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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N^o 101. *Tuesday, July 7.*

Tros Tyriusve mibi nullo discrimine habetur. Virg.

THIS being the great day of thanksgiving for the Peace, I shall present my reader with a couple of letters that are the fruits of it. They are written by a Gentleman who has taken this opportunity to see *France*, and has given his Friends in *England* a general Account of what he has there met with, in several epistles. Those which follow were put into my hands with liberty to make them publick, and I question not but my reader will think himself obliged to me for so doing.

S I R,

“ SINCE I had the happiness to see you last, I have encountered as many misfortunes as a Knight-errant. I had a fall into the water at *Calais*, and since that several bruises upon land, lame post-horses by day, and hard beds at night, with many other dismal adventures.

Quorum animus meminisse horret luctuque refugit.

“ My arrival at *Paris* was at first no less uncomfortable, where I could not see a face nor hear a word that I ever met with before; so that my most agreeable companions have been statues and pictures, which are many of them very extraordinary, but what particularly recommends them to me is, that they do not speak *French*, and have a very good quality, rarely to be met with in this country, of not being too talkative.

“ I am settled for some time at *Paris*. Since my being here I have made the Tour of all the King’s palaces, which has been I think the pleasantest part of my life. I could not believe it was in the power of art to furnish out such a multitude of noble scenes as I there met with, or that so many delightful prospects could lie within the compass of a man’s imagination. There is every thing done that can be expected from a Prince who removes mountains, turns the course of rivers, raises woods in a day’s time, and plants a village or town on such a particular

“ ticular spot of ground, only for the bettering of a view. One would
 “ wonder to see how many tricks he has made the water play for his di-
 “ version. It turns it self into pyramids, triumphal arches, glafs-bottles,
 “ imitates a fire-work, rises in a mist, or tells a itory out of *Æsop*.

“ I do not believe, as good a Poet as you are, that you can make finer
 “ landskips than those about the King’s houses, or with all your descrip-
 “ tions raise a more magnificent palace than *Versailles*. I am however fo
 “ singular as to prefer *Fontaine bleau* to all the rest. It is situated a-
 “ mong rocks and woods, that give you a fine variety of salvage prospects,
 “ The King has humour’d the Genius of the place, and only made use of
 “ so much art as is necessary to help and regulate Nature, without refor-
 “ ming her too much. The cascades seem to break through the clefts
 “ and cracks of rocks that are covered over with moss, and look as if
 “ they were piled upon one another by accident. There is an artificial
 “ wildness in the meadows, walks, and canals; and the garden, instead of
 “ a wall, is fenced on the lower end by a natural Mound of rock-work
 “ that strikes the eye very agreeably. For my part, I think there is some-
 “ thing more charming in these rude heaps of stone than in so many
 “ statues, and would as soon see a river winding through woods and
 “ meadows, as when it is tossed up in so many whimsical figures at *Ver-
 “ sailles*. To pass from works of nature to those of art. In my opinion,
 “ the pleasantest part of *Versailles* is the gallery. Every one sees on
 “ each side of it something that will be sure to please him. For one of
 “ them commands a view of the finest garden in the world, and the
 “ other is wainscotted with looking-glafs. The history of the present
 “ King till the year 16 is painted on the roof by *le Brun*, so that his Ma-
 “ jesty has actions enough by him to furnish another gallery much longer
 “ than the present.

“ The painter has represented his most Christian Majesty under the fi-
 “ gure of *Jupiter*, throwing thunder-bolts all about the cieling, and stri-
 “ king terror into the *Danube* and *Rhine*, that lie astonished and blasted
 “ with lightning a little above the cornice.

