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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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flush of good-nature when they are once sweetned; he owned to me very frankly, he had been much imposed upon by those false accounts of things he had heard in the country; and that he would make it his business, upon his return thither, to set his neighbours right, and give them a more just notion of the present state of affairs.

What confirm'd my friend in this excellent temper of mind, and gave him an inexpressible satisfaction, was a message he received, as we were walking together, from the prisoner, for whom he had given his testimony in his late tryal. This person having been condemned for his part in the late rebellion, sent him word that his Majesty had been graciously pleas'd to reprieve him, with several of his friends, in order, as it was thought, to give them their lives; and that he hop'd before he went out of town they should have a cheerful meeting, and drink health and prosperity to King *George*.

N^o 48. *Monday, June 4.*

Tu tamen, si habes aliquam spem de Republica, sive desperas; ea para, meditare, cogita, quæ esse in eo cive ac viro debent, qui sit Rempublicam afflictam et oppressam miseris temporibus ac perditis moribus in veterem dignitatem ac libertatem vindicaturus.

Cicer.

THE condition of a Minister of state is only suited to persons, who, out of a love to their King and country, desire rather to be useful to the publick, than easy to themselves. When a man is posted in such a station, whatever his behaviour may be, he is sure, beside the natural fatigue and trouble of it, to incur the envy of some, and the displeasure of others; as he will have many rivals, whose ambition he cannot satisfy, and many dependents whose wants he cannot provide for. These are misfortunes inseparable from such publick employments in all countries; but there are several others which hang upon this condition of life in our *British* government, more than any other sovereignty in *Europe*:

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As in the first place, there is no other nation which is so equally divided into two opposite parties, whom it is impossible to please at the same time. Our notions of the publick good, with relation both to our selves and foreigners, are of so different a nature, that those measures which are extolled by one half of the Kingdom, are naturally decryed by the other. Besides, that in a *British* administration, many acts of government are absolutely necessary, in which one of the parties must be favoured and obliged, in opposition to their antagonists. So that the most perfect administration, conducted by the most consummate wisdom and probity, must unavoidably produce opposition, enmity, and defamation, from multitudes who are made happy by it.

Farther, it is peculiarly observed of our nation, that almost every man in it is a politician, and hath a scheme of his own, which he thinks preferable to that of any other person. Whether this may proceed from that spirit of liberty which reigns among us, or from those great numbers of all ranks and conditions, who from time to time are concerned in the *British* legislature, and by that means are let into the business of the nation, I shall not take upon me to determine. But for this reason it is certain, that a *British* Ministry must expect to meet with many censurers, even in their own party, and ought to be satisfied, if, allowing to every particular man that his private scheme is wisest, they can persuade him that next to his own plan that of the government is the most eligible.

Besides, we have a set of very honest and well-meaning Gentlemen in *England*, not to be met with in other countries, who take it for granted they can never be in the wrong, so long as they oppose Ministers of state. Those, whom they have admired through the whole course of their lives for their honour and integrity, though they still persist to act in their former character, and change nothing but their stations, appear to them in a disadvantageous light, as soon as they are placed upon state-eminences. Many of these Gentlemen have been used to think there is a kind of slavery in concurring with the measures of great men, and that the good of the country is inconsistent with the inclinations of the Court: by the strength of these prejudices, they are apt to fancy a man loses his honesty, from the very moment that he is made the most capable of being useful to the publick; and will not consider that it is every whit as honourable to assist a good Minister, as to oppose a bad one.

In the last place, we may observe, that there are greater numbers of persons who solicit for places, and perhaps are fit for them, in our own country,

country, than in any other. To which we must add, That, by the nature of our constitution, it is in the power of more particular persons in this kingdom, than in any other, to distress the government when they are disobliged. A *British* Minister must therefore expect to see many of those friends and dependants fall off from him, whom he cannot gratify in their demands upon him; since, to use the phrase of a late Statesman, who knew very well how to form a party, *The pasture is not large enough.*

Upon the whole: The condition of a *British* Minister labours under so many difficulties, that we find in almost every reign since the conquest, the chief Ministers have been new men, or such as have raised themselves to the greatest posts in the government, from the state of private Gentlemen. Several of them neither rose from any conspicuous family, nor left any behind them, being of that class of eminent persons, whom Sir *Francis Bacon* speaks of, who, like Comets or blazing stars, draw upon them the whole attention of the age in which they appear, though no body knows whence they came, nor where they are lost. Persons of Hereditary wealth and title have not been over-forward to engage in so great a scene of cares and perplexities, nor to run all the risks of so dangerous a situation. Nay, many whose greatness and fortune were not made to their hands, and had sufficient qualifications and opportunities of rising to these high posts of trust and honour, have been deterred from such pursuits by the difficulties that attend them, and chose rather to be easie than powerful; or, if I may use the expression, to be carried in the Chariot than to drive it.

As the condition of a Minister of State in general is subject to many burthens and vexations; and as that of a *British* Minister in particular is involved in several hazards and difficulties peculiar to our own country: so is this high station exposed more than ordinary to such inconveniencies in the present juncture of affairs; first, as it is the beginning of a new establishment among us; and secondly, as this establishment hath been disturbed by a dangerous rebellion.

If we look back into our *English* history, we shall always find the first Monarch of a new line received with the greatest opposition, and reconciling to himself by degrees the duty and affection of his people. The government, on such occasions, is always shaken before it settles. The inveteracy of the peoples prejudices, and the artifices of domestick enemies, compelled their rulers to make use of all means for reducing them to their allegiance, which perhaps, after all, was brought about rather by
time

time than by policy, When commotions and disturbances are of an extraordinary and unusual nature, the proceedings of the government must be so too. The remedy must be suited to the evil, and I know no juncture more difficult to a Minister of State, than such as requires uncommon methods to be made use of; when at the same time no other can be made use of, than what are prescribed by the known laws of our constitution. Several measures may be absolutely necessary in such a juncture, which may be represented as hard and severe, and would not be proper in a time of publick peace and tranquillity. In this case *Virgil's* excuse, which he puts in the mouth of a fictitious Sovereign upon a complaint of this nature, hath the utmost force of reason and justice on its side.

Res dura et regni novitas me talia cogunt.

The difficulties that I meet with in the beginning of my reign make such a proceeding necessary.

In the next place: As this establishment has been disturbed by a dangerous rebellion, the Ministry has been involved in many additional and supernumerary difficulties. It is a common remark, that *English* Ministers never fare so well as in a time of war with a foreign power, which diverts the private feuds and animosities of the nation, and turns their efforts upon the common enemy. As a foreign war is favourable to a Ministry, a Rebellion is no less dangerous; if it succeeds, they are the first persons who must fall a sacrifice to it; if it is defeated, they naturally become odious to all the secret favourers and abettors of it. Every method they make use of for preventing or suppressing it, and for deterring others from the like practices for the future, must be unacceptable and displeasing to the friends, relations and accomplices of the guilty. In cases where it is thought necessary to make examples, it is the humour of the multitude to forget the crime and remember the punishment. However, we have already seen, and still hope to see, so many instances of mercy in his Majesty's government, that our chief Ministers have more to fear from the murmurs of their too violent friends, than from the reproaches of their enemies.



Friday,