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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

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— *Quæ res in se neque consilium neque modum
Habet ullum, eam consilio regere non potes.* Ter.

IT is an old observation, which has been made of politicians who would rather ingratiate themselves with their Sovereign, than promote his real service, that they accommodate their counsels to his inclinations, and advise him to such actions only as his heart is naturally set upon. The Privy-counsellor of one in love must observe the same conduct, unless he would forfeit the friendship of the person who desires his advice. I have known several odd cases of this nature. *Hipparchus* was going to marry a common woman, but being resolved to do nothing without the advice of his friend *Philander*, he consulted him upon the occasion. *Philander* told him his mind freely, and represented his Mistress to him in such strong colours, that the next morning he received a challenge for his pains, and before twelve a clock was run through the body by the man who had asked his advice. *Celia* was more prudent on the like occasion; she desired *Leonilla* to give her opinion freely upon a young fellow who made his addresses to her. *Leonilla*, to oblige her, told her with great frankness, that she looked upon him as one of the most worthless — *Celia*, foreseeing what a character she was to expect, begged her not to go on, for that she had been privately married to him above a fortnight. The truth of it is, a woman seldom asks advice before she has bought her wedding-cloathes. When she has made her own choice, for form's sake she sends a *Conge d'elire* to her friends.

If we look into the secret springs and motives that set people at work on these occasions, and put them upon asking advice, which they never intend to take; I look upon it to be none of the least, that they are incapable of keeping a secret which is so very pleasing to them. A girl longs to tell her confidant, that she hopes to be married in a little time, and, in order to talk of the pretty fellow that dwells so much in her thoughts, asks her very gravely, what she would advise her to in a case of so much difficulty.

difficulty. Why else should *Melissa*, who had not a thousand pounds in the world, go into every quarter of the town to ask her acquaintance whether they would advise her to take *Tom Townly*, that made his addresses to her with an estate of five thousand a year? 'Tis very pleasant, on this occasion, to hear the Lady propose her doubts, and to see the pains she is at to get over them.

I must not here omit a practice that is in use among the vainer part of our own sex, who will often ask a friend's advice, in relation to a fortune whom they are never likely to come at. *WILL. HONEYCOMB*, who is now on the verge of threescore, took me aside not long since, and asked me in his most serious look, whether I would advise him to marry my Lady *Betty Single*, who, by the way, is one of the greatest fortunes about town. I stared him full in the face upon so strange a question; upon which he immediately gave me an inventory of her jewels and estate, adding, that he was resolved to do nothing in a matter of such consequence without my approbation. Finding he would have an answer, I told him, if he could get the Lady's consent, he had mine. This is about the tenth match which, to my knowledge, *WILL.* has consulted his friends upon, without ever opening his mind to the party herself.

I have been engaged in this subject by the following letter, which comes to me from some notable young female scribe, who, by the contents of it, seems to have carried matters so far, that she is ripe for asking advice; but as I would not lose her good-will, nor forfeit the reputation which I have with her for wisdom, I shall only communicate the letter to the publick, without returning any answer to it.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

“ **N**OW, Sir, the thing is this: *Mr. Shapely* is the prettiest Gentle-
 “ man about town. He is very tall, but not too tall neither. He
 “ dances like an Angel. His mouth is made I do not know how, but it
 “ is the prettiest that I ever saw in my life. He is always laughing, for
 “ he has an infinite deal of wit. If you did but see how he rolls his stock-
 “ ings! He has a thousand pretty fancies, and I am sure, if you saw him,
 “ you would like him. He is a very good scholar, and can talk *Latin*
 “ as fast as *English*. I wish you could but see him dance. Now you must
 “ understand poor *Mr. Shapely* has no estate; but how can he help that,
 “ you know? And yet my friends are so unreasonable as to be always
 “ teasing me about him, because he has no estate: but I am sure he has
 “ that that is better than an estate; for he is a good-natured, ingenious,

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“ mo-

“ modest, civil, tall, well-bred, handsome man, and I am obliged to him
 “ for his civilities ever since I saw him. I forgot to tell you that he has
 “ black eyes, and looks upon me now and then as if he had tears in
 “ them. And yet my friends are so unreasonable, that they would have
 “ me be uncivil to him. I have a good portion which they cannot hin-
 “ der me of, and I shall be fourteen on the 29th day of *August* next, and
 “ am therefore willing to settle in the world as soon as I can, and so is
 “ Mr. *Shapely*. But every body I advise with here is poor Mr. *Shapely*'s
 “ enemy. I desire therefore you will give me your advice, for I know
 “ you are a wise man; and if you advise me well, I am resolved to fol-
 “ low it. I heartily wish you could see him dance, and am,

S I R, Your most humble Servant, B. D.

“ He loves your *Spectators* mightily.

N^o 476. Friday, September 5.

----- *Lucidus ordo.*

Hor.

AMONG my daily papers which I bestow on the publick, there
 are some which are written with regularity and method, and
 others that run out into the wildness of those compositions which
 go by the name of *Essays*. As for the first, I have the whole scheme of
 the discourse in my mind before I set pen to paper. In the other kind
 of writing, it is sufficient that I have several thoughts on a subject, with-
 out troubling my self to range them in such order, that they may seem to
 grow out of one another, and be disposed under the proper heads. *Se-
 neca* and *Montaigne* are patterns for writing in this last kind, as *Tully*
 and *Aristotle* excel in the other. When I read an Author of Genius who
 writes without method, I fancy my self in a wood that abounds with a great
 many noble objects, rising among one another in the greatest confusion
 and disorder. When I read a methodical discourse, I am in a regular
 plantation, and can place my self in its several centers, so as to take a
 view of all the lines and walks that are struck from them. You may
 ramble