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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 269. Tuesday, January 8.

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-----*Ævo rarissima nostro*
Simplicitas-----

Ov.

I Was this morning surprized with a great knocking at the door, when my Landlady's daughter came up to me and told me there was a man below desired to speak with me. Upon my asking her who it was, she told me it was a very grave elderly person, but that she did not know his name. I immediately went down to him, and found him to be the coachman of my worthy friend Sir ROGER DE COVERLY. He told me that his master came to town last night, and would be glad to take a turn with me in *Grays-Inn* walks. As I was wondring in my self what had brought Sir ROGER to town, not having lately received any letter from him, he told me that his master was come up to get a fight of Prince *Eugene*, and that he desired I would immediately meet him.

I was not a little pleased with the curiosity of the old Knight, though I did not much wonder at it, having heard him say more than once in private discourse, that he looked upon Prince *Eugenio* (for so the Knight always calls him) to be a greater man than *Scanderbeg*.

I was no sooner come into *Grays-Inn* walks, but I heard my friend upon the Terrace hemming twice or thrice to himself with great vigour, for he loves to clear his pipes in good air (to make use of his own phrase) and is not a little pleased with any one who takes notice of the strength which he still exerts in his morning hemms.

I was touched with a secret joy at the sight of the good old man, who before he saw me was engaged in conversation with a beggar man that had asked an alms of him. I could hear my friend chide him for not finding out some work; but at the same time saw him put his hand in his pocket and give him six-pence.

Our salutations were very hearty on both sides, consisting of many kind shakes of the hand, and several affectionate looks which we cast upon one another. After which the Knight told me my good friend his Chaplain
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was very well, and much at my service, and that the *Sunday* before, he had made a most incomparable Sermon out of Doctor *Barrow*. I have left, says he, all my affairs in his hands, and being willing to lay an obligation upon him, have deposited with him thirty marks, to be distributed among his poor parishioners.

He then proceeded to acquaint me with the welfare of *Will Wimble*. Upon which he put his hand into his fob, and presented me in his name with a tobacco stopper, telling me that *Will* had been busie all the beginning of the winter in turning great quantities of them; and that he made a present of one to every Gentleman in the country who has good principles, and smokes. He added, that poor *Will* was at present under great tribulation, for that *Tom Touchy* had taken the law of him for cutting some hazel sticks out of one of his hedges.

Among other pieces of news which the Knight brought from his country seat, he informed me that *Moll White* was dead; and that about a month after her death the wind was so very high, that it blew down the end of one of his barns. But for my part, says Sir ROGER, I do not think that the old woman had any hand in it.

He afterwards fell into an account of the diversions which had passed in his house during the holydays, for Sir ROGER, after the laudable custom of his ancestors, always keeps open house at *Christmas*. I learned from him, that he had killed eight fat hogs for this season, that he had dealt about his chines very liberally amongst his neighbours, and that in particular he had sent a string of hogs-puddings with a pack of cards to every poor family in the parish. I have often thought, says Sir ROGER, it happens very well that *Christmas* should fall out in the middle of the winter. It is the most dead uncomfortable time of the year, when the poor people would suffer very much from their poverty and cold, if they had not good cheer, warm fires, and *Christmas* gambols to support them. I love to rejoyce their poor hearts at this season, and to see the whole village merry in my great hall. I allow a double quantity of malt to my small beer, and set it a running for twelve days to every one that calls for it. I have always a piece of cold beef and a mince-pye upon the table, and am wonderfully pleased to see my tenants pass away a whole evening in playing their innocent tricks, and smutting one another. Our friend *Will Wimble* is as merry as any of them, and shews a thousand roguish tricks upon these occasions.

I was very much delighted with the reflection of my old friend, which carried so much goodness in it. He then launched out into the praise of the

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the late Act of Parliament for securing the Church of *England*, and told me with great satisfaction, that he believed it already began to take effect; for that a rigid Dissenter, who chanced to dine at his house on *Christmas* day, had been observed to eat very plentifully of his plumb-porridge.

After having dispatched all our country matters, Sir ROGER made several enquiries concerning the club, and particularly of his old antagonist Sir ANDREW FREEPORT. He asked me with a kind of smile, whether Sir ANDREW had not taken the advantage of his absence, to vent among them some of his Republican doctrines; but soon after gathering up his countenance into a more than ordinary seriousness, Tell me truly, says he, don't you think Sir ANDREW had a hand in the Pope's procession—but without giving me time to answer him, Well, well, says he, I know you are a wary man, and do not care to talk of publick matters.

The Knight then asked me, if I had seen Prince *Eugene*; and made me promise to get him a stand in some convenient place where he might have a full sight of that extraordinary man, whose presence does so much honour to the *British* nation. He dwelt very long on the praises of this great General, and I found that since I was with him in the country, he had drawn many observations together out of his reading in *Baker's Chronicle*, and other Authors, who always lie in his hall window, which very much redound to the honour of this Prince.

Having passed away the greatest part of the morning in hearing the Knight's reflections, which were partly private, and partly political, he asked me if I would smoke a pipe with him over a dish of Coffee at *Squire's*. As I love the old man, I take a delight in complying with every thing that is agreeable to him, and accordingly waited on him to the Coffee-house, where his venerable figure drew upon us the eyes of the whole room. He had no sooner seated himself at the upper end of the high table, but he called for a clean pipe, a paper of Tobacco, a dish of Coffee, a wax candle, and the *Supplement*, with such an air of cheerfulness and good humour, that all the boys in the Coffee-room (who seemed to take pleasure in serving him) were at once employed on his several errands, infomuch that no body else could come at a dish of Tea, till the Knight had got all his conveniencies about him.