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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 303. Saturday, February 16.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621](#)

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*volet hæc sub luce videri,
Judicis argutum quæ non formidat acumen.* Hor.

I Have seen in the works of a modern Philosopher, a map of the Spots in the Sun. My last paper of the Faults and Blemishes in *Milton's Paradise Lost*, may be considered as a piece of the same nature. To pursue the Allusion: As it is observed, that among the bright parts of the luminous body above-mentioned, there are some which glow more intensely, and dart a stronger light than others; so, notwithstanding I have already shewn *Milton's Poem* to be very beautiful in general, I shall now proceed to take notice of such Beauties as appear to be more exquisite than the rest. *Milton* has proposed the Subject of his Poem in the following verses.

*Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought Death into the world, and all our woe;
With loss of Eden, 'till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat,
Sing Heav'ny Muse —*

These lines are perhaps as plain, simple and unadorned as any of the whole Poem, in which particular the Author has conformed himself to the example of *Homer*, and the precept of *Horace*.

His Invocation to a work which turns in a great measure upon the Creation of the world, is very properly made to the Muse who inspired *Moses* in those books from whence our Author drew his subject, and to the Holy Spirit who is therein represented as operating after a particular manner in the first production of Nature. This whole Exordium rises very happily into noble Language and Sentiment, as I think the Transition to the Fable is exquisitely beautiful and natural.

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The

Vid.
Hesiod. The Nine-days astonishment, in which the Angels lay entranced after their dreadful overthrow and fall from heaven, before they could recover either the use of thought or speech, is a noble *Circumstance*, and very finely imagined. The division of hell into Seas of Fire, and into firm Ground impregnated with the same furious Element, with that particular circumstance of the Exclusion of *Hope* from those infernal regions, are instances of the same great and fruitful Invention.

The Thoughts in the first speech and description of *Satan*, who is one of the principal Actors in this poem, are wonderfully proper to give us a full Idea of him. His Pride, Envy and Revenge, Obstinacy, Despair and Impenitence, are all of them very artfully interwoven. In short, his first speech is a Complication of all those Passions which discover themselves separately in several other of his speeches in the poem. The whole Part of this great enemy of mankind is filled with such Incidents as are very apt to raise and terrify the Reader's Imagination. Of this nature, in the book now before us, is his being the first that awakens out of the general Trance, with his Posture on the burning Lake, his Rising from it, and the description of his Shield and Spear.

Thus Satan talking to his nearest mate;
With head up-lift above the wave, and eyes
That sparkling blazed, his other parts beside
Prone on the flood, extended long and large,
Lay floating many a rood —
Forthwith upright he rears from off the pool
His mighty Stature; on each hand the flames
Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and rowld
In billows leave i' th' mid' st a horrid vale.
Then with expanded wings he steers his flight
Aloft, incumbent on the dusky air
That felt unusual weight —
His pondrous Shield,
Ethereal temper, massive, large and round,
Behind him cast; the broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the Moon, whose orb
Thro' Optic glass the Tuscan Artists view
At Ev'ning from the top of Fesole,
Or in Valdarno, to descry new Lands,
Rivers or mountains in her spotty Globe.

His

*His Spear, to equal which the tallest Pine
Hewn on Norwegian hills, to be the Mast
Of some great Ammiral, were but a wand,
He walk'd with to support uneasy steps
Over the burning Marle—*

To which we may add his Call to the fallen Angels that lay plunged and stupified in the Sea of Fire.

*He call'd so loud, that all the hollow deep
Of hell resounded—*

But there is no single passage in the whole poem worked up to a greater Sublimity, than that wherein his Person is described in those celebrated lines :

*— He, above the rest
In shape and gesture proudly eminent
Stood like a Tow'r, &c.*

His Sentiments are every way answerable to his Character, and suitable to a created Being of the most exalted and depraved nature. Such is that in which he takes possession of his place of torments.

*— Hail Horrors, hail
Infernall world ! and thou profoundest hell
Receive thy new Possessour : one who brings
A mind not to be changed by place or time.*

And afterwards,

*— Here at least
We shall be Free ; th' Almighty hath not built
Here for his Envy ; will not drive us hence :
Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
To reign is worth ambition, tho' in hell :
Better to reign in hell, than serve in heaven.*

Amidst those Impieties which this enraged Spirit utters in other places of the Poem, the Author has taken care to introduce none that is not big with Absurdity, and incapable of shocking a religious Reader ; his words, as the Poet describes them, bearing only a *Semblance of worth, not Substance*. He is likewise with great art described as owning his Adversary to be Almighty. Whatever perverse interpretation he puts on the Justice, Mercy,

Mercy, and other attributes of the Supreme Being, he frequently confesses his Omnipotence, that being the perfection he was forced to allow him, and the only consideration which could support his Pride under the shame of his defeat.

