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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 469. Thursday, August 28.

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N<sup>o</sup> 469. Thursday, August 28.

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*Detrahere aliquid alteri, et hominem hominis incommodo suum augere commodum, magis est contra naturam, quam mors, quam paupertas, quam dolor, quam cætera quæ possunt aut corpori accidere, aut rebus externis.* Tull.

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**I** Am perswaded there are few men, of generous principles, who would seek after great places, were it not rather to have an opportunity in their hands of obliging their particular friends, or those whom they look upon as men of worth, than to procure wealth and honour for themselves. To an honest mind the best perquisites of a place are the advantages it gives a man of doing good.

Those who are under the great Officers of State, and are the instruments by which they act, have more frequent opportunities for the exercise of compassion, and benevolence, than their Superiors themselves. These men know every little case that is to come before the great man, and if they are possessed with honest minds, will consider poverty as a recommendation in the person who applies himself to them, and make the justice of his cause the most powerful Sollicitor in his behalf. A man of this temper, when he is in a post of business, becomes a blessing to the public: he patronizes the orphan and the widow, assists the friendless, and guides the ignorant: he does not reject the person's pretensions, who does not know how to explain them, or refuse doing a good office for a man because he cannot pay the fee of it. In short, though he regulates himself in all his proceedings by justice and equity, he finds a thousand occasions for all the good-natured offices of generosity and compassion.

A man is unfit for such a place of trust, who is of a sower untractable nature, or has any other passion that makes him uneasy to those who approach him. Roughness of temper is apt to discountenance the timorous or modest. The proud man discourages those from approaching him, who are of

of a mean condition, and who most want his assistance. The impatient man will not give himself time to be informed of the matter that lies before him. An Officer with one or more of these unbecoming qualities, is sometimes looked upon as a proper person to keep off impertinence and solicitation from his superior; but this is a kind of merit, that can never atone for the injustice which may very often arise from it.

There are two other vicious qualities which render a man very unfit for such a place of trust. The first of these is a dilatory temper, which commits innumerable cruelties without design. The maxim which several have laid down for a man's conduct in ordinary life, should be inviolable with a man in office, never to think of doing that to-morrow which may be done to-day. A man who defers doing what ought to be done, is guilty of injustice so long as he defers it. The dispatch of a good office is very often as beneficial to the solicitor as the good office it self. In short, if a man compared the inconveniencies which another suffers by his delays, with the trifling motives and advantages which he himself may reap by such a delay, he would never be guilty of a fault which very often does an irreparable prejudice to the person who depends upon him, and which might be remedied with little trouble to himself.

But in the last place, there is no man so improper to be employed in business, as he who is in any degree capable of corruption; and such an one is the man, who upon any pretence whatsoever, receives more than what is the stated and unquestioned fee of his office. Gratifications, tokens of thankfulness, dispatch money, and the like specious terms, are the pretences under which corruption very frequently shelters it self. An honest man will however look on all these methods as unjustifiable, and will enjoy himself better in a moderate fortune that is gained with honour and reputation, than in an over-grown estate that is cankered with the acquisitions of rapine and exaction. Were all our offices discharged with such an inflexible integrity, we should not see men in all ages, who grow up to exorbitant wealth with the abilities which are to be met with in an ordinary mechanick. I cannot but think that such a corruption proceeds chiefly from mens employing the first that offer themselves, or those who have the character of shrewd worldly men, instead of searching out such as have had a liberal education, and have been trained up in the studies of knowledge and virtue.

It has been observed, that men of learning who take to business, discharge it generally with greater honesty than men of the world. The chief reason for it I take to be as follows. A man that has spent his

youth in reading, has been used to find virtue extolled, and vice stigmatized. A man that has past his time in the world, has often seen vice triumphant, and virtue discountenanced. Extortion, rapine and injustice, which are branded with infamy in books, often give a man a figure in the world; while several qualities which are celebrated in Authors, as generosity, ingenuity and good-nature, impoverish and ruin him. This cannot but have a proportionable effect on men, whose tempers and principles are equally good and vicious.

There would be at least this advantage in employing men of learning and parts in business, that their prosperity would set more gracefully on them, and that we should not see many worthless persons shoot up into the greatest figures of life.

N<sup>o</sup> 470. Friday, August 29.

*Turpe est difficiles habere nugas,  
Et stultus est labor ineptiarum.*

Mart.

I Have been very often disappointed of late years, when upon examining the new edition of a Classic Author, I have found above half the volume taken up with various readings. When I have expected to meet with a learned note upon a doubtful passage in a *Latin* Poet, I have been only informed, that such or such ancient Manuscripts for an *et* write an *ac*, or of some other notable discovery of the like importance. Indeed, when a different reading gives us a different sense, or a new elegance in an Author, the Editor does very well in taking notice of it; but when he only entertains us with the several ways of spelling the same word, and gathers together the various blunders and mistakes of twenty or thirty different transcribers, they only take up the time of the learned Reader, and puzzle the minds of the ignorant. I have often fancied with my self how enraged an old *Latin* Author would be, should he see the several absurdities in sense and grammar, which are imputed to him by some or other of these various readings. In one he speaks nonsense; in another makes use of a word that was never heard of: and indeed there