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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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We have another view of our first Parents in their evening discourses, which is full of pleasing images and sentiments suitable to their condition and characters. The speech of *Eve*, in particular, is dressed up in such a soft and natural turn of words and sentiments, as cannot be sufficiently admired.

I shall close my reflections upon this book, with observing the masterly transition which the Poet makes to their evening worship, in the following lines.

*Thus at their shady lodge arriv'd, both stood,
Both turn'd, and under open sky ador'd
The God that made both sky, air, earth and heav'n,
Which they beheld, the Moon's resplendent globe
And starry Pole: Thou also mad'st the night,
Maker omnipotent, and thou the day, &c.*

Most of the modern heroic Poets have imitated the Ancients, in beginning a speech without premising, that the person said thus or thus; but as it is easie to imitate the Ancients in the omission of two or three words, it requires judgment to do it in such a manner as they shall not be missed, and that the speech may begin naturally without them. There is a fine instance of this kind out of *Homer*, in the twenty third Chapter of *Longinus*.

N^o 327. Saturday, March 15.

-----Major rerum mihi nascitur ordo.

Virg.

WE were told in the foregoing book how the evil spirit practised upon *Eve* as she lay asleep, in order to inspire her with thoughts of vanity, pride and ambition. The Author, who shews a wonderful art throughout his whole Poem, in preparing the Reader for the several occurrences that arise in it, founds upon the above-mentioned circumstance the first part of the fifth book. *Adam* upon his awaking finds *Eve* still asleep, with an unusual discomposure in her looks. The posture

sture in which he regards her, is described with a tenderness not to be expressed, as the Whisper with which he awakens her, is the softest that ever was conveyed to a Lover's ear.

*His wonder was to find unawaken'd Eve
With tresses discompos'd, and glowing cheek,
As thro' inquiet rest: he on his side
Leaning half-rai'd, with looks of cordial love,
Hung over her enamour'd, and beheld
Beauty, which whether waking or asleep,
Shot forth peculiar Graces; then with voice
Mild, as when Zephyrus on Flora breathes,
Her hand soft touching, whisper'd thus: Awake
My fairest, my espous'd, my latest found,
Heaven's last best gift, my ever new delight,
Awake, the morning shines, and the fresh field
Calls us, we lose the prime, to mark how spring
Our tended Plants, how blows the Citron grove,
What drops the Myrrh, and what the balmy Reed,
How Nature paints her colours, how the Bee
Sits on the bloom, extracting liquid sweet.
Such whispering wak'd her, but with startled eye
On Adam, whom embracing, thus she spake:
O sole in whom my thoughts find all repose,
My glory, my perfection, glad I see
Thy face, and morn return'd*

I cannot but take notice that *Milton*, in the conference between *Adam* and *Eve*, had his eye very frequently upon the book of *Canticles*, in which there is a noble spirit of eastern Poetry; and very often not unlike what we meet with in *Homer*, who is generally placed near the age of *Solomon*. I think there is no question but the Poet in the preceding speech remember'd those two passages which are spoken on the like occasion, and fill'd with the same pleasing images of Nature.

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my Love, my fair-one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land. The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my Love, my fair-one, and come away.

Come,

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us get up early to the vineyards, let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth.

His preferring the garden of *Eden* to that,

——— *Where the sapient King
Held dalliance with his fair Egyptian spouse,*

shews that the Poet had this delightful scene in his mind.

Eve's Dream is full of those *high conceits engendring pride*, which, we are told, the Devil endeavoured to infill into her. Of this kind is that part of it where she fancies her self awakened by *Adam* in the following beautiful lines.