“ But what makes all these shows the more agreeable is, the great
 “ kindness and affability that is shown to strangers. If the *French* do not
 “ excel the *English* in all the arts of humanity, they do at least in the
 “ outward expressions of it. And upon this, as well as other accounts,
 “ though I believe the *English* are a much wiser nation, the *French* are
 “ undoubtedly much more happy. Their old men in particular are, I
 “ believe, the most agreeable in the world. An antediluvian could not
 “ have

“ have more life and briskness in him at threescore and ten: For that
 “ fire and levity which makes the young ones scarce conversible, when
 “ a little wasted and tempered by years, makes a very pleasant gay old
 “ age. Besides, this national fault of being so very talkative looks natu-
 “ ral and graceful in one that has grey hairs to countenance it. The
 “ mentioning this fault in the *French* must put me in mind to finish my
 “ letter, lest you think me already too much infected by their conversa-
 “ tion; but I must desire you to consider, that travelling does in this
 “ respect lay a little claim to the privilege of old age.

I am, S I R, &c.

S I R,

Blois, May 15. N. S.

“ I Cannot pretend to trouble you with any news from this place,
 “ where the only advantage I have, besides getting the language, is
 “ to see the manners and temper of the people, which I believe may be
 “ better learnt here than in courts and greater cities, where artifice and
 “ disguise are more in fashion.

“ I have already seen, as I informed you in my last, all the King's pa-
 “ laces, and have now seen a great part of the country. I never thought
 “ there had been in the world such an excessive magnificence or pover-
 “ ty as I have met with in both together. One can scarce conceive the
 “ pomp that appears in every thing about the King; but at the same time
 “ it makes half his subjects go barefoot. The people are, however, the
 “ happiest in the world, and enjoy, from the benefit of their climate,
 “ and natural constitution, such a perpetual gladness of heart and easiness
 “ of temper as even liberty and plenty cannot bestow on those of other
 “ nations. 'Tis not in the power of want or slavery to make 'em mi-
 “ serable. There is nothing to be met with but mirth and poverty.
 “ Every one sings, laughs, and starves. Their conversation is generally
 “ agreeable, for if they have any wit or sense, they are sure to show it.
 “ They never mend upon a second meeting, but use all the freedom and
 “ familiarity at first sight, that a long intimacy or abundance of wine can
 “ scarce draw from an *Englishman*. Their women are perfect mistresses
 “ in this art of showing themselves to the best advantage. They are al-
 “ ways gay and sprightly, and set off the worst faces in *Europe* with the
 “ best airs. Every one knows how to give her self as charming a look
 “ and posture as Sir *Godfrey Kneller* could draw her in. I cannot end
 “ my letter without observing that from what I have already seen of the
 “ world,

“ world, I cannot but set a particular mark of distinction upon those
 “ who abound most in the virtues of their nation, and least with its im-
 “ perfections. When therefore I see the good sense of an *Englishman*
 “ in its highest perfection, without any mixture of the spleen, I hope
 “ you will excuse me if I admire the character, and am ambitious of
 “ subscribing my self,

S I R, Yours, &c.

N^o 102. Wednesday, July 8.

----- *Natos ad flumina primùm*
Deferimus, sævoque gelu duramus et undis.

Virg.

I Am always beating about in my thoughts for something that may turn to the benefit of my dear countrymen. The present season of the year having put most of them in flight summer-suits, has turned my Speculations to a subject that concerns every one who is sensible of cold or heat, which I believe takes in the greatest part of my Readers.

There is nothing in nature more inconstant than the *British* climate, if we except the humour of its inhabitants. We have frequently in one day all the seasons of the year. I have shivered in the dog-days, and been forced to throw off my coat in *January*. I have gone to bed in *August* and rose in *December*. Summer has often caught me in my *Drap de Berry*, and winter in my *Doily* suit.

I remember a very whimsical fellow (commonly known by the name of *Posture-master*) in King *Charles* the Second's reign, who was the plague of all the Taylors about town. He would often send for one of them to take measure of him, but would so contrive it as to have a most immoderate rising in one of his shoulders. When the cloaths were brought home, and tryed upon him, the deformity was removed into the other shoulder. Upon which the Taylor begged pardon for the mistake, and mended it as fast as he could; but upon a third tryal found him a freight shouldered man as one would desire to see, but a little unfortunate in a humpt back. In short, this wandering tumour puzzled all the
 work-