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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 157. Thursday, September 10.

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

“ that an ant can carry. It happens sometimes, that a corn slips out of  
 “ their paws, when they are climbing up: they take hold of it again, when  
 “ they can find it; otherwise they look for another, or take something  
 “ else, being ashamed to return to their nest without bringing something:  
 “ this I have experimented, by taking away the grain which they look-  
 “ ed for. All those experiments may easily be made by any one that has  
 “ patience enough; they do not require so great a patience as that of  
 “ Ants: but few people are capable of it.

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N<sup>o</sup> 157. *Thursday, September 10.*

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*Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.*  
 Solomon.

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**I**T has been observed by writers of morality, that in order to quicken human industry, Providence has so contrived it, that our daily food is not to be procured without much pains and labour. The chase of birds and beasts, the several arts of fishing, with all the different kinds of agriculture, are necessary scenes of business, and give employment to the greatest part of mankind. If we look into the brute creation, we find all its individuals engaged in a painful and laborious way of life, to procure a necessary subsistence for themselves, or those that grow up under them: the preservation of their Being is the whole business of it. An idle man is therefore a kind of monster in the creation. All nature is busy about him; every animal he sees reproaches him. Let such a man, who lies as a burthen or dead weight upon the species, and contributes nothing either to the riches of the Commonwealth, or to the maintenance of himself and family, consider that instinct with which Providence has endowed the ant, and by which is exhibited an example of industry to rational creatures. This is set forth under many surprizing instances in the paper of yesterday, and in the conclusion of that narrative, which is as follows:

“ Thus my Ants were forced to make shift for a livelihood, when I  
 “ had shut up the garret, out of which they used to fetch their provi-  
 “ ons.

“ ons. At last, being sensible that it would be a long time before they  
“ could discover the small heap of corn, which I had laid up for them,  
“ I resolved to shew it to them.

“ In order to know how far their industry could reach, I contrived  
“ an expedient, which had good success: the thing will appear incredible  
“ to those, who never considered, that all animals of the same kind,  
“ which form a society, are more knowing than others. I took one of  
“ the largest ants, and threw her upon that small heap of wheat. She  
“ was so glad to find her self at liberty, that she ran away to her nest,  
“ without carrying off a grain; but she observed it: for an hour after all  
“ my ants had notice given them of such a provision; and I saw most of  
“ them very busie in carrying away the corn I had laid up in the room.  
“ I leave it to you to judge, whether it may not be said, that they have  
“ a particular way of communicating their knowledge to one another;  
“ for otherwise how could they know, one or two hours after, that there  
“ was corn in that place? It was quickly exhausted; and I put in more,  
“ but in a small quantity, to know the true extent of their appetite or  
“ prodigious avarice; for I make no doubt but they lay up provisions  
“ against the winter: we read it in holy Scripture; a thousand experi-  
“ ments teach us the same; and I do not believe that any experiment  
“ has been made that shews the contrary.

“ I have said before, that there were three ants-nests in that box or  
“ *Parterre*, which formed, if I may say so, three different cities, govern-  
“ ed by the same laws, and observing the same order, and the same cu-  
“ stoms. However there was this difference, that the inhabitants of one  
“ of those holes seemed to be more knowing and industrious than their  
“ neighbours. The ants of that nest were disposed in a better order;  
“ their corn was finer; they had a greater plenty of provisions; their  
“ nest was furnished with more inhabitants, and they were bigger and  
“ stronger: It was the principal and the capital nest. Nay, I observed  
“ that those ants were distinguished from the rest, and had some pre-emi-  
“ nence over them.

“ Though the box-full of earth, where the ants had made their set-  
“ tlement, was generally free from rain; yet it rained sometimes upon  
“ it, when a certain wind blew. It was a great inconvenience for those  
“ insects: ants are afraid of water; and when they go a great way in  
“ quest of provisions, and are surprized by the rain, they shelter them-  
“ selves under some tile, or something else, and do not come out until  
“ the rain is over. The ants of the principal nest found out a wonder-  
“ ful