*Why sleep'st thou Eve? now is the pleasant time,
The cool, the silent, save where silence yields
To the night-warbling bird, that now awake
Tunes sweetest his love-labour'd song; now reigns
Full-orb'd the Moon, and with more pleasing light
Shadowy sets off the face of things: in vain,
If none regard. Heav'n wakes with all his eyes,
Whom to behold but thee, Nature's desire,
In whose sight all things joy, with ravishment,
Attracted by thy beauty still to gaze!*

An injudicious Poet would have made *Adam* talk through the whole work, in such sentiments as these: but flattery and falshood are not the courtship of *Milton's Adam*, and could not be heard by *Eve* in her state of Innocence, excepting only in a Dream produced on purpose to taint her Imagination. Other vain sentiments of the same kind in this relation of her Dream, will be obvious to every reader. Though the Catastrophe of the Poem is finely presaged on this occasion, the particulars of it are so artfully shadowed, that they do not anticipate the story which follows in the ninth book. I shall only add, that though the vision of it self is founded upon truth, the circumstances of it are full of that wildness and inconsistency which are natural to a Dream. *Adam*, conformable to his superior character for wisdom, instructs and comforts *Eve* upon this occasion.

*So cheer'd he his fair spouse, and she was cheer'd,
But silently a gentle tear let fall*

From

From either eye, and wiped them with her hair;
 Two other precious drops that ready stood,
 Each in their crystal sluice, be e'er they fell
 Kiss'd, as the gracious signs of sweet remorse
 And pious awe, that fear'd to have offended.

The morning Hymn is written in imitation of one of those Psalms, where, in the overflowings of gratitude and praise, the Psalmist calls not only upon the Angels, but upon the most conspicuous parts of the inanimate Creation, to join with him in extolling their common Maker. Invocations of this nature fill the mind with glorious ideas of God's works, and awaken that divine enthusiasm, which is so natural to devotion. But if this calling upon the dead parts of Nature, is at all times a proper kind of worship, it was in a particular manner suitable to our first parents, who had the creation fresh upon their minds, and had not seen the various dispensations of Providence, nor consequently could be acquainted with those many topicks of praise which might afford matter to the devotions of their posterity. I need not remark the beautiful spirit of Poetry, which runs through this whole Hymn, nor the holiness of that resolution with which it concludes.

Having already mentioned those speeches which are assigned to the persons in this poem, I proceed to the description which the Poet gives of *Raphael*. His departure from before the throne, and his flight through the choirs of Angels, is finely imaged. As *Milton* every where fills his Poem with circumstances that are marvellous and astonishing, he describes the gate of heaven as framed after such a manner, that it opened of it self upon the approach of the Angel who was to pass through it.

——— *Till at the gate*
Of Heav'n arriv'd, the gate self-open'd wide,
On golden hinges turning, as by work
Divine the sovereign architect had framed.

The Poet here seems to have regarded two or three passages in the 18th *Iliad*, as that in particular, where, speaking of *Vulcan*, *Homer* says, that he had made twenty *Tripodes* running on golden wheels; which, upon occasion, might go of themselves to the assembly of the Gods, and, when there was no more use for them, return again after the same manner. *Scaliger* has rallied *Homer* very severely upon this point, as *M. Dacier* has endeavoured to defend it. I will not pretend to determine, whether in this particular of *Homer*, the marvellous does not lose sight

of the probable. As the miraculous workmanship of *Milton's* gates is not so extraordinary as this of the *Tripodes*, so I am persuaded he would not have mentioned it, had not he been supported in it by a passage in the Scripture, which speaks of wheels in Heaven that had life in them, and moved of themselves, or stood still, in conformity with the Cherubims, whom they accompanied.

There is no question but *Milton* had this circumstance in his thoughts, because in the following book he describes the chariot of the *Messiah* with *living* wheels, according to the plan in *Ezekiel's* vision.

——— *Forth rush'd with whirlwind sound*
The chariot of paternal Deity,
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,
It self instinct with spirit ——

I question not but *Bossu*, and the two *Daciers*, who are for vindicating every thing that is censured in *Homer*, by something parallel in holy Writ, would have been very well pleased had they thought of confronting *Vulcan's Tripodes* with *Ezekiel's* wheels.

Raphael's descent to the earth, with the figure of his person, is represented in very lively colours. Several of the *French, Italian, and English* Poets have given a loose to their imaginations in the description of Angels: but I do not remember to have met with any so finely drawn, and so conformable to the notions which are given of them in Scripture, as this in *Milton*. After having set him forth in all his heavenly plumage, and represented him as alighting upon the earth, the Poet concludes his description with a circumstance, which is altogether new, and imagined with the greatest strength of fancy.

