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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 445. Thursday, July 31.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621)

N^o 445. *Thursday, July 31.*

Tanti non es ais. Sapis, Luperce.

Mart.

THIS is the day on which many eminent Authors will probably publish their last words. I am afraid that few of our weekly historians, who are men that above all others delight in war, will be able to subsist under the weight of a stamp, and an approaching peace. A sheet of blank paper that must have this new Imprimatur clapt upon it, before it is qualified to communicate any thing to the publick, will make its way in the world but very heavily. In short, the necessity of carrying a stamp, and the improbability of notifying a bloody battel, will, I am afraid, both concur to the sinking of those thin Folios, which have every other day retailed to us the history of *Europe* for several years last past. A facetious friend of mine, who loves a punn, calls this present mortality among Authors, *The fall of the leaf.*

I remember, upon Mr. *Baxter's* death, there was published a sheet of very good sayings, inscribed, *The last words of Mr. Baxter.* The title sold so great a number of these papers, that about a week after, there came out a second sheet inscribed, *More last words of Mr. Baxter.* In the same manner, I have reason to think, that several ingenious writers, who have taken their leave of the publick, in farewell papers, will not give over so, but intend to appear again, though perhaps under another form, and with a different title. Be that as it will, it is my business, in this place, to give an account of my own intentions, and to acquaint my Reader with the motives by which I act, in this great crisis of the republick of letters.

I have been long debating in my own heart, whether I should throw up my pen, as an Author that is cashiered by the Act of Parliament, which is to operate within these four and twenty hours, or whether I should still persist in laying my Speculations, from day to day, before the publick. The argument which prevails with me most on the first side of the question is, that I am informed by my Bookfeller he must raise the price of

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every single paper to two-pence, or that he shall not be able to pay the duty of it. Now as I am very desirous my readers should have their learning as cheap as possible, it is with great difficulty that I comply with him in this particular.

However, upon laying my reasons together in the balance, I find that those which plead for the continuance of this work, have much the greater weight. For, in the first place, in recompence for the expence to which this will put my readers, it is to be hoped they may receive from every paper so much instruction, as will be a very good equivalent. And, in order to this, I would not advise any one to take it in, who, after the perusal of it, does not find himself two-pence the wiser, or the better man for it; or who, upon examination, does not believe that he has had two penny-worth of mirth or instruction for his money.

But I must confess there is another motive which prevails with me more than the former. I consider that the tax on paper was given for the support of the Government; and as I have enemies, who are apt to pervert every thing I do or say, I fear they would ascribe the laying down my paper, on such an occasion, to a spirit of malecontentedness, which I am resolved none shall ever justly upbraid me with. No, I shall glory in contributing my utmost to the weal publick; and if my country receives five or six pounds a-day by my labours, I shall be very well pleased to find my self so useful a member. It is a received maxim, that no honest man should enrich himself by methods that are prejudicial to the Community in which he lives, and by the same rule I think we may pronounce the person to deserve very well of his country-men, whose labours bring more into the publick coffers, than into his own pocket.

Since I have mentioned the word Enemies, I must explain my self so far as to acquaint my Reader, that I mean only the insignificant party zealots on both sides; men of such poor narrow souls, that they are not capable of thinking on any thing but with an eye to Whig or Tory. During the course of this paper, I have been accused by these despicable wretches of trimming, time-serving, personal reflection, secret hate, and the like. Now, though in these my compositions, it is visible to any reader of common sense, that I consider nothing but my subject, which is always of an indifferent nature; how is it possible for me to write so clear of party, as not to lie open to the censures of those who will be applying every sentence, and finding out persons and things in it, which it has no regard to?

Seve-

Several paltry scribblers and declaimers have done me the honour to be dull upon me in reflections of this nature; but notwithstanding my name has been sometimes traduced by this contemptible tribe of men, I have hitherto avoided all animadversions upon them. The truth of it is, I am afraid of making them appear considerable by taking notice of them, for they are like those imperceptible insects which are discovered by the microscope, and cannot be made the subject of observation without being magnified.

Having mentioned those few who have shewn themselves the enemies of this paper, I should be very ungrateful to the publick, did not I at the same time testify my gratitude to those who are its friends, in which number I may reckon many of the most distinguished persons of all conditions, parties and professions in the Isle of *Great Britain*. I am not so vain as to think this approbation is so much due to the performance as to the design. There is, and ever will be, justice enough in the world, to afford patronage and protection for those who endeavour to advance truth and virtue, without regard to the passions and prejudices of any particular cause or faction. If I have any other merit in me, it is that I have new-pointed all the batteries of ridicule. They have been generally planted against persons who have appeared serious rather than absurd; or at best, have aimed rather at what is unfashionable than what is vicious. For my own part, I have endeavoured to make nothing ridiculous that is not in some measure criminal. I have set up the immoral man as the object of derision: in short, if I have not formed a new weapon against vice and irreligion, I have at least shewn how that weapon may be put to a right use, which has so often fought the battels of impiety and prophaneness.

