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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 137. Tuesday, August 18.

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Surfeit of curds and cream	2
Took cold sleeping at Church	11
Of a sprain in his shoulder by saving his dog at a Bull-baiting	1
Lady B—s cordial water	2
Knocked down by a quart bottle	1
Frighted out of his wits by a headless dog with sawcer eyes	1
Of <i>October</i>	25
Broke a vein in bawling for a Knight of the shire	1
Old women drowned upon tryal of witchcraft	3
Climbing a crow's nest	2
Chalk and green apples	4
Led into a horse-pond by a <i>Will of the Whisp</i>	1
Died of a fright in an exercise of the trained bands	1
Over-eat himself at a house-warming	1
By the Parson's bull	2
Vagrant beggars worried by the Squire's house-dog	2
Shot by mistake	1
Of a mountebank doctor	6
Of the <i>Merry-Andrew</i>	1
Caught her death in a wet ditch	1
Old age	100
Foul distemper	o

N<sup>o</sup> 137. *Tuesday, August 18.*

----- *sanctus haberi*  
*Iustitiaeque tenax, factis dictisque mereris?*  
*Agnosco procerem*-----

Juv.

**H**ORACE, Juvenal, Boileau, and indeed the greatest writers in almost every age, have exposed, with all the strength of wit and good sense, the vanity of a man's valuing himself upon his ancestors, and endeavoured to show that true nobility consists in virtue, not in birth. With submission however to so many great authorities, I think they

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they have pushed this matter a little too far. We ought in gratitude to honour the posterity of those who have raised either the interest or reputation of their country, and by whose labours we our selves are more happy, wise or virtuous than we should have been without them. Besides, naturally speaking, a man bids fairer for greatness of soul, who is the descendant of worthy ancestors, and has good blood in his veins, than one who is come of an ignoble and obscure parentage. For these reasons I think a man of merit, who is derived from an illustrious line, is very justly to be regarded more than a man of equal merit who has no claim to hereditary honours. Nay, I think those who are indifferent in themselves, and have nothing else to distinguish them but the virtues of their forefathers, are to be looked upon with a degree of veneration even upon that account, and to be more respected than the common run of men who are of low and vulgar extraction.

After having thus ascribed due honours to birth, and parentage, I must however take notice of those who arrogate to themselves more honours than are due to them upon this account. The first are such who are not enough sensible that vice and ignorance taint the blood, and that an unworthy behaviour degrades and disennobles a man, in the eye of the world, as much as birth and family aggrandize and exalt him.

The second are those who believe a *new* man of an elevated merit is not more to be honoured than an insignificant and worthless man who is descended from a long line of patriots and heroes: Or, in other words, behold with contempt a person who is such a man as the first founder of their family was, upon whose reputation they value themselves.

But I shall chiefly apply myself to those whose quality fits uppermost in all their discourses and behaviour. An empty man of a great family is a creature that is scarce conversible. You read his ancestry in his smile, in his air, in his eye-brow. He has indeed nothing but his nobility to give employment to his thoughts. Rank and precedency are the important points which he is always discussing within himself. A Gentleman of this turn began a speech in one of King *Charles's* parliaments: *Sir, I had the honour to be born at a time*—upon which a rough honest Gentleman took him up short, *I would fain know what that Gentleman means: Is there any one in this house that has not had the honour to be born as well as himself?* The good sense which reigns in our nation has pretty well destroyed this starched behaviour among men who have seen the world, and know that every Gentleman will be treated upon a foot of equality. But there are many who have had their education among women, dependants

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or flatterers, that lose all the respect, which would otherwise be paid them, by being too assiduous in procuring it.

My Lord *Froth* has been so educated in punctilio, that he governs himself by a ceremonial in all the ordinary occurrences of life. He measures out his bow to the degree of the person he converses with. I have seen him in every inclination of the body, from a familiar nod to the low stoop in the salutation-sign. I remember five of us, who were acquainted with one another, met together one morning at his lodgings, when a wag of the company was saying, it wou'd be worth while to observe how he would distinguish us at his first entrance. Accordingly he no sooner came into the room, but casting his eye about, *My Lord such a one*, says he, *your most humble servant*. *Sir Richard*, *your humble servant*. *Your servant*, *Mr. Ironside*. *Mr. Ducker*, *how do you do? Hab! Frank, are you there?*

There is nothing more easy than to discover a man whose heart is full of his family. Weak minds that have imbibed a strong tincture of the nursery, younger brothers that have been brought up to nothing, superannuated retainers to a great house, have generally their thoughts taken up with little else.

I had some years ago an aunt of my own, by name *Mrs. Martha Ironside*, who would never marry beneath her self, and is supposed to have died a maid in the fourscorth year of her age. She was the chronicle of our family, and passed away the greatest part of the last forty years of her life in recounting the antiquity, marriages, exploits and alliances of the *Ironsides*. *Mrs. Martha* conversed generally with a knot of old virgins, who were likewise of good families, and had been very cruel all the beginning of the last century. They were every one of them as proud as *Lucifer*, but said their prayers twice a day, and in all other respects were the best women in the world. If they saw a fine petticoat at Church, they immediately took to pieces the pedigree of her that wore it, and would lift up their eyes to heaven at the confidence of the sawcy Minx, when they found she was an honest tradesman's daughter. It is impossible to describe the pious indignation that would rise in them at the sight of a man who lived plentifully on an estate of his own getting. They were transported with zeal beyond measure, if they heard of a young woman's matching into a great family upon account only of her beauty, her merit, or her money. In short, there was not a female within ten miles of them that was in possession of a gold watch, a pearl necklace, or a piece of *Mechlin* lace, but they examined her title to it. My aunt *Martha* used to

chide me very frequently for not sufficiently valuing my self. She would not eat a bit all dinner-time, if at an invitation she found she had been seated below her self; and would frown upon me for an hour together, if she saw me give place to any man under a Baronet. As I was once talking to her of a wealthy Citizen whom she had refused in her youth, she declared to me with great warmth, that she preferred a man of quality in his shirt to the richest man upon the Change in a coach and six. She pretended, that our family was nearly related by the mother's side to half a dozen Peers; but as none of them knew any thing of the matter, we always kept it as a secret among our selves. A little before her death she was reciting to me the history of my fore-fathers; but dwelling a little longer than ordinary upon the actions of Sir *Gilbert Ironside*, who had a horse shot under him at *Edgbill* fight, I gave an unfortunate *Pish*, and asked, *What was all this to me?* upon which she retired to her closet, and fell a scribbling for three hours together, in which time, as I afterwards found, she struck me out of her will, and left all she had to my sister *Margaret*, a wheedling baggage, that used to be asking questions about her great grandfather from morning to night. She now lies buried among the family of the *Ironsides*, with a stone over her, acquainting the reader, that she died at the age of eighty years, a Spinster, and that she was descended of the ancient family of the *Ironsides*—— After which follows the Genealogy drawn up by her own hand.

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 N<sup>o</sup> 138.

Wednesday, August 19.

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*Incenditque animum famæ venientis amore.*

Virg.

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**T**HERE is nothing which I study so much in the course of these my daily dissertations as variety. By this means every one of my Readers is sure some time or other to find a subject that pleases him, and almost every paper has some particular sett of men for its advocates. Instead of seeing the number of my papers every day encreasing, they would quickly lie as a drug upon my hands, did not I take care to keep up the appetite of my guests, and quicken it from time to time by something