——— *Like Maia's son he stood,*
And shook his plumes, that heav'nly fragrance fill'd
The circuit wide. ——

Raphael's reception by the guardian Angels; his passing through the wilderness of sweets; his distant appearance to *Adam*, have all the graces that Poetry is capable of bestowing. The Author afterwards gives us a particular description of *Eve* in her domestick employments.

So saying, with dispatchful looks in haste
She turns, on hospitable thoughts intent,
What choice to chuse for delicacy best,
What order, so contriv'd, as not to mix

Tastes,

*Tastes, not well join'd, inelegant, but bring
Taste after taste, upheld with kindest change;
Bestirs her then, &c. —*

Though in this, and other parts of the same book, the subject is only the housewifery of our first parent, it is set off with so many pleasing images and strong expressions, as make it none of the least agreeable parts in this divine work.

The natural majesty of *Adam*, and at the same time his submissive behaviour to the superior Being, who had vouchsafed to be his guest; the solemn *Hail* which the Angel bestows upon the Mother of mankind, with the figure of *Eve* ministring at the table, are circumstances which deserve to be admired.

Raphael's behaviour is every way suitable to the dignity of his nature, and to that character of a sociable spirit, with which the Author has so judiciously introduced him. He had received instructions to converse with *Adam*, as one friend converses with another, and to warn him of the enemy, who was contriving his destruction: accordingly he is represented as sitting down at a table with *Adam*, and eating of the fruits of *Paradise*. The occasion naturally leads him to his discourse on the food of Angels. After having thus entered into conversation with man upon more indifferent subjects, he warns him of his obedience, and makes a natural transition to the history of that fallen Angel, who was employed in the circumvention of our first Parents.

Had I followed Monsieur *Bossu's* method in my first paper on *Milton*, I should have dated the action of *Paradise Lost* from the beginning of *Raphael's* speech in this book, as he supposes the action of the *Aeneid* to begin in the second book of that Poem. I could alledge many reasons for my drawing the action of the *Aeneid* rather from its immediate beginning in the first book, than from its remote beginning in the second; and shew why I have considered the sacking of *Troy* as an *Episode*, according to the common acceptation of that word. But as this would be a dry unentertaining piece of Criticism, and perhaps unnecessary to those who have read my first paper, I shall not enlarge upon it. Which-ever of the notions be true, the unity of *Milton's* Action is preserved according to either of them; whether we consider the Fall of man in its immediate beginning, as proceeding from the resolutions taken in the infernal Council, or in its more remote beginning, as proceeding from the first revolt of the Angels in heaven. The occasion which *Milton* assigns for this revolt, as it is founded on hints in Holy Writ, and on the opinion of

some great writers, so it was the most proper that the Poet could have made use of.

The Revolt in heaven is described with great force of imagination, and a fine variety of circumstances. The learned Reader cannot but be pleased with the Poet's imitation of *Homer* in the last of the following lines.

*At length into the limits of the North
They came, and Satan took his royal seat
High on a hill, far blazing, as a mount
Rais'd on a mount, with pyramids and tow'rs
From diamond quarries hewn, and rocks of gold,
The Palace of great Lucifer, (so call
That structure in the dialect of men
Interpreted)*—————

Homer mentions persons and things, which he tells us in the language of the Gods are called by different names from those they go by in the language of men. *Milton* has imitated him with his usual judgment in this particular place, wherein he has likewise the authority of Scripture to justify him. The part of *Abdiel*, who was the only Spirit that in this infinite host of Angels preserved his Allegiance to his Maker, exhibits to us a noble moral of religious Singularity. The zeal of the Seraph breaks forth in a becoming warmth of sentiments and expressions, as the character which is given us of him denotes that generous scorn and intrepidity which attends heroic virtue. The Author doubtless designed it as a pattern to those who live among mankind in their present state of degeneracy and corruption.

*So spake the Seraph Abdiel, faithful found
Among the faithless, faithful only he;
Among innumerable false, unmov'd,
Unshaken, unsecul'd, untir'd;
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal:
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single. From amidst them forth he pass'd,
Long way through hostile scorn, which he sustain'd
Superior, nor of violence fear'd aught;
And with retorted scorn his back he turn'd
On those proud tow'rs to swift destruction doom'd.*

Saturday,