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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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been filled with personal reflections and debates; for which reason I have never once turned out of my way to observe those little cavils which have been made against it by Envy or Ignorance. The common fry of scribblers, who have no other way of being taken notice of but by attacking what has gain'd some reputation in the world, would have furnished me with business enough, had they found me disposed to enter the Lists with them.

I shall conclude with the Fable of *Boccalini's* traveller, who was so pestered with the noise of grasshoppers in his ears, that he alighted from his horse in great wrath to kill them all. This, says the Author, was troubling himself to no manner of purpose: had he pursued his journey without taking notice of them, the troublesome insects would have died of themselves in a very few weeks, and he would have suffered nothing from them.

N^o 361. *Thursday, April 24.*

*Tartaream intendit vocem, qua protinus omnis
Contremuit domus-----* Virg.

I Have lately received the following Letter from a country Gentleman.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

“ THE night before I left *London* I went to see a Play, called, *The*
 “ *Humorous Lieutenant*. Upon the rising of the curtain I was
 “ very much surprized with the great Confort of Cat-calls which was
 “ exhibited that evening, and began to think with my self that I had
 “ made a mistake, and gone to a Musick-meeting, instead of the Play-
 “ house. It appeared indeed a little odd to me to see so many persons
 “ of quality of both sexes assembled together at a kind of Catterwawling;
 “ for I cannot look upon that performance to have been any thing bet-
 “ ter, whatever the Musicians themselves might think of it. As I had
 “ no acquaintance in the house to ask questions of, and was forced to go
 “ out

“ out of town early the next morning, I could not learn the secret of
 “ this matter. What I would therefore desire of you, is, to give some
 “ account of this strange instrument, which I found the company called
 “ a Cat-call; and particularly to let me know whether it be a piece of
 “ music lately come from *Italy*. For my own part, to be free with you,
 “ I would rather hear an *English* Fiddle; though I durst not shew my
 “ dislike whilst I was in the Play-house, it being my chance to sit the
 “ very next man to one of the Performers.

I am, SIR, Your most affectionate Friend and Servant,

John Shallow, *Esq;*

In compliance with 'Squire *Shallow's* request, I design this paper as a
 Dissertation upon the Cat-call. In order to make my self a master of the
 subject, I purchased one the beginning of last week, though not without
 great difficulty, being informed at two or three Toyshops that the Players
 had lately bought them all up. I have since consulted many learned An-
 tiquaries in relation to its original, and find them very much divided a-
 mong themselves upon that particular. A Fellow of the Royal Society,
 who is my good friend, and a great proficient in the mathematical part
 of music, concludes from the simplicity of its make, and the uniformity
 of it found, that the Cat-call is older than any of the inventions of *Ju-
 bal*. He observes very well, that musical instruments took their first rise
 from the notes of birds, and other melodious animals; and what, says he,
 was more natural than for the first Ages of mankind to imitate the voice
 of a Cat that lived under the same roof with them? he added, that the
 Cat had contributed more to harmony than any other animal; as we are
 not only beholden to her for this wind-instrument, but for our string-
 music in general.

Another Virtuoso of my acquaintance will not allow the Cat-call to
 be older than *Thespis*, and is apt to think it appeared in the world soon
 after the antient Comedy; for which reason it has still a place in our Dra-
 matic entertainments: nor must I here omit what a very curious Gentle-
 man, who is lately returned from his travels, has more than once assured
 me, namely, that there was lately dug up at *Rome* the Statue of a *Mo-
 mus*, who holds an instrument in his right-hand very much resembling our
 modern Cat-call.

There are others who ascribe this invention to *Orpheus*, and look up-
 on the Cat-call to be one of those instruments which that famous Musician

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made

made use of to draw the beasts about him. It is certain, that the roaring of a cat does not call together a greater audience of that species, than this instrument, if dexterously played upon in proper time and place.

But notwithstanding these various and learned conjectures, I cannot forbear thinking that the Cat-call is originally a piece of *English* musick. Its resemblance to the voice of some of our *British* songsters, as well as the use of it, which is peculiar to our nation, confirms me in this opinion. It has at least received great improvements among us, whether we consider the instrument it self, or those several quavers and graces which are thrown into the playing of it. Every one might be sensible of this, who heard that remarkable over-grown Cat-call which was placed in the center of the pit, and presided over all the rest at the celebrated performance lately exhibited in *Drury-lane*.

Having said thus much concerning the original of the Cat-call, we are in the next place to consider the use of it. The Cat-call exerts it self to most advantage in the *British* theatre: It very much improves the sound of Non-sense, and often goes along with the voice of the actor who pronounces it, as the Violin or Harpsicord accompanies the *Italian* Recitativo.

It has often supplied the place of the antient *Chorus*, in the words of Mr. *** In short, a bad Poet has as great an antipathy to a Cat-call, as many people have to a real Cat.

Mr. *Collier*, in his ingenious Essay upon Musick, has the following passage:

I believe it is possible to invent an instrument that shall have a quite contrary effect to those martial ones now in use: an Instrument that shall sink the spirits, and shake the nerves, and curdle the blood, and inspire despair, and cowardice and consternation, at a surprizing rate. It is probable the roaring of a Lion, the warbling of Cats and Scritch-owls, together with a mixture of the howling of Dogs, judiciously imitated and compounded, might go a great way in this invention. Whether such Anti-musick as this might not be of service in a camp, I shall leave to the military men to consider.

What this learned Gentleman supposes in speculation, I have known actually verified in practice. The Cat-call has struck a damp into Generals, and frighted Heroes off the stage. At the first sound of it I have seen a crowned head tremble, and a Princess fall into fits. The *humorous Lieutenant* himself could not stand it; nay, I am told that even *Almanzor* looked like a mouse, and trembled at the voice of this terrifying instrument.

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As it is of a Dramatic nature, and peculiarly appropriated to the stage, I can by no means approve the thought of that angry lover, who, after an unsuccessful pursuit of some years, took leave of his Mistress in a ferenade of Cat-calls.

I must conclude this paper with the account I have lately received of an ingenious artist, who has long studied this instrument, and is very well versed in all the rules of the Drama. He teaches to play on it by book, and to express by it the whole art of criticism. He has his base and his treble Cat-call; the former for Tragedy, the latter for Comedy; only in Tragy-comedies they may both play together in consort. He has a particular squeak to denote the violation of each of the unities, and has different sounds to shew whether he aims at the poet or the player. In short, he teaches the Smut-note, the Fustian-note, the Stupid-note, and has composed a kind of air that may serve as an Act-tune to an incorrigible play, and which takes in the whole compass of the Cat-call.

N^o 367. *Thursday, May 1.*

----- *Periturae parcite chartae.*

Juv.

I Have often pleased my self with considering the two kinds of benefits which accrue to the publick from these my Speculations, and which, were I to speak after the manner of Logicians, I would distinguish into the *Material* and the *Formal*. By the latter I understand those advantages which my Readers receive, as their minds are either improved or delighted by these my daily labours; but having already several times descanted on my endeavours in this light, I shall at present wholly confine my self to the consideration of the former. By the word *Material* I mean those benefits which arise to the publick from these my Speculations, as they consume a considerable quantity of our paper manufacture, employ our Artisans in printing, and find business for great numbers of indigent persons.

Our paper-manufacture takes into it several mean materials which could be put to no other use, and affords work for several hands in the collecting
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