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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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But it has always been my maxim never to refuse going out of my way to do any honest man a service, especially when I have an interest in it myself.

Most venerable NESTOR,

“ AS you are a person that very eminently distinguish yourself in the promotion of the publick Good, I desire your friendship in signifying to the town, what concerns the greatest good of life, *Health*.
 “ I do assure you, Sir, there is in a vault, under the *Exchange* in *Cornhill*, over-against *Pope's-Head Alley*, a parcel of *French* wines, full of the seeds of good humour, cheerfulness and friendly mirth. I have been told, the learned of our nation agree, there is no such thing as bribery in liquors, therefore I shall presume to send you of it, lest you should think it inconsistent with integrity to recommend what you do not understand by experience. In the mean time please to insert this, that every man may judge for himself.

I am, SIR, &c.

N^o 161. *Tuesday, September 15.*

----- *incoctum generoso pectus honesto.* Perf.

EVERY principle that is a motive to good actions, ought to be encouraged, since men are of so different a make, that the same principle does not work equally upon all minds. What some men are prompted to by conscience, duty, or religion, which are only different names for the same thing, others are prompted to by *Honour*.

The sense of honour is of so fine and delicate a nature, that it is only to be met with in minds which are naturally noble, or in such as have been cultivated by great examples, or a refined education. This paper therefore is chiefly designed for those who by means of any of these advantages are, or ought to be, actuated by this glorious principle.

But as nothing is more pernicious than a principle of action when it is misunderstood, I shall consider honour with respect to three sorts of men.

First

First of all, with regard to those who have a right notion of it. Secondly, with regard to those who have a mistaken notion of it. And thirdly, with regard to those who treat it as chimerical, and turn it into ridicule.

In the first place, true honour, tho' it be a different principle from religion, is that which produces the same effects. The lines of action, tho' drawn from different parts, terminate in the same point. Religion embraces virtue, as it is enjoined by the laws of God; Honour, as it is graceful and ornamental to human nature. The religious man *fears*, the man of honour *scorns* to do an ill action. The one considers vice as something that is beneath him, the other as something that is offensive to the divine Being. The one as what is *unbecoming*, the other as what is *forbidden*. Thus *Seneca* speaks in the natural and genuine language of a man of honour, when he declares that were there no God to see or punish vice, he would not commit it, because it is of so mean, so base and so vile a nature.

I shall conclude this head with the description of honour in the part of young *Juba*.

*Honour's a sacred tie, the law of Kings,
The noble mind's distinguishing perfection,
That aids and strengthens virtue where it meets her,
And imitates her actions where she is not,
It ought not to be sported with——*

Cato.

In the second place we are to consider those who have mistaken notions of honour, and these are such as establish any thing to themselves for a point of honour, which is contrary either to the laws of God, or of their country; who think it more honourable to revenge, than to forgive an injury; who make no scruple of telling a lie, but would put any man to death that accuses them of it; who are more careful to guard their reputation by their courage, than by their virtue. True fortitude is indeed so becoming in human nature, that he who wants it scarce deserves the name of a man; but we find several who so much abuse this notion, that they place the whole idea of honour in a kind of brutal courage; by which means we have had many among us who have call'd themselves men of honour, that would have been a disgrace to a gibbet. In a word the man who sacrifices any duty of a reasonable creature to a prevailing mode or fashion, who looks upon any thing as honourable that is displeasing to his maker, or destructive to society, who thinks himself obliged
by

by this principle to the practice of some virtues and not of others, is by no means to be reckoned among true men of honour.

Timogenes was a lively instance of one actuated by false honour. *Timogenes* wou'd smile at a man's jest who ridiculed his maker, and, at the same time, run a man through the body that spoke ill of his friend. *Timogenes* would have scorned to have betrayed a secret, that was entrusted with him, though the fate of his country depended upon the discovery of it. *Timogenes* took away the life of a young fellow, in a duel, for having spoken ill of *Belinda*, a Lady whom he himself had seduced in her youth, and betrayed into want and ignominy. To close his character, *Timogenes*, after having ruined several poor tradesmen's families, who had trusted him, sold his estate to satisfy his creditors; but, like a man of honour, disposed of all the mony he could make of it, in the paying off his play debts, or to speak in his own language, his debts of honour.

In the third place, we are to consider those persons, who treat this principle as chimerical, and turn it into ridicule. Men who are professedly of no honour, are of a more profligate and abandoned nature than even those who are acted by false notions of it, as there is more hopes of a heretick than of an atheist. These sons of infamy consider honour with old *Syphax*, in the play before-mentioned, as a fine imaginary notion, that leads astray young unexperienc'd men, and draws them into real mischiefs, while they are engaged in the pursuits of a shadow. These are generally persons who, in *Shakespear's* phrase, are worn and hackney'd in the ways of men; whose imaginations are grown callous, and have lost all those delicate sentiments which are natural to minds that are innocent and undepraved. Such old battered miscreants ridicule gvery thing as romantick that comes in competition with their present interest, and treat those persons as visionaries, who dare stand up in a corrupt age, for what has not its immediate reward joined to it. The talents, interest, or experience of such men, make them very often useful in all parties, and at all times. But whatever wealth and dignities they may arrive at, they ought to consider, that every one stands as a blot in the annals of his country, who arrives at the temple of *Honour* by any other way than through that of *Virtue*.

Wednesday,