“ ful expedient to keep out the rain: there was a small piece of a flat slate,  
“ which they laid over the hole of their nest, in the day-time, when they  
“ foresaw it would rain, and almost every night. Above fifty of those  
“ little animals, especially the strongest, surrounded that piece of slate,  
“ and drew it equally in a wonderful order: they removed it in the  
“ morning; and nothing could be more curious than to see those little  
“ animals about such a work. They had made the ground uneven about  
“ their nest, insomuch, that the slate did not lye flat upon it, but left a  
“ free passage underneath. The ants of the two other nests did not so  
“ well succeed in keeping out the rain: they laid over their holes several  
“ pieces of old and dry plaister one upon the other; but they were  
“ still troubled with the rain, and the next day they took a world of pains  
“ to repair the damage. Hence it is, that those insects are so frequently  
“ ly to be found under tiles, where they settle themselves to avoid the  
“ rain. Their nests are at all times covered with those tiles, without any  
“ incumbrance, and they lay out their corn and their dry earth in the  
“ sun about the tiles, as one may see every day. I took care to cover  
“ the two ants-nests that were troubled with the rain: as for the capital  
“ nest, there was no need of exercising my charity towards it.

“ *M. de la Loubere* says in his relation of *Siam*, that in a certain part  
“ of that kingdom, which lies open to great inundations, all the ants  
“ make their settlements upon trees: no ants-nests are to be seen any  
“ where else. I need not insert here what that Author says about those  
“ insects: you may see his relation.

“ Here follows a curious experiment, which I made upon the same  
“ ground, where I had three ants-nests. I undertook to make a fourth,  
“ and went about it in the following manner. In a corner of a kind of  
“ a terrass, at a considerable distance from the box, I found a hole swarm-  
“ ing with ants much larger than all those I had already seen; but they  
“ were not so well provided with corn, nor under so good a government.  
“ I made a hole in the box like that of an ants-nest, and laid, as it were,  
“ the foundations of a new city. Afterwards I got as many ants as I  
“ could out of the nest in the terrass, and put them into a bottle, to give  
“ them a new habitation in my box; and because I was afraid they would  
“ return to the terrass, I destroyed their old nest, pouring boiling water  
“ into the hole, to kill those ants that remained in it. In the next place,  
“ I filled the new hole with the ants that were in the bottle; but none  
“ of them would stay in it: they went away in less than two hours; which  
“ made me believe, that it was impossible to make a fourth settlement in  
“ my box.

“ Two

“ Two or three days after, going accidentally over the terrafs, I was  
 “ very much surprized to fee the ants nest which I had destroyed very  
 “ artfully repaired. I refolved then to destroy it entirely, and to settle  
 “ those ants in my box. To fucceed in my design, I put some gun-pow-  
 “ der and brimstone into their hole, and sprung a mine, whereby the  
 “ whole nest was overthrown; and then I carried as many ants as I could  
 “ get, into the place which I designed for them. It happened to be a  
 “ very rainy day, and it rained all night; and therefore they remained  
 “ in the new hole all that time. In the morning, when the rain was o-  
 “ ver, most of them went to repair their old habitation; but finding it  
 “ impracticable by reason of the smell of the powder and brimstone,  
 “ which kills them, they came back again, and settled in the place I had  
 “ appointed for them. They quickly grew acquainted with their neigh-  
 “ bours, and received from them all manner of assistance out of their  
 “ holes. As for the inside of their nest, none but themselves were con-  
 “ cerned in it, according to the inviolable laws establish’d among those  
 “ animals.

“ An ant never goes into any other nest but her own; and if she  
 “ should venture to do it, she would be turn’d out, and severely punish’d.  
 “ I have often taken an ant out of one nest, to put her into another;  
 “ but she quickly came out, being warmly pursu’d by two or three other  
 “ ants. I tried the same experiment several times with the same ant;  
 “ but at last the other ants grew impatient, and tore her to pieces. I  
 “ have often frighted some ants with my fingers, and pursued them as  
 “ far as another hole: stopping all the passages to prevent their going to  
 “ their own nest. It was very natural for them to fly into the next hole:  
 “ Many a man would not be so cautious, and would throw himself out  
 “ of the windows, or into a well, if he were pursued by assassins. But  
 “ the ants I am speaking of, avoided going into any other hole but their  
 “ own, and rather tried all other ways of making their escape. They ne-  
 “ ver fled into another nest, but at the last extremity; and sometimes ra-  
 “ ther chose to be taken, as I have often experienc’d. It is therefore an  
 “ inviolable custom among those insects, not to go into any other hole  
 “ but their own. They do not exercise hospitality; but they are very rea-  
 “ dy to help one another out of their holes. They put down their loads  
 “ at the entrance of a neighbouring nest; and those that live in it carry  
 “ them in.

