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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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“ The management of a husband is built upon the following doctrines,
 “ which are universally assented to by the whole Club. Not to give him
 “ his head at first. Not to allow him too great freedoms and familiari-
 “ ties. Not to be treated by him like a raw girl, but as a woman that
 “ knows the world. Not to lessen any thing of her former figure. To
 “ celebrate the generosity, or any other virtue, of a deceased husband,
 “ which she would recommend to his successor. To turn away all his
 “ old friends and servants, that she may have the dear man to her self.
 “ To make him disinheret the undutiful children of any former wife.
 “ Never to be thoroughly convinced of his affection, until he has made
 “ over to her all his goods and chattels.

“ After so long a Letter, I am, without more ceremony,

Your humble servant, &c.

N^o 562. Friday, July 2.

-----Præsens, absens ut sies.

Ter.

IT is a hard and nice subject for a man to speak of himself, says Cowley; it grates his own heart to say any thing of disparagement, and the Reader's ears to hear any thing of praise from him. Let the tenor of his discourse be what it will upon this subject, it generally proceeds from *Vanity*. An ostentatious man will rather relate a blunder or an absurdity he has committed, than be debarred from talking of his own dear person.

Some very great writers have been guilty of this fault. It is observed of *Tully* in particular, that his works run very much in the first person, and that he takes all occasions of doing himself justice. “ Does he think, “ says *Brutus*, that his Consulship deserves more applause than my putting *Cæsar* to death, because I am not perpetually talking of the Ides “ of *March*, as he is of the Nones of *December*?” I need not acquaint my learned Reader, that in the Ides of *March*, *Brutus* destroyed *Cæsar*, and that *Cicero* quashed the conspiracy of *Cataline* in the Calends of *December*.

cember. How shocking soever this great man's talking of himself might have been to his contemporaries, I must confess I am never better pleased than when he is on this subject. Such openings of the heart give a man a thorough insight into his personal character, and illustrate several passages in the history of his life: besides, that there is some little pleasure in discovering the infirmity of a great man, and seeing how the opinion he has of himself agrees with what the world entertains of him.

The Gentlemen of *Port-royal*, who were more eminent for their learning and their humility than any other in *France*, banished the way of speaking in the first person out of all their works, as arising from vain-glory and self-conceit. To shew their particular aversion to it, they branded this form of writing with the name of an *Egotism*; a figure not to be found among the ancient rhetoricians.

The most violent Egotism which I have met with in the course of my reading, is that of Cardinal *Woolsey*, *Ego et Rex meus, I and my King*; as perhaps the most eminent Egotist that ever appeared in the world, was *Montagne* the Author of the celebrated *Essays*. This lively old *Gascon* has woven all his bodily infirmities into his works, and after having spoken of the faults or virtues of any other man, immediately publishes to the world how it stands with himself in that particular. Had he kept his own counsel, he might have passed for a much better man, though perhaps he would not have been so diverting an Author. The title of an *Essay* promises perhaps a discourse upon *Virgil* or *Julius Cæsar*; but when you look into it, you are sure to meet with more upon Monsieur *Montagne* than either of them. The younger *Scaliger*, who seems to have been no great friend to this Author, after having acquainted the world that his father sold herrings, adds these words; *La grande sadoise de Montagne, qui a escrit qu'il aimoit mieux le vin blanc—que diable a-t-on à faire de sçavoir ce qu'il aime? For my part, says Montagne, I am a great lover of your white wines—What the Devil signifies it to the publick, says Scaliger, whether he is a lover of white wines or of red wines?*

I cannot here forbear mentioning a tribe of Egotists for whom I have always had a mortal aversion, I mean the Authors of *Memoirs*, who are never mentioned in any works but their own, and who raise all their productions out of this single figure of speech.

Most of our modern Prefaces favour very strongly of the Egotism. Every insignificant Author fancies it of importance to the world, to know that he writ his book in the country, that he did it to pass away some of

his idle hours, that it was published at the importunity of friends, or that his natural temper, studies or conversations, directed him to the choice of his subject.

— *Id populus curat scilicet.*

Such informations cannot but be highly improving to the Reader.

In works of humour, especially when a man writes under a fictitious personage, the talking of one's self may give some diversion to the publick; but I would advise every other writer never to speak of himself, unless there be something very considerable in his character: though I am sensible this rule will be of little use in the world, because there is no man who fancies his thoughts worth publishing, that does not look upon himself as a considerable person.

I shall close this paper with a remark upon such as are Egotists in conversation: these are generally the vain or shallow part of mankind, people being naturally full of themselves when they have nothing else in them. There is one kind of Egotists which is very common in the world, though I do not remember that any writer has taken notice of them; I mean those empty conceited fellows, who repeat as sayings of their own, or some of their particular friends, several jests which were made before they were born, and which every one who has conversed in the world has heard a hundred times over. A forward young fellow of my acquaintance was very guilty of this absurdity: he would be always laying a new scene for some old piece of wit, and telling us, That as he and *Jack* such-a-one were together, one or t'other of them had such a conceit on such an occasion; upon which he would laugh very heartily, and wonder the company did not join with him. When his mirth was over, I have often reprehended him out of *Terence*, *Tuumne, obsecro te, hoc dictum erat? vetus credidi.* But finding him still incorrigible, and having a kindness for the young coxcomb, who was otherwise a good-natured fellow, I recommended to his perusal the *Oxford* and *Cambridge* Jest, with several little pieces of pleasantry of the same nature. Upon the reading of them, he was under no small confusion to find that all his jokes had passed through several editions, and that what he thought was a new conceit, and had appropriated to his own use, had appeared in print before he or his ingenious friends were ever heard of. This had so good an effect upon him, that he is content at present to pass for a man of plain sense in his ordinary conversation, and is never facetious but when he knows his company.

Friday.