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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 162. Wednesday, September 16.

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

N^o 162. Wednesday, September 16.

Proprium hoc esse prudentiæ, conciliare sibi animos hominum et ad usus suos adjungere.
Cicer.

I Was the other day in company at my Lady *Lizard's*, when there came in among us their cousin *Tom*, who is one of those country Squires that set up for plain honest Gentlemen who speak their minds. *Tom* is in short a lively impudent clown, and has wit enough to have made him a pleasant companion, had it been polished and rectified by good manners. *Tom* had not been a quarter of an hour with us, before he set every one in the company a blushing, by some blunt question, or unlucky observation. He asked the *Sparkler* if her wit had yet got her a husband; and told her eldest sister she looked a little wan under the eyes, and that it was time for her to look about her, if she did not design to lead apes in the other world. The good Lady *Lizard*, who suffers more than her daughters on such an occasion, desired her cousin *Thomas*, with a smile, not to be so severe on his Relations; to which the booby replied, with a rude country laugh, If I be not mistaken Aunt, you were a mother at fifteen, and why do you expect that your daughters should be maids till five and twenty? I endeavoured to divert the discourse, when without taking notice of what I said, Mr. *Ironside*, says he, you fill my cousins heads with your fine notions as you call them, can you teach them to make a pudding? I must confess he put me out of countenance with his rustick raillery, so that I made some excuse, and left the room.

This fellow's behaviour made me reflect on the usefulness of complaisance, to make all conversation agreeable. This, though in it self it be scarce reckoned in the number of moral virtues, is that which gives a lustre to every talent a man can be possessed of. It was *Plato's* advice to an unpolished writer, that he should sacrifice to the Graces. In the same manner I would advise every man of learning, who would not appear in the world a meer Scholar, or Philosopher, to make himself master of the social virtue which I have here mentioned.

Complaisance

Complaisance renders a superior amiable, an equal agreeable, and an inferior acceptable. It smoothes distinction, sweetens conversation, and makes every one in the company pleased with himself. It produces good-nature and mutual benevolence, encourages the timorous, soothes the turbulent, humanises the fierce, and distinguishes a society of civilized persons from a confusion of savages. In a word, complaisance is a virtue that blends all orders of men together in a friendly intercourse of words and actions, and is suited to that equality in human nature which every one ought to consider, so far as is consistent with the order and oeconomy of the world.

If we could look into the secret anguish and affliction of every man's heart, we should often find, that more of it arises from little imaginary distresses, such as checks, frowns, contradictions, expressions of contempt, and (what *Shakespear* reckons among other evils under the Sun)

— *The poor man's contumely,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,*

than from the more real pains and calamities of life. The only method to remove these imaginary distresses as much as possible out of human life, would be the universal practice of such an ingenuous complaisance as I have been here describing, which, as it is a virtue, may be defined to be *a constant endeavour to please those whom we converse with, so far as we may do it innocently.* I shall here add, that I know nothing so effectual to raise a man's fortune as complaisance, which recommends more to the favour of the great, than wit, knowledge, or any other talent whatsoever. I find this consideration very prettily illustrated by a little wild *Arabian* tale, which I shall here abridge, for the sake of my reader, after having again warned him, that I do not recommend to him such an impertinent or vicious complaisance as is not consistent with honour and integrity.

