The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

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Addison, Joseph

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lyes before him, without entering into its ſeveral parts, or diſcerning the variety of its colours in their full glory and perfection.

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Quem tu Melpomene ſemel
Naſcentem placido lumine videris,
Non illum labor Iſthmius
Clarabit pugilem, non equus impiger, &c.
Sed quæ Tibur aquæ fertile perfluunt,
Et ſpiſſæ nemorum comæ
Fingent Æolio carmine nobilem. Hor.

WE may obſerve, that any ſingle circumſtance of what we have formerly ſeen, often raiſes up a whole ſcene of imagery, and awakens numberleſs Ideas that before ſlept in the Imagination; ſuch a particular ſmell or colour is able to fill the mind, on a ſudden, with the picture of the fields or gardens where we firſt met with it, and to bring up into view all the variety of images that once attended it. Our Imagination takes the hint, and leads us unexpectedly into cities or theatres, plains or meadows. We may further obſerve, when the fancy thus reflects on the ſcenes that have paſt in it formerly, thoſe, which were at firſt pleaſant to behold, appear more ſo upon reflection, and that the memory heightens the delightfulneſs of the original. A *Carteſian* would account for both theſe inſtances in the following manner.

The ſet of ideas, which we received from ſuch a proſpect or garden, having entered the mind at the ſame time, have a ſett of traces belonging to them in the brain, bordering very near upon one another; when therefore any one of theſe ideas ariſes in the Imagination, and conſequently diſpatches a flow of animal ſpirits to its proper trace, theſe ſpirits, in the violence of their motion, run not only into the trace, to which they were more particularly directed, but into ſeveral of thoſe that lye about it: by this means they awaken other ideas of the ſame ſett, which immediately

determine a new dispatch of spirits, that in the same manner open other neighbouring traces, till at last the whole sett of them is blown up, and the whole prospect or garden flourishes in the Imagination. But because the pleasure we received from these places far surmounted, and overcame the disagreeableness we found in them, for this reason there was at first a wider passage worn in the pleasure traces, and, on the contrary, so narrow a one in those which belonged to the disagreeable ideas, that they were quickly stopt up, and rendered incapable of receiving any animal spirits, and consequently of exciting any unpleasant ideas in the memory.

It would be in vain to enquire, whether the power of imagining things strongly proceeds from any greater perfection in the Soul, or from any nicer texture in the brain of one man than of another. But this is certain, that a noble writer should be born with this faculty in its full strength and vigour, so as to be able to receive lively ideas from outward objects, to retain them long, and to range them together, upon occasion, in such figures and representations as are most likely to hit the fancy of the reader. A Poet should take as much pains in forming his imagination, as a Philosopher in cultivating his understanding. He must gain a due relish of the works of nature, and be throughly conversant in the various scenary of a country life.

When he is stored with country images, if he would go beyond pastoral, and the lower kinds of poetry, he ought to acquaint himself with the pomp and magnificence of Courts. He should be very well versed in every thing that is noble and stately in the productions of art, whether it appear in Painting or Statuary, in the great works of Architecture which are in their present glory, or in the ruines of those which flourished in former ages.

Such advantages as these help to open a man's thoughts, and to enlarge his Imagination, and will therefore have their influence on all kinds of writing, if the Author knows how to make right use of them. And among those of the learned languages who excel in this talent, the most perfect in their several kinds, are perhaps *Homer*, *Virgil*, and *Ovid*. The first strikes the Imagination wonderfully with what is Great, the second with what is Beautiful, and the last with what is Strange. Reading the *Iliad* is like travelling through a country uninhabited, where the fancy is entertained with a thousand savage prospects of vast deserts, wide uncultivated marshes, huge forests, mis-shapen rocks and precipices. On the contrary, the *Æneid* is like a well ordered garden, where it is impossible to find out any part unadorned, or to cast our eyes upon a single

spot,

ſpot, that does not produce ſome beautiful plant or flower. But when we are in the *Metamorphoſis*, we are walking on enchanted ground, and ſee nothing but ſcenes of Magick lying round us.

