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**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

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*Hi narrata ferunt alio: mensuraque ficti  
Crescit; et auditis aliquid novus adjicit auctor.* Ov.

**O**VID describes the palace of Fame as situated in the very center of the universe, and perforated with so many windows and avenues as gave her the sight of every thing that was done in the heavens, in the earth, and in the sea. The structure of it was contrived in so admirable a manner, that it echoed every word which was spoken in the whole compass of nature; so that the Palace, says the Poet, was always filled with a confused hubbub of low dying sounds, the voices being almost spent and worn out before they arrived at this general rendezvous of speeches and whispers.

I consider Courts with the same regard to the governments which they superintend, as *Ovid's* palace of Fame, with regard to the Universe. The eyes of a watchful Minister run through the whole people. There is scarce a murmur or complaint, that does not reach his ears. They have News-gatherers and Intelligencers distributed in their several walks and quarters, who bring in their respective quotas, and make them acquainted with the discourse and conversation of the whole Kingdom or Commonwealth where they are employed. The wisest of Kings, alluding to these invisible and unsuspected spies who are planted by Kings and Rulers over their fellow-citizens, as well as those voluntary informers that are buzzing about the ears of a great man, and making their court by such secret methods of intelligence, has given us a very prudent caution: *Curse not the King, no not in thy thought, and curse not the rich in thy bed-chamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.*

As it is absolutely necessary for Rulers to make use of other peoples eyes and ears, they should take particular care to do it in such manner, that it may not bear too hard on the person whose life and conversation are

are enquired into. A man who is capable of so infamous a calling as that of a Spy, is not very much to be relied upon. He can have no great ties of honour, or checks of conscience, to restrain him in those covert evidences, where the person accused has no opportunity of vindicating himself. He will be more industrious to carry that which is grateful, than that which is true. There will be no occasion for him, if he does not hear and see things worth discovery; so that he naturally inflames every word and circumstance, aggravates what is faulty, perverts what is good, and misrepresents what is indifferent. Nor is it to be doubted but that such ignominious wretches let their private passions into these their clandestine informations, and often wreck their particular spite or malice against the person whom they are set to watch. It is a pleasant scene enough, which an *Italian* Author describes between a Spy, and a Cardinal who employed him. The Cardinal is represented as minuting down every thing that is told him. The Spy begins with a low voice, Such an one, the Advocate, whispered to one of his friends, within my hearing, that your Eminence was a very great poultron; and after having given his Patron time to take it down, adds, that another called him a mercenary Rascal in a public conversation. The Cardinal replies, Very well, and bids him go on. The Spy proceeds, and loads him with reports of the same nature, till the Cardinal rises in great wrath, calls him an impudent scoundrel, and kicks him out of the room.

It is observed of great and heroic minds, that they have not only shew'd a particular disregard to those unmerited reproaches which have been cast upon them, but have been altogether free from that impertinent curiosity of enquiring after them, or the poor revenge of resenting them. The Histories of *Alexander* and *Cæsar* are full of this kind of instances. Vulgar souls are of a quite contrary character. *Dionysius*, the tyrant of *Sicily*, had a dungeon which was a very curious piece of Architecture; and of which, as I am informed, there are still to be seen some remains in that island. It was called *Dionysius's Ear*, and built with several little windings and labyrinths in the form of a real ear. The structure of it made it a kind of whispering place, but such a one as gathered the voice of him who spoke into a funnel, which was placed at the very top of it. The tyrant used to lodge all his state criminals, or those whom he supposed to be engaged together in any evil designs upon him, in this dungeon. He had at the same time an apartment over it, where he used to apply himself to the funnel, and by that means over-hear every thing that was whispered in the dungeon. I believe one may venture to affirm, that a

*Cæsar* or an *Alexander* would rather have died by the treason, than have used such disingenuous means for the detecting of it.

A man, who in ordinary life is very inquisitive after every thing which is spoken ill of him, passes his time but very indifferently. He is wounded by every arrow that is shot at him, and puts it in the power of every insignificant enemy to disquiet him. Nay, he will suffer from what has been said of him, when it is forgotten by those who said or heard it. For this reason I could never bear one of those officious friends, that would be telling every malicious report, every idle censure that passed upon me. The tongue of man is so petulant, and his thoughts so variable, that one should not lay too great a stress upon any present speeches or opinions. Praise and obloquy proceed very frequently out of the same mouth upon the same person, and upon the same occasion. A generous enemy will sometimes bestow commendations, as the dearest friend cannot sometimes refrain from speaking ill. The man who is indifferent in either of these respects, gives his opinion at random, and praises or disapproves as he finds himself in humour.

I shall conclude this essay with part of a character, which is finely drawn by the Earl of *Clarendon*, in the first book of his history, and which gives us the lively picture of a great man teizing himself with an absurd curiosity.

“ He had not that application and submission, and reverence for the  
 “ Queen, as might have been expected from his wisdom and breeding ;  
 “ and often crossed her pretences and desires with more rudeness than  
 “ was natural to him. Yet he was impertinently solicitous to know  
 “ what her Majesty said of him in private, and what resentments she had  
 “ towards him. And when by some confidants, who had their ends up-  
 “ on him from those offices, he was informed of some bitter expressions  
 “ fallen from her Majesty, he was so exceedingly afflicted and tormented  
 “ with the sense of it, that sometimes by passionate complaints and re-  
 “ presentations to the King ; sometimes by more dutiful addresses and  
 “ expostulations with the Queen, in bewailing his misfortune ; he fre-  
 “ quently exposed himself, and left his condition worse than it was be-  
 “ fore, and the eclairsment commonly ended in the discovery of the  
 “ persons from whom he had received his most secret intelligence.”

Friday,