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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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“ much nicety in this particular favours of the Rhetorician and Epigram-
“ matist.

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.

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*Dī, 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

*Satan was now at hand, and from his seat
The monster moving onward came as fast
With horrid strides, Hell trembled as he strode,
Th' undaunted Fiend what this might be admir'd,
Admir'd, not fear'd —*

The same boldness and intrepidity of behaviour discovers it self in the several adventures, which he meets with during his passage through the regions of unformed matter, and particularly in his address to those tremendous powers who are described as presiding over it.

The part of *Moloch* is likewise in all its circumstances full of that fire and fury, which distinguish this spirit from the rest of the fallen Angels. He is described in the first book as besmeared with the blood of humane sacrifices, and delighted with the tears of Parents and the cries of Children. In the second book he is marked out as the fiercest spirit that fought in Heaven; and if we consider the figure which he makes in the sixth book, where the battel of the Angels is described, we find it every way answerable to the same furious enraged Character.

*— Where the might of Gabriel fought,
And with fierce ensigns pierc'd the deep array
Of Moloch, furious King, who him defy'd,
And at his chariot-wheels to drag him bound
Threaten'd, nor from the Holy one of heav'n
Refrain'd his tongue blasphemous; but anon
Down cloven to the waste, with shatter'd arms
And uncouth pain fled bellowing. —*

It may be worth while to observe, that *Milton* has represented this violent impetuous Spirit, who is hurried on by such precipitate passions, as the first that rises in that assembly, to give his opinion upon their present posture of affairs. Accordingly he declares himself abruptly for war, and appears incensed at his companions, for losing so much time as even to deliberate upon it. All his sentiments are rash, audacious and desperate. Such is that of arming themselves with tortures, and turning their punishments upon him who inflicted them.

*— No, let us rather chuse,
Arm'd with Hell-flames and fury, all at once
O'er Heav'n's high tow'rs to force resistless way,
Turning our tortures into horrid arms*

Q 9 2

Against

*Against the tort'rer; when to meet the noise
Of his almighty engine he shall hear
Infernal Thunder, and for Lightning see
Black fire and horror shot with equal rage
Among his Angels; and his throne it self
Mixt with Tartarean sulphur, and strange fire,
His own invented torments——*

His preferring annihilation to shame or misery, is also highly suitable to his character; as the comfort he draws from their disturbing the peace of Heaven, that if it be not victory, it is revenge, is a sentiment truly diabolical, and becoming the bitterness of this implacable Spirit.

Belial is described, in the first book, as the Idol of the lewd and luxurious. He is in the second book, pursuant to that description, characterised as timorous and slothful; and if we look into the sixth book we find him celebrated in the battle of Angels for nothing but that scoffing speech which he makes to *Satan*, on their supposed advantage over the enemy. As his appearance is uniform, and of a piece in these three several views, we find his Sentiments in the infernal Assembly every way conformable to his Character. Such are his apprehensions of a second battle, his horrors of annihilation, his preferring to be miserable rather than *not to be*. I need not observe, that the contrast of thought in this speech, and that which precedes it, gives an agreeable variety to the debate.

Mammon's Character is so fully drawn in the first book, that the Poet adds nothing to it in the second. We were before told, that he was the first who taught mankind to ransack the earth for gold and silver, and that he was the architect of *Pandemonium*, or the infernal palace, where the evil spirits were to meet in council. His speech in this book is every where suitable to so depraved a Character. How proper is that reflection, of their being unable to taste the happiness of Heaven were they actually there, in the mouth of one, who while he was in Heaven is said to have had his mind dazzled with the outward pomps and glories of the place, and to have been more intent on the riches of the pavement, than on the beatific vision. I shall also leave the Reader to judge how agreeable the following Sentiments are to the same Character.

———*This deep world
Of darkness do we dread? how oft amidst
Thick cloud and dark doth Heav'ns all-ruling Sire*

Chuse

*Chuse to reside, his Glory unobscured,
And with the Majesty of darkness round
Covers his throne; from whence deep Thunders roar
Mustering their rage, and Heav'n resembles Hell?
As he our darkness, cannot we his light
Imitate when we please? this desert Soil
Wants not her hidden lustre, gems and gold;
Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise
Magnificence, and what can Heaven shew more?*

Belzebub, who is reckoned the second in dignity that fell, and is in the first book the second that awakens out of the trance, and confers with *Satan* upon the situation of their affairs, maintains his rank in the book now before us. There is a wonderful Majesty described in his rising up to speak. He acts as a kind of moderator between the two opposite parties, and proposes a third undertaking, which the whole assembly gives into. The motion he makes of detaching one of their body in search of a new world is grounded upon a project devised by *Satan*, and cursorily proposed by him in the following lines of the first Book.

*Space may produce New worlds, whereof so rise
There went a fame in Heaven, that he ere long
Intended to create, and therein plant
A generation, whom his choice regard
Should favour equal to the sons of Heav'n:
Thither, if but to pry, shall be perhaps
Our first eruption, thither or elsewhere:
For this infernal Pit shall never hold
Celestial Spirits in bondage, nor th' Abyss
Long under darkness cover. But these thoughts
Full counsel must mature:——*

It is on this project that *Belzebub* grounds his proposal.