“ *Schacabac* being reduced to great poverty, and having eat nothing for two days together, made a visit to a noble *Barmecide* in *Persia*, who was very hospitable, but withal a great humourist. The *Barmecide* was sitting at his table that seemed ready covered for an entertainment. Upon hearing *Schacabac's* complaint, he desired him to sit down and fall on. He then gave him an empty plate, and asked him how he liked his rice-soup. *Schacabac*, who was a man of wit, and resolved to comply with the *Barmecide* in all his humours, told him it was ad-
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“mirable, and at the same time, in imitation of the other, lifted up the
“empty spoon to his mouth with great pleasure. The *Barmecide* then
“asked him, if he ever saw whiter bread? *Schacabac*, who saw neither
“bread nor meat, If I did not like it, you may be sure, says he, I should
“not eat so heartily of it. You oblige me mightily, replied the *Bar-*
“*mecide*, pray let me help you to this leg of a goose. *Schacabac* reach-
“ed out his plate, and received nothing on it with great cheerfulness.
“As he was eating very heartily on this imaginary goose, and crying up
“the fauce to the skies, the *Barmecide* desired him to keep a corner of
“his stomach for a roasted lamb, fed with pistacho-nuts, and after having
“called for it, as though it had really been served up, Here is a dish,
“says he, that you will see at no body’s table but my own. *Schacabac*
“was wonderfully delighted with the taste of it, which is like nothing,
“says he, I ever eat before. Several other nice dishes were served up in
“idea, which both of them commended and feasted on after the same
“manner. This was followed by an invisible *Dissert*, no part of which
“delighted *Schacabac* so much as a certain lozenge, which the *Barmecide*
“told him was a sweet-meat of his own invention. *Schacabac* at length,
“being courteously reproached by the *Barmecide*, that he had no sto-
“mach, and that he eat nothing, and, at the same time, being tired with
“moving his jaws up and down to no purpose, desired to be excused,
“for that really he was so full he could not eat a bit more. Come then,
“says the *Barmecide*, the cloth shall be removed, and you shall taste of
“my wines, which I may say, without vanity, are the best in *Persia*.
“He then filled both their glasses out of an empty decanter. *Schacabac*
“would have excused himself from drinking so much at once, because
“he said he was a little quarrelsome in his liquor; however being prest
“to it, he pretended to take it off, having before-hand praised the co-
“lour, and afterwards the flavour. Being plyed with two or three other
“imaginary bumpers of different wines equally delicious, and a little vex-
“ed with this fantastic treat, he pretended to grow flustered, and gave
“the *Barmecide* a good box on the ear, but immediately recovering
“himself, Sir, says he, I beg ten thousand pardons, but I told you before,
“that it was my misfortune to be quarrelsome in my drink. The *Bar-*
“*mecide* could not but smile at the humour of his guest, and instead of
“being angry at him, I find, says he, thou art a complaisant fellow, and
“deservest to be entertained in my house. Since thou canst accommodate
“thy self to my humour, we will now eat together in good earnest.
“Upon which, calling for his supper, the rice-soup, the goose, the pi-
“stacho-

“ stacho-lamb, the several other nice dishes, with the *Dissert*, the lo-
 “ zenges, and all the variety of *Persian* wines, were served up succes-
 “ sively, one after another; and *Schacabac* was feasted in reality, with
 “ those very things which he had before been entertained with in ima-
 “ gination.

N^o 163. *Thursday, September 16.*

----- *miserum est alienâ vivere quadrâ.* Juv.

WHEN I am disposed to give my self a day's rest, I order the
 Lion to be opened, and search into the magazine of intelligence
 for such Letters as are to my purpose. The first I looked into
 comes to me from one who is Chaplain to a great family. He treats him-
 self, in the beginning of it, after such a manner, as I am persuaded no
 man of sense would treat him. Even the Lawyer and the Physician, to
 a man of quality, expect to be used like Gentlemen, and much more
 may any one of so superior a profession. I am by no means for encour-
 aging that dispute, whether the Chaplain or the Master of the house
 be the better man, and the more to be respected. The two learned Au-
 thors, Doctor *Hicks*, and Mr. *Collier*, to whom I might add several others,
 are to be excused if they have carried the point a little too high in fa-
 vour of the Chaplain, since in so corrupt an age as that we live in, the
 popular opinion runs so far into the other extreme. The only contro-
 versie, between the Patron and the Chaplain, ought to be which should
 promote the good designs and interests of each other most; and for my
 own part, I think it is the happiest circumstance, in a great estate or title,
 that it qualifies a man for chusing, out of such a learned and valuable body
 of men as that of the *English* Clergy, a friend, a spiritual guide, and a
 companion. The Letter I have received from one of this Order, is as
 follows.

M m 2

Mr.