Nor must I here omit that beautiful circumstance of his bursting out in tears, upon his survey of those innumerable spirits whom he had involved in the same guilt and ruin with himself.

— *He now prepared*

*To speak; whereat their doubled ranks they bend
From wing to wing, and half enclose him round
With all his peers: attention held them mute.
Thrice he assay'd, and thrice in spite of scorn
Tears, such as Angels weep, burst forth—*

The catalogue of evil spirits has abundance of learning in it, and a very agreeable turn of Poetry, which rises in a great measure from its describing the places where they were worshipped, by those beautiful marks of rivers, so frequent among the ancient Poets. The Author had doubtless in this place Homer's catalogue of ships, and Virgil's list of warriors in his view. The characters of *Moloch* and *Belial* prepare the Reader's mind for their respective speeches and behaviour in the second and sixth book. The account of *Thammuz* is finely romantic, and suitable to what we read among the ancients of the worship which was paid to that idol.

— *Thammuz came next behind,*

*Whose annual wound in Lebanon allur'd
The Syrian damsels to lament his fate
In am'rous ditties all a summer's day,
While smooth Adonis from his native rock
Ran purple to the sea, suppos'd with blood
Of Thammuz yearly wounded: the love-tale
Infected Sion's daughters with like heat,
Whose wanton passions in the sacred porch
Ezekiel saw, when by the Vision led
His eye survey'd the dark idolatries
Of alienated Judah.—*

The Reader will pardon me if I insert as a note on this beautiful passage, the account given us by the late ingenious Mr. Maundrell of this ancient piece of worship, and probably the first occasion of such a super-

superstition. " We came to a fair large river —— doubtless the ancient river *Adonis*, so famous for the idolatrous rites performed here in lamentation of *Adonis*. We had the fortune to see what may be supposed to be the occasion of that opinion which *Lucian* relates, concerning this river, *viz.* That this stream, at certain seasons of the year, especially about the feast of *Adonis*, is of a bloody colour; which the heathens looked upon as proceeding from a kind of sympathy in the river for the death of *Adonis*, who was killed by a wild boar in the mountains, out of which this stream rises. Something like this we saw actually come to pass; for the water was stained to a surprising redness; and, as we observed in travelling, had discoloured the sea a great way into a reddish hue, occasioned doubtless by a sort of Minium, or red earth, washed into the river by the violence of the rain, and not by any stain from *Adonis's* blood.

The passage in the catalogue, explaining the manner how spirits transform themselves by contraction, or enlargement of their dimensions, is introduced with great judgment, to make way for several surprising accidents in the sequel of the Poem. There follows one, at the very end of the first book, which is what the French Critics call *marvellous*, but at the same time *probable* by reason of the passage last mentioned. As soon as the infernal Palace is finished, we are told the multitude and rabble of spirits immediately shrunk themselves into a small compass, that there might be room for such a numberless assembly in this capacious hall. But it is the Poet's refinement upon this thought, which I most admire, and which is indeed very noble in it self. For he tells us, that notwithstanding the vulgar, among the fallen spirits, contracted their forms, those of the first rank and dignity still preserved their natural dimensions.

*Thus incorporeal Spirits to smalleſt forms
Reduc'd their ſhapes immenſe, and were at large
Though without number ſtill amideſt the hall
Of that infernal Court. But far within,
And in their own diſtances like themſelves,
The great ſeraphic Lords and Cherubim,
In cloſe receſſ and ſecret conclave ſate,
A thouſand Demy-gods on golden ſeats,
Frequent and full ——*

The

The character of *Mammon*, and the description of the *Pandæmonium*, are full of beauties.

There are several other strokes in the first book wonderfully poetical, and instances of that Sublime genius so peculiar to the Author. Such is the description of *Azazel's* stature, and of the infernal standard, which he unfurls; as also of that ghastly light, by which the fiends appear to one another in their place of torments.

