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**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 103. Thursday, July 9.

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How different an old man is *Crassus* from my self. It is indeed the particular distinction of the *Ironsides* to be robust and hardy, to defie the cold and rain, and let the weather do its worst. My father lived till a hundred without a cough, and we have a tradition in the family, that my grandfather used to throw off his hat and go open breasted after four-score. As for my self, they used to fowse me over head and ears in water when I was a boy, so that I am now looked upon as one of the most case-hardened of the whole family of the *Ironsides*. In short, I have been so plunged in water and inured to the cold, that I regard my self as a piece of true-tempered *Steele*, and can say with the above-mentioned *Scythian*, that I am face, or if my enemies please, forehead, all over.

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N<sup>o</sup> 103. *Thursday, July 9.*

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*Dum flammæ Jovis, et sonitus imitatur Olympi.* Virg.

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I Am considering how most of the great *Phænomena*, or appearances in nature, have been imitated by the art of man. Thunder is grown a common drug among the Chymists. Lightning may be bought by the pound. If a man has occasion for a Lambent flame, you have whole sheets of it in a handful of Phosphor. Showers of rain are to be met with in every water-work; and we are informed, that some years ago the Vertuoso's of *France* covered a little vault with artificial snow, which they made to fall above an hour together for the entertainment of his present Majesty.

I am led into this train of thinking by the noble fire-work that was exhibited last night upon the *Thames*. You might there see a little sky filled with innumerable blazing Stars and Meteors. Nothing could be more astonishing than the pillars of flame, clouds of smoke, and multitudes of stars mingled together in such an agreeable confusion. Every Rocket ended in a Constellation, and strowed the air with such a shower of silver spangles, as opened and enlightened the whole scene from time to time. It put me in mind of the lines in *OEdipus*,

*Why*

*Why from the bleeding womb of monstrous night  
Burst forth such myriads of abortive stars?*

In short, the artist did his part to admiration, and was so encompassed with fire and smoke, that one would have thought nothing but a Salamander could have been safe in such a situation.

I was in company with two or three fanciful friends during this whole show. One of them being a Critic, that is, a man who on all occasions is more attentive to what is wanting than what is present, begun to exert his talent upon the several objects we had before us. I am mightily pleased, says he, with that burning cypher. There is no matter in the world so proper to write with as wild-fire, as no characters can be more legible than those which are read by their own light. But as for your cardinal virtues I do not care for seeing them in such combustible figures. Who can imagine *Chastity* with a body of fire, or *Temperance* in a flame? *Justice* indeed may be furnished out of this element as far as her sword goes, and *Courage* may be all over one continued blaze, if the artist pleases.

Our companion observing that we laugh at this unseasonable severity, let drop the Critic, and proposed a subject for a fire-work, which he thought would be very amusing, if executed by so able an artist as he who was at that time entertaining us. The plan he mentioned was a scene in *Milton*. He would have a large piece of machinery represent the *Pandæmonium*, where

——— *from the arched roof*  
*Pendent by subtle magick, many a row*  
*Of starry lamps, and blazing cressets, fed*  
*With Naphtha and Asphaltus, yielded light*  
*As from a sky*———

This might be finely represented by several illuminations disposed in a great frame of wood, with ten thousand beautiful exhalations of fire, which men versed in this art know very well how to raise. The evil spirits at the same time might very properly appear in vehicles of flame, and employ all the tricks of art to terrify and surprize the spectator.

We were well enough pleased with this start of thought, but fancied there was something in it too serious, and perhaps too horrid, to be put in execution.

Upon this a friend of mine gave us an account of a fire-work described, if I am not mistaken, by *Strada*. A Prince of *Italy*, it seems, entertained his mistress with it upon a great lake. In the midst of this lake was a huge floating mountain made by art. The mountain represented *Ætna*, being bored through the top with a monstrous orifice. Upon a signal given the eruption began. Fire and smoke, mixed with several unusual prodigies and figures, made their appearance for some time. On a sudden there was heard a most dreadful rumbling noise within the entrails of the machine. After which the mountain burst, and discovered a vast cavity in that side which faced the Prince and his Court. Within this hollow was *Vulcan's* shop full of fire and clock-work. A column of blue flames issued out incessantly from the forge. *Vulcan* was employed in hammering out thunder-bolts, that every now and then flew up from the anvil with dreadful cracks and flashes. *Venus* stood by him in a figure of the brightest fire, with numberless *Cupids* on all sides of her, that shot out volleys of burning arrows. Before her was an altar with hearts of fire flaming on it. I have forgot several other particulars no less curious, and have only mentioned these to show that there may be a sort of fable or design in a fire-work, which may give an additional beauty to those surprizing objects.

I seldom see any thing that raises wonder in me, which does not give my thoughts a turn that makes my heart the better for it. As I was lying in my bed, and ruminating on what I had seen, I could not forbear reflecting on the insignificancy of human art, when set in comparison with the designs of Providence. In the pursuit of this thought I considered a Comet, or in the language of the vulgar a blazing-star, as a sky-rocket discharged by an hand that is Almighty. Many of my Readers saw that in the year 1680, and if they are not mathematicians will be amazed to hear that it travelled in a much greater degree of swiftness than a cannon ball, and drew after it a tail of fire that was fourscore millions of miles in length. What an amazing thought is it to consider this stupendous body traversing the immensity of the Creation with such a rapidity, and at the same time wheeling about in that line which the Almighty has prescribed for it? that it should move in such an inconceivable fury and combustion, and at the same time with such an exact regularity? How spacious must the Universe be that gives such bodies as these their full play, without suffering the least disorder or confusion by it? What a glorious show are those Beings entertained with, that can look into this great theatre of nature, and see myriads of such tremendous objects wandring through

through those immeasurable depths of *Ether*, and running their appointed courses? Our eyes may hereafter be strong enough to command this magnificent prospect, and our understandings able to find out the several uses of these great parts of the Universe. In the mean time they are very proper objects for our imaginations to contemplate, that we may form more exalted notions of infinite wisdom and power, and learn to think humbly of our selves, and of all the little works of human Invention.

N<sup>o</sup> 104. Friday, July 10.

*Quæ è longinquo magis placent.*

Tacit.

ON *Tuesday* last I published two letters written by a Gentleman in his travels. As they were applauded by my best Readers, I shall this day publish two more from the same hand. The first of them contains a matter of fact which is very curious, and may deserve the attention of those who are versed in our *British* antiquities.

S I R,

*Blois, May 15. N. S.*

“ BECAUSE I am at present out of the road of news, I shall send you a story that was lately given me by a Gentleman of this country, who is descended from one of the persons concerned in the Relation, and very inquisitive to know if there be any of the family now in *England*.

“ I shall only premise to it, that this story is preserved with great care among the writings of this Gentleman’s family, and that it has been given to two or three of our *English* Nobility, when they were in these parts, who could not return any satisfactory answer to the Gentleman, whether there be any of that family now remaining in *Great Britain*.

“ In the Reign of King *John* there lived a nobleman called *John de Sigonia*, Lord of that place in *Tourraine*. His Brothers were *Philip* and *Briant*. *Briant*, when very young, was made one of the *French* King’s