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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N° 481. Thursday, September 11.

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----- *Uti non*
Compositus melius cum Bitbo Bacchius, in jus
Acres procurrant----- Hor.

IT is sometimes pleasant enough to consider the different notions, which different persons have of the same thing. If men of low condition very often set a value on things, which are not prized by those who are in a higher station of life, there are many things these esteem which are in no value among persons of an inferior rank. Common people are, in particular, very much astonished, when they hear of those solemn contests and debates, which are made among the Great upon the punctilio's of a public ceremony; and wonder to hear that any business of consequence should be retarded by those little circumstances, which they represent to themselves as trifling and insignificant. I am mightily pleased with a porter's decision in one of Mr. *Southern's* Plays, which is founded upon that fine distress of a virtuous woman's marrying a second husband, while her first was yet living. The first husband, who was supposed to have been dead, returning to his house after a long absence, raises a noble perplexity for the tragic part of the Play. In the mean while, the nurse and the porter conferring upon the difficulties that would ensue in such a case, honest *Sampson* thinks the matter may be easily decided, and solves it very judiciously, by the old proverb, that if his first master be still living, *The man must have his mare again.* There is nothing in my time which has so much surprized and confounded the greatest part of my honest countrymen, as the present controversy between Count *Rechteren* and Monsieur *Mesnage*, which employs the wise heads of so many nations, and holds all the affairs of *Europe* in suspense.

Upon my going into a Coffee-house yesterday, and lending an ear to the next table, which was encompassed with a circle of inferior politicians, one of them, after having read over the news very attentively, broke

broke out into the following remarks. I am afraid, says he, this unhappy rupture between the Footmen at *Utrecht* will retard the peace of christendom. I wish the Pope may not be at the bottom of it. His Holiness has a very good hand at fomenting a division, as the poor *Swiss Cantons* have lately experienced to their cost. If Monsieur *What-d'ye-call-him's* domesticks will not come to an accommodation, I do not know how the quarrel can be ended, but by a religious war.

Why truly, says a *Wifeacre* that sat by him, were I as the King of *France*, I would scorn to take part with the footmen of either side: here's all the business of *Europe* stands still, because Monsieur *Mesnager's* man has had his head broke. If Count *Rectrum* had given them a pot of ale after it, all would have been well, without any of this bustle; but they say he is a warm man, and does not care to be made mouths at.

Upon this, one, that had held his tongue hitherto, began to exert himself; declaring, that he was very well pleased the plenipotentiaries of our christian Princes took this matter into their serious consideration; for that Lacqueys were never so saucy and pragmatical, as they are now-a-days, and that he should be glad to see them taken down in the treaty of peace, if it might be done without prejudice to the publick affairs.

One, who sat at the other end of the table, and seemed to be in the interests of the *French King*, told them, that they did not take the matter right, for that his most christian Majesty did not resent this matter because it was an injury done to Monsieur *Mesnager's* footmen; for, says he, what are Monsieur *Mesnager's* footmen to him? but because it was done to his subjects. Now, says he, let me tell you, it would look very odd for a subject of *France* to have a bloody nose, and his Sovereign not to take notice of it. He is obliged in honour to defend his people against hostilities; and if the *Dutch* will be so insolent to a crowned Head, as, in any wise, to cuff or kick those who are under *his* protection, I think he is in the right to call them to an account for it.

This distinction set the controversy upon a new foot, and seemed to be very well approved by most that heard it, till a little warm fellow, who declared himself a friend to the house of *Austria*, fell most unmercifully upon his *Gallick* Majesty, as encouraging his subjects to make mouths at their betters, and afterwards skreening them from the punishment that was due to their insolence. To which he added, that the *French* nation was so addicted to grimace, that if there was not a stop put to it at the general Congress, there would be no walking the streets for them in a time of peace, especially if they continued masters of the *West-Indies*.

The little man proceeded with a great deal of warmth, declaring, that if the Allies were of his mind, he would oblige the *French* King to burn his gallies, and tolerate the protestant religion in his dominions, before he would sheath his sword. He concluded with calling Monsieur *Mesnager* an insignificant prig.

The dispute was now growing very warm, and one does not know where it would have ended, had not a young man of about one and twenty, who seems to have been brought up with an eye to the law, taken the debate into his hand, and given it as his opinion, that neither Count *Rechteren* nor Monsieur *Mesnager* had behaved themselves right in this affair. Count *Rechteren*, says he, should have made affidavit that his servants had been affronted, and then Monsieur *Mesnager* would have done him justice, by taking away their liveries from them, or some other way that he might have thought the most proper; for let me tell you, if a man makes a mouth at me, I am not to knock the teeth out of it for his pains. Then again, as for Monsieur *Mesnager*, upon his servant's being beaten, why! he might have had his action of assault and battery. But as the case now stands, if you will have my opinion, I think they ought to bring it to Referees.

I heard a great deal more of this conference, but I must confess with little edification; for all I could learn at last from these honest Gentlemen, was, that the matter in debate was of too high a nature for such heads as theirs, or mine, to comprehend.

N° 482. Friday, September 12.

Floriferis ut apes in salibus omnia libant.

Lucr.

WHEN I have published any single paper that falls in with the popular taste, and pleases more than ordinary, it always brings me in a great return of letters. My *Tuesday's* discourse, wherein I gave several admonitions to the fraternity of the *Henpeck'd*, has already produced me very many correspondents; the reason I cannot guess at, unless it be that such a discourse is of general use, and every married man's money.