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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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*Sport that wrinkled care derides,
 And laughter holding both his sides.
 Come, and trip it as you go,
 On the light fantastick toe,
 And in thy right hand lead with thee
 The mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty;
 And if I give thee honour due,
 Mirth, admit me of thy crue,
 To live with her, and live with thee,
 In unreprieved pleasures free.*

N^o 251. *Tuesday, December 18.*

---- *Linguae centum sunt, oraque centum,
 Ferrea vox.* ----- Virg.

THERE is nothing which more astonishes a foreigner and frights a country Squire, than the *Cries of London*. My good friend Sir ROGER often declares that he cannot get them out of his head, or go to sleep for them, the first week that he is in town. On the contrary, WILL. HONEYCOMB calls them the *Ramage de la Ville*, and prefers them to the sounds of larks and nightingales, with all the musick of the fields and woods. I have lately received a letter from some very odd fellow upon this subject, which I shall leave with my Reader, without saying any thing further of it.

SIR,

“ I Am a man out of all business, and would willingly turn my head to any
 “ thing for an honest livelihood. I have invented several projects
 “ for raising many millions of money without burthening the Subject,
 “ but I cannot get the Parliament to listen to me, who look upon me,
 “ forsooth, as a crack and a projector; so that despairing to enrich either
 “ my self or my country by this publick-spiritedness, I would make some
 “ pro-

“ propofals to you relating to a defign which I have very much at heart,
 “ and which may procure me an handsome fubfiftance, if you will be
 “ pleafed to recommend it to the cities of *London* and *Westminfter*.

“ The poft I would aim at is to be Comptroller-general of the
 “ *London* Cries, which are at prefent under no manner of rules or di-
 “ fcipline. I think I am pretty well qualified for this place, as being a
 “ man of very ftrong lungs, of great infight into all the branches of our
 “ *British* trades and manufactures, and of a competent skill in mufick.

“ The Cries of *London* may be divided into vocal and inftrumental.
 “ As for the latter, they are at prefent under a very great diforder. A
 “ Freeman of *London* has the privilege of difturbng a whole ftreet for
 “ an hour together, with the twanking of a brafs-kettle or a frying-pan.
 “ The Watchman’s thump at midnight startles us in our beds, as much
 “ as the breaking in of a thief. The Sowgelder’s horn has indeed some-
 “ thing mufical in it, but this is feldom heard within the liberties. I
 “ would therefore propofe, that no inftrument of this nature fhould be
 “ made ufe of, which I have not tuned and licenfed, after having care-
 “ fully examined in what manner it may affect the ears of her Majefty’s
 “ liege fubjects.

“ Vocal Cries are of a much larger extent, and indeed fo full of in-
 “ congruities and barbarifms, that we appear a diftracted city to foreign-
 “ ers, who do not comprehend the meaning of fuch enormous outcries.
 “ Milk is generally fold in a note above *Ela*, and in founds fo exceed-
 “ ing fhriU, that it often fets our teeth on edge. The Chimney-swee-
 “ per is confined to no certain pitch; he fometimes utters himfelf in
 “ the deepeft bafe, and fometimes in the fharpelt treble; fometimes in
 “ the higheft, and fometimes in the loweft note of the Gamut. The
 “ fame obfervation might be made on the retailers of Small-coal, not to
 “ mention broken glaffes or brick-duft. In thefe therefore, and the like
 “ cafes, it fhould be my care to fweeten and mellow the voices of thefe
 “ itinerant tradefmen, before they make their appearance in our ftreets,
 “ as alfo to accommodate their cries to their refpective wares; and to
 “ take care in particular that thofe may not make the moft noife who
 “ have the leaft to fell, which is very obfervable in the venders of Card-
 “ matches, to whom I cannot but apply that old proverb of *Much cry*
 “ *but little wool*.

