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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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*Nec duo sunt, at forma duplex, nec femina dici
Nec puer ut possint, neutrumque et utrumque videntur.* Ovid.

MOST of the papers I give the public are written on subjects that never vary, but are for ever fixt and immutable. Of this kind are all my more serious essays and discourses; but there is another sort of Speculations, which I consider as occasional papers, that take their rise from the folly, extravagance, and caprice of the present Age. For I look upon my self as one set to watch the manners and behaviour of my countrymen and contemporaries, and to mark down every absurd fashion, ridiculous custom, or affected form of speech that makes its appearance in the world, during the course of these my Speculations. The petticoat no sooner begun to swell, but I observed its motions. The party-patches had not time to muster themselves before I detected them. I had intelligence of the coloured hood the very first time it appeared in a public assembly. I might here mention several other the like contingent subjects, upon which I have bestowed distinct papers. By this means I have so effectually quashed those irregularities which gave occasion to them, that I am afraid posterity will scarce have a sufficient idea of them to relish those discourses which were in no little vogue at the time when they were written. They will be apt to think that the fashions and customs I attacked were some fantastical conceits of my own, and that their Great-grandmothers could not be so whimsical as I have represented them. For this reason, when I think on the figure my several volumes of Speculations will make about a hundred years hence, I consider them as so many pieces of old plate, where the weight will be regarded, but the fashion lost.

Among the several female extravagancies I have already taken notice of, there is one which still keeps its ground. I mean that of the Ladies who dress themselves in a hat and feather, a riding-coat and a perriwig;
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or at least tie up their hair in a bag or ribbond, in imitation of the smart part of the opposite sex. As in my yesterday's paper I gave an account of the mixture of two sexes in one commonwealth, I shall here take notice of this mixture of two sexes in one person. I have already shewn my dislike of this immodest custom more than once; but in contempt of every thing I have hitherto said, I am informed that the highways about this great city are still very much infested with these female cavaliers.

I remember when I was at my friend Sir ROGER DE COVERLEY'S about this time twelve-month, an equestrian Lady of this order appeared upon the plains which lay at a distance from his house. I was at that time walking in the fields with my old friend; and as his tenants ran out on every side to see so strange a sight, Sir ROGER asked one of them who came by us, what it was? To which the country fellow replied, 'Tis a Gentlewoman, saving your Worship's presence, in a coat and hat. This produced a great deal of mirth at the Knight's house, where we had a story at the same time of another of his tenants, who meeting this Gentleman-like Lady on the high way, was asked by her *whether that was Coverly-hall*; the honest man seeing only the male part of the Querist, replied, *Yes, Sir*; but upon the second question, *whether Sir ROGER DE COVERLY was a married man*, having dropped his eye upon the petticoat, he changed his note into *No Madam*.

Had one of these Hermaphrodites appeared in *Juvenal's* days, with what an indignation should we have seen her described by that excellent satyrift. He would have represented her in her riding habit, as a greater monster than the Centaur. He would have called for sacrifices, or purifying waters, to expiate the appearance of such a prodigy. He would have invoked the shades of *Portia* or *Lucretia*, to see into what the *Roman Ladies* had transformed themselves.

For my own part, I am for treating the sex with greater tenderness, and have all along made use of the most gentle methods to bring them off from any little extravagance into which they are sometimes unwarily fallen: I think it however absolutely necessary to keep up the partition between the two sexes, and to take notice of the smallest encroachments which the one makes upon the other. I hope therefore that I shall not hear any more complaints on this subject. I am sure my she-disciples who peruse these my daily lectures, have profited but little by them, if they are capable of giving into such an amphibious dress. This I should not have mentioned, had not I lately met one of these my female Readers
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in *Hide Park*, who looked upon me with a masculine assurance, and cocked her hat full in my face.

For my part, I have one general key to the behaviour of the fair sex. When I see them singular in any part of their dress, I conclude it is not without some evil intention; and therefore question not but the design of this strange fashion is to smite more effectually their male beholders. Now to set them right in this particular, I would fain have them consider with themselves whether we are not more likely to be struck by a figure entirely female, than with such an one as we may see every day in our glasses: or, if they please, let them reflect upon their own hearts, and think how they would be affected should they meet a man on horse-back, in his breeches and jack-boots, and at the same time dressed up in a commode and a night-rail.

I must observe that this fashion was first of all brought to us from *France*, a country which has infected all the nations in *Europe* with its levity. I speak not this in derogation of a whole people, having more than once found fault with those general reflections which strike at Kingdoms or Commonwealths in the gross: a piece of cruelty, which an ingenious writer of our own compares to that of *Caligula*, who wished the *Roman* people had all but one neck, that he might behead them at a blow. I shall therefore only remark, that as liveliness and assurance are in a peculiar manner the qualifications of the *French* nation, the same habits and customs will not give the same offence to that people, which they produce among those of our own country. Modesty is our distinguishing character, as vivacity is theirs: and when this our national virtue appears in that family-beauty, for which our *British* Ladies are celebrated above all others in the universe, it makes up the most amiable object that the eye of man can possibly behold.



Thursday.