



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 463. Thursday, August 21.

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

N^o 463. Thursday, August 21.*Omnia quæ sensu voluntur vota diurno,**Pectore sopito reddit amica quies.**Venator defessa toro cùm membra reponit,**Mens tamen ad sylvas et sua lustra redit.**Judicibus lites, aurigis somnia currus,**Vanaque nocturnis meta cavetur equis.**Me quoque Musarum studium sub nocte silenti**Artibus assuetis sollicitare solet.*

Claud.

I Was lately entertaining my self with comparing *Homer's* ballance, in which *Jupiter* is represented as weighing the fates of *Hector* and *Achilles*, with a passage of *Virgil*, wherein that Deity is introduced as weighing the fates of *Turnus* and *Aeneas*. I then considered how the same way of thinking prevailed in the eastern parts of the world, as in those noble passages of Scripture, where we are told, that the great King of *Babylon*, the day before his death, had been weighed in the ballance, and been found wanting. In other places of the holy writings, the Almighty is described as weighing the mountains in scales, making the weight for the winds, knowing the ballancings of the clouds, and, in others, as weighing the actions of men, and laying their calamities together in a ballance. *Milton*, as I have observed in a former paper, had an eye to several of these foregoing instances, in that beautiful description wherein he represents the Arch-Angel and the evil Spirit as addressing themselves for the combat, but parted by the ballance which appeared in the heavens, and weighed the consequences of such a battel.

*Th' Eternal to prevent such horrid fray,
Hung forth in heav'n his golden scales, yet seen
Betwixt Astrea and the Scorpion sign,
Wherein all things created first he weigh'd,*

The

*The pendulous round earth with ballanc'd air
 In counterpoise, now ponders all events,
 Battles and realms; in these he puts two weights
 The sequel each of parting and of fight:
 The latter quick up flew, and kickt the beam;
 Which Gabriel spying, thus bespake the fiend.*

*Satan I know thy strength, and thou know'st mine,
 Neither our own but giv'n; what folly then
 To boast what arms can do, since thine no more
 Than Heav'n permits, nor mine, though doubled more
 To trample thee as mire: for proof look up,
 And read thy lot in yon celestial Sign,
 Where thou art weigh'd, and shown, how light, how weak,
 If thou resist. The fiend look'd up, and knew
 His mounted scale aloft; nor more, but fled
 Murm'ring, and with him fled the shades of night.*

These several amusing thoughts having taken possession of my mind some time before I went to sleep, and mingling themselves with my ordinary ideas, raised in my imagination a very odd kind of vision. I was, methought, replaced in my study, and seated in my elbow chair, where I had indulged the foregoing speculations, with my lamp burning by me, as usual. Whilst I was here meditating on several subjects of Morality, and considering the nature of many virtues and vices, as materials for those discourses with which I daily entertain the publick; I saw, methought, a pair of golden scales hanging by a chain in the same metal over the table that stood before me; when, on a sudden, there were great heaps of weights thrown down on each side of them. I found upon examining these weights, they shewed the value of every thing that is in esteem among men. I made an essay of them, by putting the weight of wisdom in one scale, and that of riches in another, upon which the latter, to shew its comparative lightness, immediately *flew up and kickt the beam.*

But, before I proceed, I must inform my Reader, that these weights did not exert their natural gravity, till they were laid in the golden balance, inasmuch that I could not guess which was light or heavy, whilst I held them in my hand. This I found by several instances, for upon my laying a weight in one of the scales, which was inscribed by the word *Eternity*; though I threw in that of time, prosperity, affliction, wealth, poverty,

poverty, interest, success, with many other weights, which in my hand seemed very ponderous, they were not able to stir the opposite ballance, nor could they have prevailed, though assisted with the weight of the sun, the stars, and the earth.

Upon emptying the scales, I laid several titles and honours, with pomps, triumphs, and many weights of the like nature, in one of them, and seeing a little glittering weight lie by me, I threw it accidentally into the other scale, when, to my great surprize, it proved so exact a counterpoise, that it kept the ballance in an equilibrium. This little glittering weight was inscribed upon the edges of it with the word *Vanity*. I found there were several other weights which were equally heavy, and exact counterpoises to one another; a few of them I tried, as avarice and poverty, riches and content, with some others.

There were likewise several weights that were of the same figure, and seemed to correspond with each other, but were entirely different when thrown into the scales, as religion and hypocrisie, pedantry and learning, wit and vivacity, superstition and devotion, gravity and wisdom, with many others.

I observed one particular weight lettered on both sides, and upon applying my self to the reading of it, I found on one side written, *In the Dialect of men*, and underneath it, *CALAMITIES*; on the other side was written, *In the language of the Gods*, and underneath, *BLESSINGS*. I found the intrinsic value of this weight to be much greater than I imagined, for it over-powered health, wealth, good-fortune, and many other weights, which were much more ponderous in my hand than the other.

There is saying among the *Scotch*, that an ounce of Mother is worth a pound of Clergy; I was sensible of the truth of this saying, when I saw the difference between the weight of natural parts, and that of learning. The observation which I made upon these two weights opened to me a new field of discoveries, for notwithstanding the weight of natural parts was much heavier than that of learning; I observed that it weighed an hundred times heavier than it did before, when I put learning into the same scale with it. I made the same observation upon Faith and Morality; for notwithstanding the latter out-weighed the former separately, it received a thousand times more additional weight from its conjunction with the former, than what it had by it self. This odd Phænomenon shewed it self in other particulars, as in wit and judgment, philosophy and religion, justice and humanity, zeal and charity, depth of sense and perspicu-

perspicuity of stile, with innumerable other particulars, too long to be mentioned in this paper.

As a dream seldom fails of dashing seriousness with impertinence, mirth with gravity, methought I made several other experiments of a more ludicrous nature, by one of which I found that an *English Octavo* was very often heavier than a *French Folio*; and by another, that an old *Greek* or *Latin* Author weighed down a whole library of moderns. Seeing one of my *Spectators* lying by me, I laid it into one of the scales, and flung a two-penny piece into the other. The Reader will not enquire into the event, if he remembers the first trial which I have recorded in this paper. I afterwards threw both the sexes into the ballance; but as it is not for my interest to disoblige either of them, I shall desire to be excused from telling the result of this experiment. Having an opportunity of this nature in my hands, I could not forbear throwing into one scale the principles of a Tory, and in the other those of a Whig; but as I have all along declared this to be a neutral paper, I shall likewise desire to be silent under this head also, though upon examining one of the weights, I saw the word *TEKEL* engraven on it in capital letters.

I made many other experiments, and though I have not room for them all in this day's Speculation, I may perhaps reserve them for another. I shall only add, that upon my awaking I was sorry to find my golden scales vanished, but resolved for the future to learn this lesson from them, not to despise or value any things for their appearances, but to regulate my esteem and passions towards them according to their real and intrinsic value.



Friday