——— *What if we find
Some easier enterprize? There is a place
(If ancient and prophetic fame in Heav'n
Err not) another world, the happy seat
Of some new race call'd MAN, about this time
To be created like to us, though less
In power and excellence, but favour'd more*

Of

*Of him who rules above; so was his will
Pronounc'd among the Gods, and by an oath,
That shook Heav'n's whole circumference, confirm'd.*

The Reader may observe how just it was, not to omit in the first book the project upon which the whole Poem turns: as also that the Prince of the fallen Angels was the only proper person to give it birth, and that he next to him in dignity was the fittest to support it.

There is besides, I think, something wonderfully beautiful, and very apt to affect the Reader's imagination, in this antient prophecy or report in Heaven, concerning the Creation of man. Nothing could shew more the dignity of the species, than this tradition which ran of them before their existence. They are represented to have been the Talk of Heaven, before they were created. *Virgil*, in compliment to the Roman Commonwealth, makes the Heroes of it appear in their state of pre-existence; but *Milton* does a far greater honour to mankind in general, as he gives us a glimpse of them even before they are in Being.

The rising of this great assembly is described in a very sublime and poetical manner.

*Their rising all at once was as the sound
Of Thunder heard remote——*

The Diversions of the fallen Angels, with the particular account of their place of habitation, are described with great pregnancy of thought, and copiousness of invention. The Diversions are every way suitable to Beings who had nothing left them but strength and knowledge misapplied. Such are their contentions at the race, and in feats of arms, with their entertainment in the following lines.

*Others with vast Typhæan rage more fell
Rend up both rocks and hills, and ride the air
In whirlwind; Hell scarce holds the wild uproar.*

Their Music is employed in celebrating their own criminal exploits, and their Discourse in founding the unfathomable depths of fate, free-will, and fore-knowledge.

The several circumstances in the description of Hell are finely imagined; as the four rivers which disgorge themselves into the sea of fire, the extremes of cold and heat, and the river of oblivion. The monstrous animals produced in that infernal world are represented by a single line, which gives us a more horrid Idea of them, than a much longer description would have done.

——— *Nature*

— Nature breeds,
 Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things,
 Abominable, inutterable, and worse
 Than Fables yet have feign'd, or Fear conceiv'd,
 Gorgons, and Hydra's, and Chimera's dire.

This Episode of the fallen Spirits, and their place of habitation, comes in very happily to unbend the mind of the Reader from its attention to the debate. An ordinary Poet would indeed have spun out so many circumstances to a great length, and by that means have weakned, instead of illustrated, the principal Fable.

The flight of Satan to the gates of hell is finely imagined.

I have already declared my opinion of the Allegory concerning *Sin* and *Death*, which is however a very finished Piece in its kind, when it is not considered as a part of an Epic Poem. The Genealogy of the several persons is contrived with great delicacy. *Sin* is the daughter of *Satan*, and *Death* the off-spring of *Sin*. The incestuous mixture between *Sin* and *Death* produces those Monsters and Hell-hounds which from time to time enter into their Mother, and tear the bowels of her who gave them birth. These are the Terrors of an evil Conscience, and the proper fruits of *Sin*, which naturally rise from the apprehensions of *Death*. This last beautiful Moral is, I think, clearly intimated in the speech of *Sin*, where complaining of this her dreadful Issue, she adds,

Before mine eyes in opposition sits
 Grim *Death* thy son and foe, who sets them on.
 And me his Parent would full soon devour
 For want of other prey, but that he knows
 His end with mine involv'd—

I need not mention to the Reader the beautiful Circumstance in the last part of this quotation. He will likewise observe how naturally the three persons concerned in this Allegory are tempted by one common interest to enter into a confederacy together, and how properly *Sin* is made the Portress of hell, and the only Being that can open the gates to that world of Tortures.

The descriptive part of this Allegory is likewise very strong, and full of sublime Ideas. The figure of *Death*, the Regal Crown upon his head, his menace of *Satan*, his advancing to the combat, the Outcry at his birth, are circumstances too noble to be past over in silence, and extremely

extreamly fuitable to this *King of Terrors*. I need not mention the justness of thought which is observed in the Generation of these several symbolical persons, that *Sin* was produced upon the first Revolt of *Satan*, that *Death* appeared soon after he was cast into hell, and that the Terrors of Conscience were conceived at the gate of this place of torments. The description of the Gates is very poetical, as the opening of them is full of *Milton's Spirit*.

— On a sudden open fly
 With impetuous recoil and jarring sound
 Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
 Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
 Of Erebus. She open'd, but to shut
 Excell'd her power; the Gates wide open stood,
 That with extended wings a banner'd host
 Under spread ensigns marching might pass through
 With horse and chariots rank'd in loose array;
 So wide they stood, and like a furnace mouth
 Cast forth redounding smoak and ruddy flame.

In *Satan's* voyage through the *Chaos*, there are several imaginary persons described, as residing in that immense waste of Matter. This may perhaps be conformable to the Taste of those Critics who are pleas'd with nothing in a Poet which has not Life and Manners ascribed to it; but for my own part I am pleas'd most with those passages in this description which carry in them a greater measure of probability, and are such as might possibly have happened. Of this kind is his first mounting in the *Smoak*, that rises from the infernal Pit, his falling into a cloud of *Nitre*, and the like combustible materials, that by their explosion still hurried him forward in his voyage; his springing upward like a pyramid of fire, with his laborious passage through that Confusion of Elements, which the Poet calls

The Womb of Nature and perhaps her Grave.

The glimmering Light which shot into the *Chaos* from the utmost verge of the Creation, with the distant discovery of the Earth that hung close by the Moon, are wonderfully beautiful and poetical.

Saturday,