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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 121. Thursday, July 30.

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N<sup>o</sup> 121. *Thursday, July 30.**Hinc exaudiri gemitus, iræque leonum.* Virg.*Roarings of the Lion.*

Old NESTOR,

“**E**VER since the first notice you gave of the erection of that use-  
 “ful monument of yours in *Button's Coffee-house*, I have had  
 “a restless ambition to imitate the renowned *London Prentice*,  
 “and boldly venture my hand down the throat of your *Lion*. The subject  
 “of this letter is a relation of a Club whereof I am a member, and which  
 “has made a considerable noise of late, I mean the *Silent Club*. The  
 “year of our institution is 1694, the number of members twelve, and  
 “the place of our meeting is *Dumb's ally in Holborn*. We look upon  
 “our selves as the relicks of the old *Pythagoreans*, and have this maxim  
 “in common with them, which is the foundation of our design, that  
 “*talking spoils company*. The President of our society is one who was  
 “born deaf and dumb, and owes that blessing to nature, which in the  
 “rest of us is owing to industry alone. I find upon enquiry, that the  
 “greater part of us are married men, and such whose wives are remarkably  
 “loud at home: hither we fly for refuge, and enjoy at once the two  
 “greatest and most valuable blessings, company and retirement. When  
 “that eminent relation of yours, the *Spectator*, published his weekly pa-  
 “pers, and gave us that remarkable account of his silence (for you must  
 “know, though we do not read, yet we inspect all such useful essays) we  
 “seemed unanimous to invite him to partake of our secrecy, but it was  
 “unluckily objected that he had just then published a discourse of his at  
 “his own Club, and had not arrived to that happy inactivity of the  
 “tongue, which we expected from a man of his understanding. You  
 “will wonder, perhaps, how we managed this debate, but it will be ea-  
 “sily accounted for, when I tell you that our fingers are as nimble, and  
 “as infallible interpreters of our thoughts, as other mens tongues are;  
 “yet even this mechanick eloquence is only allowed upon the weighti-  
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" est occasions. We admire the wise institutions of the *Turks*, and other  
 " eastern nations, where all commands are performed by officious mutes;  
 " and we wonder that the polite Courts of christendom should come so  
 " far short of the majesty of the barbarians. *Ben Johnson* has gained an  
 " eternal reputation among us by his Play called *The Silent Woman*. Eve-  
 " ry member here is another *Morose* while the Club is sitting, but at home  
 " may talk as much and as fast as his family occasions require, without  
 " breach of statute. The advantages we find from this Quakerlike assem-  
 " bly are many. We consider, that the understanding of man is liable  
 " to mistakes, and his will fond of contradictions; that disputes, which  
 " are of no weight in themselves, are often very considerable in their ef-  
 " fects. The disuse of the tongue is the only effectual remedy against  
 " these. All party concerns, all private scandal, all insults over another  
 " man's weaker reasons, must there be lost, where no disputes arise. Ano-  
 " ther advantage which follows from the first, (and which is very rarely  
 " to be met with) is, that we are all upon the same level in conversation.  
 " A wag of my acquaintance used to add a third, *viz.* that, if ever we  
 " debate, we are sure to have all our arguments at our fingers ends. Of  
 " all *Longinus's* remarks, we are most enamoured with that excellent  
 " passage, where he mentions *Ajax's* silence as one of the noblest instan-  
 " ces of the sublime, and (if you will allow me to be free with a name-  
 " fake of yours) I should think that the everlasting story-teller *Nestor*, had  
 " he been likened to the ass instead of our hero, he had suffered less by  
 " the comparison.

" I have already described the practice and sentiments of this society,  
 " and shall but barely mention the report of the neighbourhood, that  
 " we are not only as mute as fishes, but that we drink like fishes  
 " too; that we are like the *Welshman's* owl, though we do not  
 " sing, we pay it off with thinking; others take us for an assembly  
 " of disaffected persons, nay their zeal to the government has carried  
 " them so far as to send, last week, a party of Constables to surprize us:  
 " you may easily imagine how exactly we represented the *Roman* Sena-  
 " tors of old, sitting with majestic silence, and undaunted at the approach  
 " of an army of *Gauls*. If you approve of our undertaking, you need  
 " not declare it to the world; your silence shall be interpreted as consent  
 " given to the honourable body of mutes, and in particular to

Your humble Servant, Ned. Mum.

P. S. " We have had but one word spoken since the foundation, for  
 " which the member was expelled by the old *Roman* custom of bending  
 " back the thumb. He had just received the news of the battel of *Hoch-*  
 " *stat*, and being too impatient to communicate his joy, was unfortunat-  
 " ly betrayed into a *lapsus linguae*. We acted on the principles of the  
 " *Roman Manlius*, and though we approved of the cause of his error as  
 " just, we condemned the effect as a manifest violation of his duty.

I never could have thought a dumb man would have roared so well out  
 of my Lion's mouth. My next pretty correspondent, like *Shakespear's*  
 Lion in *Pyramus* and *Thisbe*, roars an it were any nightingale.

Mr. IRONSIDE,

July 28, 1713.

" I Was afraid at first you were only in jest, and had a mind to expose  
 " our nakedness for the diversion of the town; but since I see that  
 " you are in good earnest, and have infallibility of your side, I cannot forbear  
 " returning my thanks to you for the care you take of us, having a friend  
 " who has promised me to give my letters to the Lion, till we can com-  
 " municate our thoughts to you through our own proper vehicle. Now  
 " you must know, dear Sir, that if you do not take care to suppress this  
 " exorbitant growth of the female chest, all that is left of my waist must in-  
 " evitably perish. It is at this time reduced to the depth of four inches,  
 " by what I have already made over to my neck. But if the stripping  
 " design, mentioned by Mrs. *Figleaf* yesterday, should take effect, Sir, I  
 " dread to think what it will come to. In short there is no help for it,  
 " my girdle and all must go. This is the naked truth of the matter. Have  
 " pity on me then, my dear *Guardian*, and preserve me from being so  
 " inhumanly exposed. I do assure you that I follow your precepts as much  
 " as a young woman can, who will live in the world without being laugh-  
 " ed at. I have no hooped petticoat, and when I am a matron will  
 " wear broad tuckers whether you succeed or no. If the flying project  
 " takes, I intend to be the last in wings, being resolved in every thing  
 " to behave my self as becomes

*Your most obedient Ward.*

Cc 2

*Tuesday,*