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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 255. Saturday, December 22.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621)

of the stone is admirably described in the numbers of these verses; as in the four first it is heaved up by several *Spondees* intermixed with proper breathing-places, and at last trundles down in a continued line of *Dactyls*.

Καὶ μὴν Σίσυρον εἰσείδον, κρατέρ' ἄλγε' ἔχοντα,
 Λᾶαν βασάζοντα πελώριον ἀμφοτέρῃσιν.
 *Ἦτοι δ' ἄλλ', σκελεπὶ μὲν ἔχει χερσὶν τε ποσσὶν τε,
 Λᾶαν ἀνω ἄθεσε ποτὶ λόρον. ἀλλ' ὅτε μέλλοι
 *Ἀκρον ὑπερβαλεῖν, τίτ' ἀποσρέψασκε κραταῖς
 Ἄστυς, ἔπειτα πῶδ' ὀνδε κυλινδέσθω λᾶας ἀναυδής.

It would be endless to quote verses out of *Virgil* which have this particular kind of beauty in the numbers; but I may take an occasion in a future paper to shew several of them which have escaped the observation of others.

I cannot conclude this paper without taking notice, that we have three poems in our tongue, which are of the same nature, and each of them a master-piece in its kind; the Essay on translated verse, the Essay on the art of poetry, and the Essay upon criticism.

N^o 255. Saturday, December 22.

*Laudis amore tumes? sunt certa piacula quæ te
 Ter pure lecto poterunt recreare libello.*

Hor.

THE Soul, considered abstractedly from its passions, is of a remiss and sedentary nature, slow in its resolves, and languishing in its executions. The use therefore of the passions is to stir it up, and put it upon action, to awaken the understanding, to enforce the will, and to make the whole man more vigorous and attentive in the prosecution of his designs. As this is the end of the passions in general, so it is particularly of Ambition, which pushes the soul to such actions as are apt to procure honour and reputation to the Actor. But if we carry our reflections higher, we may discover further ends of Providence in implanting this passion in mankind. It

It was necessary for the world, that arts should be invented and improved, books written and transmitted to posterity, nations conquered and civilized: now since the proper and genuine motives to these and the like great actions, would only influence virtuous minds; there would be but small improvements in the world, were there not some common principle of action working equally with all men. And such a principle is Ambition, or a desire of fame, by which great endowments are not suffered to lye idle and useles to the public, and many vicious men over-reached, as it were, and engaged contrary to their natural inclinations in a glorious and laudable course of action. For we may further observe, that men of the greatest abilities are most fired with ambition: and that, on the contrary, mean and narrow minds are the least actuated by it; whether it be that a man's sense of his own incapacities makes him despair of coming at fame, or that he has not enough range of thought to look out for any good which does not more immediately relate to his interest or convenience, or that Providence, in the very frame of his soul, would not subject him to such a passion as would be useles to the world, and a torment to himself.

Were not this desire of fame very strong, the difficulty of obtaining it, and the danger of losing it when obtained, would be sufficient to deter a man from so vain a pursuit.

How few are there who are furnished with abilities sufficient to recommend their actions to the admiration of the world, and to distinguish themselves from the rest of mankind? Providence for the most part sets us upon a level, and observes a kind of proportion in its dispensations towards us. If it renders us perfect in one accomplishment, it generally leaves us defective in another, and seems careful rather of preserving every person from being mean and deficient in his qualifications, than of making any single one eminent or extraordinary.

And among those, who are the most richly endowed by nature, and accomplished by their own industry, how few are there whose virtues are not obscured by the ignorance, prejudice or envy of their beholders? Some men cannot discern between a noble and a mean action. Others are apt to attribute them to some false end or intention; and others purposely misrepresent or put a wrong interpretation on them.

But the more to enforce this consideration, we may observe that those are generally most unsuccessful in their pursuit after fame, who are most desirous of obtaining it. It is *Salust's* remark upon *Cato*, that the less he coveted glory, the more he acquired it.

Mén.

Men take an ill-natured pleasure in crossing our inclinations, and disappointing us in what our hearts are most set upon. When therefore they have discovered the passionate desire of fame in the ambitious man, (as no temper of mind is more apt to shew it self) they become sparing and reserved in their commendations, they envy him the satisfaction of an applause, and look on their praises rather as a kindness done to his person, than as a tribute paid to his merit. Others who are free from this natural perverseness of temper, grow wary in their praises of one, who sets too great a value on them, lest they should raise him too high in his own imagination, and by consequence remove him to a greater distance from themselves.

But further, this desire of Fame naturally betrays the ambitious man into such indecencies as are a lessening to his reputation. He is still afraid lest any of his actions should be thrown away in private, lest his deserts should be concealed from the notice of the world, or receive any disadvantage from the reports which others make of them. This often sets him on empty boasts and ostentations of himself, and betrays him into vain fantastical recitals of his own performances: his discourse generally leans one way, and what-ever is the subject of it, tends obliquely either to the detracting from others, or the extolling of himself. Vanity is the natural weakness of an ambitious man, which exposes him to the secret scorn and derision of those he converses with, and ruins the character he is so industrious to advance by it. For though his actions are never so glorious, they lose their lustre when they are drawn at large, and set to show by his own hand; and as the world is more apt to find fault than to commend, the boast will probably be censured when the great action that occasioned it is forgotten.

Besides, this very desire of Fame is looked on as a meanness and an imperfection in the greatest character. A solid and substantial greatness of soul looks down with a generous neglect on the censures and applauses of the multitude, and places a man beyond the little noise and strife of tongues. Accordingly we find in our selves a secret awe and veneration for the character of one who moves above us in a regular and illustrious course of virtue, without any regard to our good or ill opinions of him, to our reproaches or commendations. As on the contrary, it is usual for us, when we would take off from the fame and reputation of an action, to ascribe it to vain-glory, and a desire of fame in the actor. Nor is this common judgment and opinion of mankind ill founded: for certainly it denotes no great bravery of mind to be worked up to any noble
action

action by so selfish a motive, and to do that out of a desire of Fame, which we could not be prompted to by a disinterested love to mankind, or by a generous passion for the glory of him that made us.

Thus is Fame a thing difficult to be obtained by all, but particularly by those who thirst after it, since most men have so much either of ill-nature or of wariness, as not to gratify and sooth the vanity of the ambitious man; and since this very thirst after Fame naturally betrays him into such indecencies as are a lessening to his reputation, and is it self looked upon as a weakness in the greatest characters.

In the next place, Fame is easily lost, and as difficult to be preserved as it was at first to be acquired. But this I shall make the subject of a following paper.

N° 256.

Monday, December 24.

Φήμι γὰρ τε κακὴ πέλεται κέρη μὲν αἰεταί
 Ρεῖα μάλ', ἀργαλήν δ' εἶρειν

Hef.

THERE are many passions and tempers of mind which naturally dispose us to depress and vilifie the merit of one rising in the esteem of mankind. All those who made their entrance into the world with the same advantages, and were once looked on as his equals, are apt to think the fame of his merits a reflection on their own indeferts; and will therefore take care to reproach him with the scandal of some past action, or derogate from the worth of the present, that they may still keep him on the same level with themselves. The like kind of consideration often stirs up the envy of such as were once his superiors, who think it a detraction from their merit to see another get ground upon them and overtake them in the pursuits of glory; and will therefore endeavour to sink his reputation, that they may the better preserve their own. Those who were once his equals, envy and defame him, because they now see him their superior; and those who were once his superiors, because they look upon him as their equal.

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