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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 155. Tuesday, September 8.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

“ but in cafes of this nature, where there is fuch a confufion of fex, age,
 “ and quality, men are apt to report rather what might have happened,
 “ than what really came to pafs. Without giving credit therefore to a-
 “ ny of thefe rumours, I fhall only renew my petition to you, that you
 “ will tell us your opinion at large of thefe matters, and am,

SIR, &c.

Lucifer.

N^o 155. *Tuesday, September 8.*

----- *libelli Stoici inter sericos*
Facere pulvillos amant.

Hor.

I Have often wondered that Learning is not thought a proper ingredi-
 ent in the education of a woman of quality or fortune. Since they
 have the fame improveable minds as the male part of the fpecies, why
 fhould they not be cultivated by the fame methods? why fhould reafon
 be left to it felf in one of the fexes, and be difciplined with fo much
 care in the other?

There are fome reafons why learning feems more adapted to the female
 world, than to the male. As in the firft place, becaufe they have more
 fpare time upon their hands, and lead a more fedentary life. Their em-
 ployments are of a domeftick nature, and not like thofe of the other
 fex, which are often inconsistent with ftudy and contemplation. The
 excellent Lady, the Lady *Lizard*, in the fpace of one fummer furnifhed
 a gallery with chairs and couches of her own and her daughters working;
 and at the fame time heard all Dr. *Tillotfon's* Sermons twice over. It is
 always the cuftom for one of the young Ladies to read, while the others
 are at work; fo that the learning of the family is not at all prejudicial to
 its manufactures. I was mightily pleafed, the other day, to find them all
 bufie in *preferving* feveral fruits of the feafon, with the *Sparkler* in the
 midft of them, reading over *the Plurality of Worlds*. It was very en-
 tertaining to me to fee them dividing their fpeculations between jellies
 and ftars, and making a fudden tranfition from the fun to an apricot, or
 from the *Copernican* fyftem to the figure of a cheefe-cake.

A

A second reason, why women should apply themselves to useful knowledge rather than men, is because they have the natural gift of *Speech* in greater perfection. Since they have so excellent a talent, such a *copia verborum*, or plenty of words, it is pity they should not put it to some use. If the female tongue will be in motion, why should it not be set to go right? Could they discourse about the spots in the sun, it might divert them from publishing the faults of their neighbours: could they talk of the different aspects and conjunctions of the planets, they need not be at the pains to comment upon oglings and clandestine marriages. In short, were they furnished with matters of fact, out of arts and sciences, it would now and then be of great ease to their invention.

There is another reason why those especially who are women of quality should apply themselves to letters, namely, because their husbands are generally strangers to them.

It is great pity there should be no knowledge in a family. For my own part, I am concerned when I go into a great house, where perhaps there is not a single person that can spell, unless it be by chance the butler, or one of the footmen. What a figure is the young heir likely to make, who is a dunce both by father and mother's side?

If we look into the histories of famous women, we find many eminent Philosophers of this sex. Nay, we find that several females have distinguished themselves in those sects of philosophy which seem almost repugnant to their natures. There have been famous female *Pythagoreans*, notwithstanding most of that philosophy consisted in keeping a secret, and that the disciple was to hold her tongue five years together. I need not mention *Portia*, who was a Stoic in petticoats: nor *Hipparchia*, the famous the Cynic, who arrived at such a perfection in her studies, that she conversed with her husband, or man-planter, in broad day-light, and in the open streets.

Learning and knowledge are perfections in us, not as we are men, but as we are reasonable creatures, in which order of Beings the female world is upon the same level with the male. We ought to consider in this particular, not what is the sex, but what is the species to which they belong. At least, I believe every one will allow me, that a female Philosopher is not so absurd a character and so opposite to the sex, as a female Gamester; and that it is more irrational for a woman to pass away half a dozen hours at cards or dice, than in getting up stores of useful learning. This therefore is another reason why I would recommend the studies of knowledge to the female world, that they may not be at a loss how to employ those hours that lie upon their hands.

I might also add this motive to my fair Readers, that several of their sex, who have improved their minds by books and literature, have raised themselves to the highest posts of honour and fortune. A neighbouring nation may at this time furnish us with a very remarkable instance of this kind, but I shall conclude this head with the history of *Athenais*, which is a very signal example to my present purpose.

The Emperor *Theodosius* being about the age of one and twenty, and designing to take a wife, desired his sister *Pulcheria* and his friend *Paulinus* to search his whole empire for a woman of the most exquisite beauty and highest accomplishments. In the midst of this search, *Athenais*, a *Grecian* virgin, accidentally offered her self. Her father, who was an eminent Philosopher of *Athens*, and had bred her up in all the learning of that place, at his death left her but a very small portion, in which also she suffered great hardships from the injustice of her two brothers. This forced her upon a journey to *Constantinople*, where she had a Relation who represented her case to *Pulcheria*, in order to obtain some redress from the Emperor. By this means that religious Princess became acquainted with *Athenais*, whom she found the most beautiful woman of her age, and educated under a long course of philosophy in the strictest virtue, and most unspotted innocence. *Pulcheria* was charmed with her conversation, and immediately made her reports to the Emperor her brother *Theodosius*. The character she gave made such an impression on him, that he desired his sister to bring her away immediately to the lodgings of his friend *Paulinus*, where he found her beauty and her conversation beyond the highest idea he had framed of them. His friend *Paulinus* converted her to Christianity, and gave her the name of *Eudocia*; after which the Emperor publicly espoused her, and enjoyed all the happiness in his marriage which he promised himself from such a virtuous and learned bride. She not only forgave the injuries which her two brothers had done her, but raised them to great honours; and by several works of learning, as well as by an exemplary life, made herself so dear to the whole Empire, that she had many statues erected to her memory, and is celebrated by the Fathers of the Church as the ornament of her sex.



Wednesday,