“ Some of thefe laft-mentioned Muficians are fo very loud in the fale
 “ of thefe trifling manufactures, that an honeft fplenetick Gentleman, of
 “ my acquaintance bargained with one of them never to come into the

“ free

“ street where he lived: but what was the effect of this contract? Why,
 “ the whole tribe of Cardmatch-makers which frequent the quarter,
 “ passed by his door the very next day, in hopes of being bought off
 “ after the same manner.

“ It is another great imperfection in our *London Cries*, that there is
 “ no just time nor measure observed in them. Our news should indeed
 “ be published in a very quick time, because it is a commodity that will
 “ not keep cold. It should not however be cried with the same preci-
 “ pitation as *Fire*: yet this is generally the case: a bloody battle alarms
 “ the town from one end to another in an instant. Every motion of the
 “ *French* is published in so great a hurry, that one would think the ene-
 “ my were at our gates. This likewise I would take upon me to regu-
 “ late in such a manner, that there should be some distinction made be-
 “ tween the spreading of a victory, a march, or an incampment, a *Dutch*,
 “ a *Portugal*, or a *Spanish Mail*. Nor must I omit under this head,
 “ those excessive alarms with which several boisterous rusticks infest our
 “ streets in Turnip-season; and which are more inexcusable, because these
 “ are wares which are in no danger of cooling upon their hands.

“ There are others who affect a very slow time, and are in my opinion
 “ much more tunable than the former; the Cooper in particular swells
 “ his last note in an hollow voice, that is not without its harmony; nor
 “ can I forbear being inspired with a most agreeable melancholy, when
 “ I hear that sad and solemn air with which the publick is very often
 “ asked, if they have any Chairs to mend? Your own memory may sug-
 “ gest to you many other lamentable ditties of the same nature, in which
 “ the musick is wonderfully languishing and melodious.

“ I am always pleased with that particular time of the year which is
 “ proper for the pickling of Dill and Cucumbers; but, alas, this Cry,
 “ like the song of the Nightingale, is not heard above two months. It
 “ would therefore be worth while, to consider whether the same Air
 “ might not in some cases be adapted to other words.

“ It might likewise deserve our most serious consideration, how far,
 “ in a well-regulated city, those humourists are to be tolerated, who, not
 “ contented with the traditional cries of their forefathers, have invented
 “ particular songs and tunes of their own: such as was, not many years
 “ since, the Pastry-man, commonly known by the name of the Colly-
 “ molly-puff; and such as is at this day the vender of powder and wash-
 “ balls, who, if I am rightly informed, goes under the name of *Powder-*
 “ *Watt*.

“ I must not here omit one particular absurdity which runs through
 “ this whole vociferous generation, and which renders their Cries very
 “ often not only incommodious, but altogether useles to the publick; I
 “ mean that idle accomplishment which they all of them aim at, of crying
 “ so as not to be understood. Whether or no they have learned this
 “ from several of our affected singers, I will not take upon me to say;
 “ but most certain it is, that people know the wares they deal in rather
 “ by their tunes than by their words; insomuch that I have sometimes
 “ seen a country boy run out to buy apples of a Bellows-mender, and
 “ Ginger-bread from a grinder of knives and scissars. Nay, so strangely
 “ infatuated are some very eminent artists of this particular grace in a
 “ Cry, that none but their acquaintance are able to guess at their pro-
 “ fession; for who else can know, that *Work if I had it*, should be the
 “ signification of a Corn-cutter?

“ Forasmuch therefore as persons of this rank are seldom men of ge-
 “ nius or capacity, I think it would be very proper that some man of
 “ good sense and sound judgment should preside over these publick cries,
 “ who should permit none to lift up their voices in our streets, that have
 “ not tuneable throats, and are not only able to overcome the noise of
 “ the croud, and the rattling of coaches, but also to vend their respec-
 “ tive merchandizes in apt phrases, and in the most distinct and agreea-
 “ ble sounds. I do therefore humbly recommend my self as a person
 “ rightly qualified for this post; and if I meet with fitting encourage-
 “ ment, shall communicate some other projects which I have by me, that
 “ may no less conduce to the emolument of the publick.

I am, SIR, &c.

Ralph Crotchet.



Thursday,