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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 122. Friday, July 31.

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 N<sup>o</sup> 122. *Friday, July 31.*


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*Nec magis expressi vultus per abenea signa.* Hor.

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**T**HAT I may get out of debt with the public as fast as I can, I shall here give them the remaining part of *Strada's* criticism on the *Latin* heroic poets. My Readers may see the whole work in the three papers numbered 115, 119, 122. Those who are acquainted with the Authors themselves, cannot but be pleased to see them so justly represented; and as for those who have never perused the originals, they may form a judgment of them from such accurate and entertaining copies. The whole piece will show at least how a man of genius (and none else should call himself a Critic) can make the driest art a pleasing amusement.

*The sequel of Strada's prolusion.*

The Poet who personated *Ovid* gives an account of the Chryso-magnet, or of the Loadstone, which attracts gold, after the same manner as the common Loadstone attracts iron. The Author, that he might express *Ovid's* way of thinking, derives this virtue to the Chryso-magnet from a poetical Metamorphosis.

As I was sitting by a well, says he, when I was a boy, my ring dropped into it, when immediately my father fastning a certain stone to the end of a line, let it down into the well. It no sooner touched the surface of the water, but the ring leapt up from the bottom, and clung to it in such a manner, that he drew it out like a fish. My father seeing me wonder at the experiment, gave me the following account of it. When *Deucalion* and *Pyrrha* went about the world, to repair mankind by throwing stones over their heads, the men who rose from them differed in their inclinations according to the places on which the stones fell. Those which fell in the fields became plowmen and shepherds. Those which fell into the water produced sailors and fishermen. Those that fell among the woods and forests gave birth to huntsmen. Among the rest there were

were several that fell upon mountains, that had mines of gold and silver in them. This last race of men immediately betook themselves to the search of these precious metals; but nature being displeas'd to see her self ransack'd, withdrew these her treasures towards the center of the earth. The avarice of man however persisted in its former pursuits, and ransack'd her inmost bowels in quest of the riches which they contained. Nature seeing her self thus plundered by a swarm of miners, was so highly incens'd, that she shook the whole place with an earthquake, and buried the men under their own works. The *Stygian* flames which lay in the neighbourhood of these deep mines, broke out at the same time with great fury, burning up the whole mass of human limbs and earth, until they were hardened and baked into stone. The human bodies that were delving in iron mines were converted into those common loadstones which attract that metal. Those which were in search of gold became chryso-magnets, and still keep their former avarice in their present state of petrification.

*Ovid* had no sooner given over speaking, but the assembly pronounced their opinions of him. Several were so taken with his easie way of writing, and had so formed their tastes upon it, that they had no relish for any composition which was not framed in the *Ovidian* manner. A great many, however, were of a contrary opinion, until at length it was determined by a plurality of voices, that *Ovid* highly deserved the name of a witty man, but that his language was vulgar and trivial, and of the nature of those things which cost no labour in the invention, but are ready found out to a man's hand. In the last place they all agreed, that the greatest objection which lay against *Ovid*, both as to his life and writings, was his having too much wit, and that he would have succeeded better in both, had he rather checked than indulg'd it. *Statius* stood up next with a swelling and haughty air, and made the following story the subject of his poem.

A *German* and a *Portuguese*, when *Vienna* was besieged, having had frequent contests of rivalry, were preparing for a single duel, when on a sudden the walls were attacked by the enemy. Upon this both the *German* and *Portuguese* consented to sacrifice their private resentments to the publick, and to see who could signalize himself most upon the common foe. Each of them did wonders in repelling the enemy from different parts of the wall. The *German* was at length engaged amidst a whole army of *Turks*, until his left arm, that held the shield, was unfortunately lopped off, and he himself so stunned with a blow he had received, that  
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he fell down as dead. The *Portuguese* seeing the condition of his rival, very generously flew to his succour, dispersed the multitudes that were gathered about him, and fought over him as he lay upon the ground. In the mean while the *German* recovered from his trance, and rose up to the assistance of the *Portuguese*, who a little after had his right arm, which held his sword, cut off by the blow of a sabre. He would have lost his life at the same time by a spear which was aimed at his back, had not the *German* slain the person who was aiming at him. These two competitors for fame having received such mutual obligations now fought in conjunction, and as the one was only able to manage the sword and the other the shield, made up but one warrior betwixt them. The *Portuguese* covered the *German*, while the *German* dealt destruction among the enemy. At length, finding themselves faint with loss of blood, and resolving to perish nobly, they advanced to the most shattered part of the wall, and threw themselves down, with a huge fragment of it, upon the heads of the besiegers.

When *Statius* ceased, the old factions immediately broke out concerning his manner of writing. Some gave him very loud acclamations, such as he had received in his life-time, declaring him the only man who had written in a style which was truly heroical, and that he was above all others in his fame as well as in his diction. Others censured him as one who went beyond all bounds in his images and expressions, laughing at the cruelty of his conceptions, the rumbling of his numbers, and the dreadful pomp and bombast of his expressions. There were however a few select judges who moderated between both these extremes, and pronounced upon *Statius*, that there appeared in his style much poetical heat and fire, but withal so much smog as sullied the brightness of it. That there was a majesty in his verse, but that it was the majesty rather of a Tyrant than of a King. That he was often towering among the clouds, but often met with the fate of *Icarus*. In a word, that *Statius* was among the Poets, what *Alexander* the Great is among Heroes, a man of great virtues and of great faults.

*Virgil* was the last of the ancient Poets who produced himself upon this occasion. His subject was the story of *Theutilla*, which being so near that of *Judith* in all its circumstances, and at the same time translated by a very ingenious Gentleman in one of Mr. *Dryden's* miscellanies, I shall here give no farther account of it. When he had done, the whole assembly declared the works of this great Poet a subject rather for their admiration than for their applause, and that if any thing was wanting in

*Virgil's* poetry, it was to be ascribed to a deficiency in the art it self, and not in the genius of this great man. There were however some envious murmurs and detractions heard among the croud, as if there were very frequently verses in him which flagged or wanted spirit, and were rather to be looked upon as faultless than beautiful. But these injudicious censures were heard with a general indignation.

I need not observe to my learned Reader, that the foregoing story of the *German* and *Portuguese* is almost the same in every particular with that of the two rival soldiers in *Cesar's* Commentaries. This prolusion ends with the performance of an *Italian* Poet, full of those little witticisms and conceits which have infected the greatest part of modern poetry.

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N<sup>o</sup> 123. Saturday, August 1.

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— *hic murus abeneus esto*  
*Nil conscire sibi* —

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**T**HERE are a sort of Knights-errant in the world, who, quite contrary to those in romance, are perpetually seeking adventures to bring virgins into distress, and to ruin innocence. When men of rank and figure pass away their lives in these criminal pursuits and practices, they ought to consider that they render themselves more vile and despicable than any innocent man can be, whatever low station his fortune or birth have placed him in. Title and ancestry render a good man more illustrious, but an ill one more contemptible.

*Thy father's merit sets thee up to view,  
 And plants thee in the fairest point of light,  
 To make thy virtues or thy faults conspicuous.*

Cato.

I have often wondered, that these deflowers of innocence, though dead to all the sentiments of virtue and honour, are not restrained by compassion and humanity. To bring sorrow, confusion and infamy  
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