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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

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We had a rabbinical Divine in *England*, who was Chaplain to the Earl of *Essex* in Queen *Elizabeth's* time, that had an admirable head for secrets of this nature. Upon his taking the Doctor of Divinity's degree, he preached before the University of *Cambridge*, upon the *first* verse of the *first* chapter of the *first* book of *Chronicles*, in which, says he, you will see the three following words,

Adam, Sheth, Enosh.

He divided this short text into many parts, and discovering several mysteries in each word, made a most learned and elaborate discourse. The name of this profound Preacher was Doctor *Alabaster*, of whom the Reader may find a more particular account in Doctor *Fuller's* book of *English Worthies*. This instance will, I hope, convince my Readers that there may be a great deal of fine writing in the capital letters which bring up the rear of my paper, and give them some satisfaction in that particular. But as for the full explication of these matters, I must refer them to time, which discovers all things.

N^o 223. *Thursday, November 15.*

*O suavis anima! qualem bonam
Antehac fuisse, tales cum sint reliquie!*

Phad.

WHEN I reflect upon the various fate of those multitudes of ancient writers who flourished in *Greece* and *Italy*, I consider Time as an immense ocean, in which many noble Authors are entirely swallowed up, many very much shattered and damaged, some quite dis-jointed and broken into pieces, while some have wholly escaped the common wreck; but the number of the last is very small.

Apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto.

Among the mutilated Poets of antiquity, there is none whose fragments are so beautiful as those of *Sappho*. They give us a taste of her way of writing, which is perfectly conformable with that extraordinary

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character

character we find of her, in the remarks of those great criticks who were conversant with her works when they were entire. One may see by what is left of them, that she followed nature in all her thoughts, without descending to those little points, conceits, and turns of wit with which many of our modern Lyricks are so miserably infected. Her Soul seems to have been made up of Love and Poetry: she felt the passion in all its warmth, and described it in all its symptoms. She is called by ancient Authors the Tenth Muse; and by *Plutarch* is compared to *Cacus* the son of *Vulcan*, who breathed out nothing but flame. I do not know by the character that is given of her works, whether it is not for the benefit of mankind that they are lost. They were filled with such bewitching tenderness and rapture, that it might have been dangerous to have given them a reading.

An inconstant lover, called *Phaon*, occasioned great calamities to this poetical Lady. She fell desperately in love with him, and took a voyage into *Sicily*, in pursuit of him, he having withdrawn himself thither on purpose to avoid her. It was in that island, and on this occasion, she is supposed to have made the Hymn to *Venus*, with a translation of which I shall present my Reader. Her Hymn was ineffectual for the procuring that happiness which she prayed for in it. *Phaon* was still obdurate, and *Sappho* so transported with the violence of her passion, that she was resolved to get rid of it at any price.

There was a promontory in *Acarmania* called *Leucate*, on the top of which was a little Temple dedicated to *Apollo*. In this Temple it was usual for despairing Lovers to make their vows in secret, and afterwards to fling themselves from the top of the precipice into the sea, where they were sometimes taken up alive. This place was therefore called *The Lover's leap*; and whether or no the fright they had been in, or the resolution that could push them to so dreadful a remedy, or the bruises which they often received in their fall, banished all the tender sentiments of love, and gave their spirits another turn; those who had taken this leap were observed never to relapse into that passion. *Sappho* tried the cure, but perished in the experiment.

After having given this short account of *Sappho* so far as it regards the following Ode, I shall subjoin the translation of it as it was sent me by a friend, whose admirable Pastorals and *Winter-piece* have been already so well received. The Reader will find in it that pathetick simplicity which is so peculiar to him, and so suitable to the Ode he has here translated. This Ode in the *Greek* (besides those beauties observed by Madam

dam *Dacier*) has several harmonious turns in the words, which are not lost in the *English*. I must further add, that the translation has preserved every image and sentiment of *Sappho*, notwithstanding it has all the ease and spirit of an original. In a word, if the Ladies have a mind to know the manner of writing practised by the so much celebrated *Sappho*, they may here see it in its genuine and natural beauty, without any foreign or affected ornaments.

An HYMN to VENUS.

I.

O Venus, beauty of the skies,
To whom a thousand Temples rise,
Gayly false in gentle smiles,
Full of love perplexing wiles;
O Goddess! from my heart remove
The wasting cares and pains of love.

II.

If ever thou hast kindly heard
A Song in soft distress preferr'd,
Propitious to my *tuneful* vow,
O gentle Goddess! hear me now.
Descend, thou bright, immortal guest,
In all thy radiant charms confest.

III.

Thou once didst leave Almighty Jove,
And all the golden roofs above:
The Carr thy wanton sparrows drew,
Hov'ring in air they lightly flew;
As to my bower they wing'd their way:
I saw their quiv'ring pinions play.

IV.

The birds dismiss (while you remain)
Bore back their empty Carr again:
Then you, with looks divinely mild,
In ev'ry heav'nly feature smil'd,
And ask'd, what new complaints I made,
And why I call'd you to my aid?

V. What

V.

*What phrenzy in my bosom raged,
And by what cure to be asswaged?
What gentle youth I would allure,
Whom in my artful toils secure?
Who does thy tender heart subdue,
Tell me, my Sappho, tell me who?*

VI.

*Tho' now he shuns thy longing arms,
He soon shall court thy slighted charms;
Tho' now thy Off'rings he despise,
He soon to thee shall sacrifice;
Tho' now he freeze, he soon shall burn,
And be thy victim in his turn.*

VII.

*Celestial visitant, once more
Thy needful presence I implore!
In pity come and ease my grief,
Bring my distemper'd Soul relief;
Favour thy suppliant's hidden fires,
And give me all my heart desires.*

Madam *Dacier* observes there is something very pretty in that circumstance of this Ode, wherein *Venus* is described as sending away her chariot upon her arrival at *Sappho's* lodgings, to denote that it was not a short transient visit which she intended to make her. This Ode was preserved by an eminent *Greek* critick, who inserted it intire in his works, as a pattern of perfection in the structure of it.

Longinus has quoted another Ode of this great Poetess, which is likewise admirable in its kind, and has been translated by the same hand with the foregoing one. I shall oblige my Reader with it in another paper. In the mean while, I cannot but wonder, that these two finished pieces have never been attempted before by any of our country-men. But the truth of it is, the compositions of the antients, which have not in them any of those unnatural witticisms that are the delight of ordinary Readers, are extremely difficult to render into another tongue, so as the beauties of the original may not appear weak and faded in the translation.

Saturday,