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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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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^o 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

there is scarce a solecism in writing which the best Author is not guilty of, if we may be at liberty to read him in the words of some Manuscript, which the laborious Editor has thought fit to examine in the prosecution of his work.

I question not but the Ladies and pretty fellows will be very curious to understand what it is that I have been hitherto talking of. I shall therefore give them a notion of this practice, by endeavouring to write after the manner of several persons who make an eminent figure in the republic of letters. To this end we will suppose, that the following Song is an old Ode which I present to the public in a new edition, with the several various readings which I find of it in former editions, and in ancient Manuscripts. Those who cannot relish the various readings, will perhaps find their account in the Song, which never before appeared in print.

*My love was fickle once and changing,
Nor e'er would settle in my heart;
From beauty still to beauty ranging,
In ev'ry face I found a dart.*

*'Twas first a charming shape enslav'd me,
An eye then gave the fatal stroke:
'Till by her wit Corinna sav'd me,
And all my former fetters broke.*

*But now a long and lasting anguish
For Belvidera I endure;
Hourly I sigh and hourly languish,
Nor hope to find the wonted cure.*

*For here the false unconstant lover,
After a thousand beauties shown,
Does new surprizing charms discover,
And finds variety in one.*

Various Readings.

Stanza the first, verse the first. *And changing.*] The *and* in some Manuscripts is written thus, &, but that in the Cotton Library writes it in three distinct letters.

Verse the second. *Nor e'er would.*] Aldus reads it *ever would*; but as this would hurt the metre, we have restored it to its genuine reading,

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by observing that *Syneresis* which had been neglected by ignorant transcribers.

Ibid. *In my heart.*] Scaliger, and others, *on my heart.*

Verse the fourth. *I found a dart.*] The *Vatican* Manuscript for *I* reads *it*, but this must have been the hallucination of the transcriber, who probably mistook the dash of the *I* for a *T*.

Stanza the second, Verse the second. *The fatal stroke.*] *Scioppius*, *Salmasius*, and many others, for *the* read *a*, but I have stuck to the usual reading.

Verse the third. *Till by her wit.*] Some Manuscripts have it *his wit*, others *your*, others *their wit*. But as I find *Corinna* to be the name of a woman in other Authors, I cannot doubt but it should be *her*.

Stanza the third, Verse the first. *A long and lasting anguish.*] The *German* Manuscript reads *a lasting passion*, but the rhyme will not admit it.

Verse the second. *For Belvidera I endure.*] Did not all the Manuscripts reclaim, I should change *Belvidera* into *Pelvidera*; *Pelvis* being used by several of the ancient Comic writers for a Looking-glass, by which means the etymology of the word is very visible, and *Pelvidera* will signify a Lady who often looks in her glass, as indeed she had very good reason, if she had all those beauties which our Poet here ascribes to her.

Verse the third. *Hourly I sigh and hourly languish.*] Some for the word *hourly* read *daily*, and others *nightly*; the last has great authorities of its side.

Verse the fourth. *The wanted cure.*] The Elder *Stevens* reads *wanted cure*.

Stanza the fourth, Verse the second. *After a thousand beauties.*] In several copies we meet with a *hundred beauties*, by the usual error of the transcribers, who probably omitted a cypher, and had not taste enough to know, that the word *thousand* was ten times a greater compliment to the Poet's Mistress than an *hundred*.

Verse the fourth. *And finds variety in one.*] Most of the ancient Manuscripts have it *in two*. Indeed so many of them concur in this last reading, that I am very much in doubt whether it ought not to take place. There are but two reasons which incline me to the reading, as I have published it; first, because the rhyme, and, secondly, because the sense is preserved by it. It might likewise proceed from the oscurity of transcribers, who, to dispatch their work the sooner, used to write all numbers in cypher, and seeing the figure 1 followed by a little dash of the pen,

pen, as is customary in old Manuscripts, they perhaps mistook the dash for a second figure, and by casting up both together composed out of them the figure 2. But this I shall leave to the learned, without determining any thing in a matter of so great uncertainty.

N^o 471. *Saturday, August 30.*

Ἐν ἐλπίσιν χρεὶ τὰς σαρπες ἔχειν εἶον.

Euripid.

THE *Time present* seldom affords sufficient employment to the mind of man. Objects of pain or pleasure, love or admiration, do not lie thick enough together in life to keep the soul in constant action, and supply an immediate exercise to its faculties. In order, therefore, to remedy this defect, that the mind may not want business, but always have materials for thinking, she is endowed with certain powers, that can recall what is passed, and anticipate what is to come.

That wonderful faculty, which we call the Memory, is perpetually looking back, when we have nothing present to entertain us. It is like those repositories in several animals, that are filled with stores of their former food, on which they may ruminate when their present pasture fails.

As the memory relieves the mind in her vacant moments, and prevents any chasms of thought by ideas of what is *past*, we have other faculties that agitate and employ her upon what *is to come*. These are the passions of Hope and Fear.

By these two passions we reach forward into futurity, and bring up to our present thoughts objects that lie hid in the remotest depths of time. We suffer misery, and enjoy happiness, before they are in Being; we can set the Sun and Stars forward, or lose sight of them by wandering into those retired parts of eternity, when the heavens and earth shall be no more.

By the way, who can imagine that the existence of a creature is to be circumscribed by Time, whose thoughts are not? But I shall, in this paper, confine my self to that particular passion which goes by the name of Hope.

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