subject, I cannot forbear mentioning a story which I have lately heard, and which is so well attested, that I have no manner of reason to suspect the truth of it. I may call it a kind of wild tragedy that passed about twelve years ago at *St. Christophers*, one of our *British* Leeward Islands. The Negroes who were concerned in it, were all of them the slaves of a gentleman who is now in *England*.

This gentleman among his negroes had a young woman, who was looked upon as a most extraordinary beauty by those of her own complexion. He had at the same time two young fellows, who were likewise negroes and slaves, remarkable for the comeliness of their persons, and for the friendship which they bore to one another. It unfortunately happened that both of them fell in love with the female negroe above mentioned, who would have been very glad to have taken either of them for her husband, provided they could agree between themselves which should be the man. But they were both so passionately in love with her, that neither of them could think of giving her up to his rival; and at the same time were so true to one another, that neither of them would think of gaining her without his friend's consent. The torments of these two

lovers were the discourse of the family to which they belonged, who could not forbear observing the strange complication of passions which perplexed the hearts of the poor negroes, that often dropp'd expressions of the uneasiness they underwent, and how impossible it was for either of them ever to be happy.

After a long struggle between love and friendship, truth and jealousy, they one day took a walk together into a wood, carrying their mistress along with them: where, after abundance of lamentations, they stabbed her to the heart, of which she immediately died. A slave, who was at his work not far from the place where this astonishing piece of cruelty was committed, hearing the shrieks of the dying person, ran to see what was the occasion of them. He there discovered the woman lying dead upon the ground, with the two negroes on each side of her kissing the dead corps, weeping over it, and beating their breasts in the utmost agonies of grief and despair. He immediately ran to the *English* family with the news of what he had seen; who upon coming to the place saw the woman dead, and the two negroes expiring by her with wounds they had given themselves.

We see, in this amazing instance of barbarity, what strange disorders are bred in the minds of those men whose passions are not regulated by virtue, and disciplined by reason. Though the action which I have recited is in it self full of guilt and horror, it proceeded from a temper of mind which might have produced very noble fruits, had it been informed and guided by a suitable education.

It is therefore an unspeakable blessing to be born in those parts of the world where wisdom and knowledge flourish; though it must be confessed, there are, even in these parts, several poor uninstructed persons, who are but little above the inhabitants of those nations of which I have been here speaking; as those who have had the advantages of a more liberal education, rise above one another by several different degrees of perfection. For to return to our statue in the block of marble, we see it sometimes only begun to be chipped, sometimes rough-hewn, and but just sketched into an human figure; sometimes we see the man appearing distinctly in all his limbs and features, sometimes we find the figure wrought up to a great elegance, but seldom meet with any to which the hand of a *Phidias* or a *Praxiteles* could not give several nice touches and finishings.

Discourses of morality, and reflections upon human nature, are the best means we can make use of to improve our minds, and gain a true knowledge

ledge of our selves, and consequently to recover our souls out of the vices ignorance, and prejudice which naturally cleave to them. I have all along profess'd my self in this paper a promoter of these great ends; and I flatter my self that I do from day to day contribute something to the polishing of men's minds; at least my design is laudable, whatever the execution may be. I must confess I am not a little encouraged in it by many letters which I receive from unknown hands, in approbation of my endeavours; and must take this opportunity of returning my thanks to those who write them, and excusing my self for not inserting several of them in my papers, which I am sensible would be a very great ornament to them. Should I publish the praises which are so well penned, they would do honour to the persons who write them, but my publishing of them would I fear be a sufficient instance to the world, that I did not deserve them.

N^o 219. *Saturday, November 10.*

Vix ea nostra voco-----

Ov.

THERE are but few men who are not ambitious of distinguishing themselves in the nation or country where they live, and of growing considerable among those with whom they converse. There is a kind of grandeur and respect, which the meanest and most insignificant part of mankind endeavour to procure in the little circle of their friends and acquaintance. The poorest mechanick, nay, the man who lives upon common alms, gets him his set of admirers, and delights in that superiority which he enjoys over those who are in some respects beneath him. This ambition, which is natural to the soul of man, might methinks receive a very happy turn; and, if it were rightly directed, contribute as much to a person's advantage, as it generally does to his uneasiness and disquiet.

I shall therefore put together some thoughts on this subject, which I have not met with in other writers; and shall set them down as they have occurred to me, without being at the pains to connect or methodize them.

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