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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N^o 165. *Saturday, September 19.**Decipit exemplar, vitiis imitabile* ----- Hor.

IT is a melancholy thing to see a coxcomb at the head of a family. He scatters infection through the whole house. His wife and children have always their eyes upon him: if they have more sense than himself, they are out of countenance for him; if less, they submit their understandings to him, and make daily improvements in folly and impertinence. I have been very often secretly concerned, when I have seen a circle of pretty children cramped in their natural parts, and prating even below themselves, while they are talking after a couple of silly parents. The dulness of a father often extinguishes a genius in the son, or gives such a wrong cast to his mind, as it is hard for him ever to wear off. In short, where the head of a family is weak, you hear the repetitions of his insipid pleasantries, shallow conceits, and topical points of mirth, in every member of it. His table, his fire side, his parties of diversion, are all of them so many standing scenes of folly.

This is one reason why I would the more recommend the improvements of the mind to my female Readers, that a family may have a double chance for it, and if it meets with weakness in one of the heads, may have it made up in the other. It is indeed an unhappy circumstance in a family, where the wife has more knowledge than the husband; but it is better it should be so, than that there should be no knowledge in the whole house. It is highly expedient that at least one of the persons, who sits at the helm of affairs, should give an example of good sense to those, who are under them in these little domestick governments.

If folly is of ill consequence in the head of a family, vice is much more so, as it is of a more pernicious and of a more contagious nature. When the master is a profligate, the rake runs through the house. You hear the sons talking loosely and swearing after their father, and see the daughters either familiarized to his discourse, or every moment blushing for him.

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The very footman will be a fine Gentleman in his Master's way. He improves by his table-talk, and repeats in the kitchen what he learns in the parlor. Invest him with the same title and ornaments, and you would scarce know him from his Lord. He practises the same oaths, the same ribaldry, the same way of joking.

It is therefore of very great concern to a family, that the ruler of it should be wise and virtuous. The first of these qualifications does not indeed lie within his power; but though a man cannot abtain from being weak, he may from being vicious. It is in his power to give a good example of modesty, of temperance, of frugality, of religion, and of all other virtues, which though the greatest ornaments of human nature, may be put in practice by men of the most ordinary capacities.

As wisdom and virtue are the proper qualifications in the Master of a house, if he is not accomplished in both of them, it is much better that he should be deficient in the former than in the latter, since the consequences of vice are of an infinitely more dangerous nature than those of folly.

When I read the histories that are left us of *Pythagoras*, I cannot but take notice of the extraordinary influence which that great Philosopher, who was an illustrious pattern of virtue and wisdom, had on his private family. This excellent man, after having perfected himself in the learning of his own country, travelled into all the known parts of the world, on purpose to converse with the most learned men of every place; by which means he gleaned up all the knowledge of the age, and is still admired by the greatest men of the present times, as a prodigy of science. His wife *Theano* wrote several books; and after his death taught his Philosophy in his publick school, which was frequented by numberless disciples of different countries. There are several excellent sayings recorded of her. I shall only mention one, because it does honour to her virtue, as well as to her wisdom. Being asked by some of her sex, in how long a time a woman might be allowed to pray to the gods, after having conversed with a man? *If it were her husband*, says she, *the next day; if a stranger, never.* *Pythagoras* had by his wife two sons and three daughters. His two sons, *Telauges* and *Mnesarchus*, were both eminent Philosophers, and were joined with their mother in the government of the *Pythagorean* school. *Arignote* was one of his daughters, whose writings were extant, and very much admired in the age of *Porphyrius*. *Damo* was another of his daughters, in whose hands *Pythagoras* left his works, with a prohibition to communicate them to strangers, which she observed to the hazard

hazard of her life; and though she was offered a great sum for them, rather chose to live in poverty, than not obey the commands of her beloved father. *Myia* was the third of the daughters, whose works and history were very famous, even in *Lucian's* time. She was so signally virtuous, that for her unblemished behaviour in her virginity, she was chosen to lead up the chorus of maids in a national solemnity; and for her exemplary conduct in marriage, was placed at the head of all the matrons, in the like publick ceremony. The memory of this learned woman was so precious among her countrymen, that her house was after her death converted into a temple, and the street she lived in called by the name of the *Museum*. Nor must I omit, whilst I am mentioning this great Philosopher under his character as the master of a family, that two of his servants so improved themselves under him, that they were instituted into his sect, and make an eminent figure in the list of *Pythagoreans*. The names of these two servants were *Astræus* and *Zamolxes*. This single example sufficiently shows us both the influence and the merit of one who discharges as he ought the office of a good master of a family; which, if it were well observed in every house, would quickly put an end to that universal depravation of manners, by which the present age is so much distinguished; and which is more easie to lament than to reform.

N^o 166. *Monday, September 21.*

----- *aliquisque malo fuit usus in illo.* Ov. Met.

CHARITY is a virtue of the heart, and not of the hands, says an old writer. Gifts and alms are the expressions, not the essence of this virtue. A man may bestow great sums on the poor and indigent, without being charitable, and may be charitable when he is not able to bestow any thing. Charity is therefore a habit of good will, or benevolence, in the soul, which disposes us to the love, assistance and relief of mankind, especially of those who stand in need of it. The poor man who has this excellent frame of mind, is no less intitled to the reward of this virtue than the man who founds a college. For my own part, I