Homer is in his province, when he is deſcribing a battel or a multitude, a Heroe or a God. *Virgil* is never better pleaſed, than when he is in *Elyſium*, or copying out an entertaining picture. *Homer*'s epithets generally mark out what is Great, *Virgil*'s what is Agreeable. Nothing can be more Magnificent than the figure *Jupiter* makes in the firſt *Iliad*, nor more Charming than that of *Venus* in the firſt *Æneid*.

Η, καὶ κυανέῃσιν ἐπ' ὀφρύσι νεῦσε Κρονίων·
Ἀμβρόσιαι δ' ἄρα χαῖται ἐπερρώσαντο ἄνακτος,
Κρατὸς ἀπ' ἀθανάτοιο· μέγαν δ' ἐλέλιξεν Ὄλυμπον.

Dixit, et avertens roſeâ cervice refulſit:
Ambroſiæque comæ divinum vertice odorem
Spiravere: pedes veſtis defluxit ad imos:
Et vera inceſſu patuit Dea———————

Homer's perſons are moſt of them god-like and terrible; *Virgil* has ſcarce admitted any into his Poem, who are not beautiful, and has taken particular care to make his Hero ſo.

———————lumenque juventæ
Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflavit honores.

In a word, *Homer* fills his Readers with ſublime ideas, and, I believe, has raiſed the imagination of all the good Poets that have come after him. I ſhall only inſtance *Horace*, who immediately takes fire at the firſt hint of any paſſage in the *Iliad* or *Odyſſee*, and always riſes above himſelf, when he has *Homer* in his view. *Virgil* has drawn together, into his *Æneid*, all the pleaſing ſcenes his ſubject is capable of admitting, and in his *Georgics* has given us a collection of the moſt delightful Landskips that can be made out of fields and woods, herds of cattle, and ſwarms of bees.

Ovid, in his *Metamorphoſis*, has ſhewn us how the Imagination may be affected by what is Strange. He deſcribes a miracle in every ſtory, and always gives us the ſight of ſome new creature at the end of it. His art conſiſts chiefly in well-timing his deſcription, before the firſt ſhape is quite worn off, and the new one perfectly finiſhed; ſo that he every where entertains us with ſomething we never ſaw before, and ſhews Monſter after Monſter, to the end of the *Metamorphoſis*.

If I were to name a Poet that is a perfect Master in all these arts of working on the Imagination, I think *Milton* may pass for one: and if his *Paradise Lost* falls short of the *Æneid* or *Iliad* in this respect, it proceeds rather from the fault of the language in which it is written, than from any defect of genius in the Author. So divine a Poem in *English*, is like a stately Palace built of brick, where one may see Architecture in as great a perfection as in one of marble, though the materials are of a coarser nature. But to consider it only as it regards our present subject: what can be conceived greater than the battel of Angels, the Majesty of Messiah, the stature and behaviour of Satan and his peers? What more beautiful than *Pandæmonium*, Paradise, Heaven, Angels, *Adam* and *Eve?* What more strange, than the Creation of the world, the several Metamorphoses of the fallen Angels, and the surprising adventures their leader meets with in his search after Paradise? No other subject could have furnished a Poet with scenes so proper to strike the Imagination, as no other Poet could have painted those scenes in more strong and lively colours.

N° 418. *Monday, June* 30.

---------*ferat et rubus asper amomum.* Virg.

THE pleasures of these secondary views of the Imagination, are of a wider and more universal nature than those it has when joined with sight; for not only what is great, strange or beautiful, but any thing that is disagreeable when looked upon, pleases us, in an apt description. Here, therefore, we must enquire after a new principle of pleasure, which is nothing else but the action of the mind, which *compares* the Ideas that arise from words, with the Ideas that arise from the objects themselves; and why this operation of the mind is attended with so much pleasure, we have before considered. For this reason therefore, the description of a dunghill is pleasing to the Imagination, if the image be presented to our minds by suitable expressions; though perhaps, this may be more properly called the pleasure of the understanding than of the fancy, because we are not so much delighted with the image that is contained in the description, as with the aptness of the description to excite the image. But