“ They keep up a sort of trade among themselves; and it is not true  
 “ that those insects are not for lending: I know the contrary: They lend  
 “ their

“ their corn; they make exchanges; they are always ready to serve one  
“ another; and I can assure you, that more time and patience would have  
“ enabled me to observe a thousand things more curious and wonderful  
“ than what I have mentioned. For instance, how they lend, and recover  
“ their loans; whether it be in the same quantity, or with usury; whe-  
“ ther they pay the strangers that work for them, &c. I do not think it  
“ impossible to examine all those things; and it would be a great curio-  
“ sity to know by what maxims they govern themselves: Perhaps such a  
“ knowledge might be of some use to us.

“ They are never attacked by any enemies in a body, as it is reported  
“ of bees: Their only fear proceeds from birds, which sometimes eat  
“ their corn when they lay it out in the sun; but they keep it under  
“ ground, when they are afraid of thieves. It is said, that some birds eat  
“ them; but I never saw any instance of it. They are also infested by  
“ small worms; but they turn them out, and kill them. I observed, that  
“ they punished those ants, which probably had been wanting to their du-  
“ ty: nay, sometimes they kill'd them; which they did in the following  
“ manner. Three or four ants fell upon one, and pull'd her several ways,  
“ until she was torn in pieces. Generally speaking they live very quiet-  
“ ly; from whence I infer that they have a very severe discipline among  
“ themselves, to keep so good an order; or that they are great lovers of  
“ peace, if they have no occasion for any discipline.

“ Was there ever a greater union in any Commonwealth? Every thing  
“ is common among them; which is not to be seen any where else. Bees,  
“ of which we are told so many wonderful things, have each of them a  
“ hole in their hives; their honey is their own; every bee minds her own  
“ concerns. The same may be said of all other animals: They frequent-  
“ ly fight, to deprive one another of their portion. It is not so with ants;  
“ They have nothing of their own: A grain of corn which an ant carries  
“ home, is deposited in a common stock: it is not designed for her own  
“ use, but for the whole community: There is no distinction between a  
“ private and a common interest. An ant never works for her self, but  
“ for the society.

“ Whatever misfortune happens to them, their care and industry find  
“ out a remedy for it; nothing discourages them. If you destroy their  
“ nests, they will be repaired in two days. Any body may easily see  
“ how difficult it is to drive them out of their habitations, without de-  
“ stroying the inhabitants; for, as long as there are any left, they will  
“ maintain their ground.

“ I

“ I had almost forgot to tell you, Sir, that *Mercury* has hitherto prov'd  
 “ a mortal poison for them; and that it is the most effectual way of de-  
 “ stroying those infects. I can do something for them in this case: Perhaps  
 “ you will hear in a little time that I have reconcil'd them to *Mercury*.”

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N<sup>o</sup> 158. Friday, September 11.

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*Gnossius hæc Rhadamanthus habet durissima regna:*

*Castigatque, auditque dolos: subigitque fateri*

*Quæ quis apud superos, furto letatus inani,*

*Distulit in seram commissa piacula mortem.*

Virg.

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I Was yesterday pursuing the hint which I mentioned in my last paper, and comparing together the industry of man with that of other creatures; in which I could not but observe, that notwithstanding we are obliged by duty to keep our selves in constant employ, after the same manner as inferior animals are prompted to it by instinct, we fall very short of them in this particular. We are here the more inexcusable, because there is a greater variety of business to which we may apply our selves. Reason opens to us a large field of affairs, which other creatures are not capable of. Beasts of prey, and I believe of all other kinds, in their natural state of Being, divide their time between action and rest. They are always at work or asleep. In short, their waking hours are wholly taken up in seeking after their food, or in consuming it. The human species only, to the great reproach of our natures, are filled with complaints, that *the day hangs heavy on them*, that *they do not know what to do with themselves*, that *they are at a loss how to pass away their time*, with many of the like shameful murmurs, which we often find in the mouths of those who are stiled reasonable Beings. How monstrous are such expressions among creatures, who have the labours of the mind, as well as those of the body, to furnish them with proper employments; who besides the business of their proper callings and professions, can apply themselves to the duties of religion, to meditation, to the reading of useful books, to dis-

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course;