*The seat of desolation, void of light,
Save what the glimm'ring of those livid flames
Casts pale and dreadful—*

The shout of the whole host of fallen Angels when drawn up in battle array:

*— The universal host up sent
A shout that tore hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.*

The review, which the leader makes of his infernal army:

*— He thro' the armed files
Darts his experienc'd eye, and soon traverse
The whole battalion views their order due,
Their visages and stature as of gods,
Their number last he sums, and now his heart
Distends with pride, and hard'ning in his strength
Glories —*

The flash of light, which appeared upon the drawing of their Swords;

*He spake: and to confirm his words outflew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thigh
Of mighty Cherubim; the sudden blaze.
Far round illumin'd Hell —*

The sudden production of the *Pandæmonium*;

*Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet.*

The artificial illuminations made in it.

— From

— From th' arched roof
 Pendent by subtle Magic, many a row
 Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
 With Naphtha and Asphaltus, yielded light
 As from a sky. —

There are also several noble Similes and Allusions in the first book of *Paradise Lost*. And here I must observe, that when *Milton* alludes either to things or persons, he never quits his Simile till it rises to some very great Idea, which is often foreign to the occasion that gave birth to it. The resemblance does not, perhaps, last above a line or two, but the Poet runs on with the hint, till he has raised out of it some glorious Image or Sentiment, proper to inflame the mind of the Reader, and to give it that sublime kind of entertainment, which is suitable to the nature of an Heroic Poem. Those, who are acquainted with *Homer's* and *Virgil's* way of writing, cannot but be pleased with this kind of structure in *Milton's* Similitudes. I am the more particular on this head, because ignorant Readers, who have formed their taste upon the quaint Similes, and little turns of wit, which are so much in vogue among modern Poets, cannot relish these beauties which are of a much higher nature, and are therefore apt to censure *Milton's* comparisons, in which they do not see any surprising points of likeness. Monsieur *Perrault* was a man of this vitiated relish, and for that very reason has endeavoured to turn into ridicule several of *Homer's* Similitudes, which he calls *Comparaisons à longue queue, Long-tail'd comparisons*. I shall conclude this paper on the first book of *Milton* with the answer which Monsieur *Boileau* makes to *Perrault* on this occasion; “ Comparisons, says he, in “ Odes and Epic Poems are not introduced only to illustrate and embellish the discourse, but to amuse and relax the mind of the Reader, “ by frequently disengaging him from too painful an attention to the “ principal subject, and by leading him into other agreeable images. *Homer*, says he, excelled in this particular, whose Comparisons abound “ with such images of nature as are proper to relieve and diversifie his “ subjects. He continually instructs the Reader, and makes him take “ notice, even in objects which are every day before our eyes, of such “ circumstances as we should not otherwise have observed. To this he “ adds, as a maxim universally acknowledged, that it is not necessary in “ Poetry for the Points of the comparison to correspond with one another exactly, but that a general resemblance is sufficient, and that too “ much

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" much nicety in this particular favours of the Rhetorician and Epigrammatist.

In short, if we look into the conduct of *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Milton*, as the great Fable is the soul of each Poem, so to give their works an agreeable variety, their Episodes are so many short Fables, and their Similes so many short Episodes; to which you may add if you please, that their Metaphors are so many short Similes. If the Reader considers the Comparisons in the first book of *Milton*, of the Sun in an eclipse, of the sleeping *Leviathan*, of the Bees swarming about the hive, of the Fairy dance, in the view wherein I have placed them, he will easily discover the great beauties that are in each of those passages.

N° 309. Saturday, February 23.

*Di, quibus imperium est animarum, umbræque silentes,
Et Chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte silentia late;
Sit mihi fas audita loqui! sit numine vestro
Pandere res alta terra et caligine mersas.*

Virg.

I have before observed in general, that the persons whom *Milton* introduces into his Poem always discover such sentiments and behaviour, as are in a peculiar manner conformable to their respective characters. Every circumstance in their speeches and actions, is with great justness and delicacy adapted to the persons who speak and act. As the Poet very much excels in this consistency of his characters, I shall beg leave to consider several passages of the second book in this light. That superior greatness, and mock-majesty, which is ascribed to the Prince of the fallen Angels, is admirably preserved in the beginning of this book. His opening and closing the debate; his taking on himself that great enterprize at the thought of which the whole infernal assembly trembled; his encountering the hideous phantom who guarded the gates of Hell, and appeared to him in all his terrors; are instances of that proud and daring mind which could not brook submission even to Omnipotence.

Satan