

ДЖОЗЕФ АДДИСОН

ESSAYS AND
TALES

Джозеф Аддисон

Essays and Tales

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Joseph Addison

Essays and Tales

INTRODUCTION

The sixty-fourth volume of this Library contains those papers from the *Tatler* which were especially associated with the imagined character of Isaac Bickerstaff, who was the central figure in that series; and in the twenty-ninth volume there is a similar collection of papers relating to the Spectator Club and Sir Roger de Coverley, who was the central figure in Steele and Addison's *Spectator*. Those volumes contained, no doubt, some of the best Essays of Addison and Steele. But in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* are full armouries of the wit and wisdom of these two writers, who summoned into life the army of the Essayists, and led it on to kindly war against the forces of Ill-temper and Ignorance. Envy, Hatred, Malice, and all their first cousins of the family of Uncharitableness, are captains under those two commanders-in-chief, and we can little afford to dismiss from the field two of the stoutest combatants against them. In this volume it is only Addison who speaks; and in another volume, presently to follow, there will be the voice of Steele.

The two friends differed in temperament and in many of the outward signs of character; but these two little books will very distinctly show how wholly they agreed as to essentials. For Addison, Literature had a charm of its own; he delighted in distinguishing the finer graces of good style, and he drew from the truths of life the principles of taste in writing. For Steele, Literature was the life itself; he loved a true book for the soul he found in it. So he agreed with Addison in judgment. But the six papers on "Wit," the two papers on "Chevy Chase," contained in this volume; the eleven papers on "Imagination," and the papers on "Paradise Lost," which may be given in some future volume; were in a form of study for which Addison was far more apt than Steele. Thus as fellow-workers they gave a breadth to the character of *Tatler* and *Spectator* that could have been produced by neither of them, singly.

The reader of this volume will never suppose that the artist's pleasure in good art and in analysis of its constituents removes him from direct enjoyment of the life about him; that he misses a real contact with all the world gives that is worth his touch. Good art is but nature, studied with love trained to the most delicate perception; and the good criticism in which the spirit of an artist speaks is, like Addison's, calm, simple, and benign. Pope yearned to attack John Dennis, a rough critic of the day, who had attacked his "Essay on Criticism." Addison had discouraged a very small assault of words. When Dennis attacked Addison's "Cato," Pope thought himself free to strike; but Addison took occasion to express, through Steele, a serious regret that he had done so. True criticism may be affected, as Addison's was, by some bias in the canons of taste prevalent in the writer's time, but, as Addison's did in the Chevy-Chase papers, it will dissent from prevalent misapplications of them, and it can never associate perception of the purest truth and beauty with petty arrogance, nor will it so speak as to give pain. When Wordsworth was remembering with love his mother's guidance of his childhood, and wished to suggest that there were mothers less wise in their ways, he was checked, he said, by the unwillingness to join thought of her "with any thought that looks at others' blame." So Addison felt towards his mother Nature, in literature and in life. He attacked nobody. With a light, kindly humour, that was never personal and never could give pain, he sought to soften the harsh lines of life, abate its follies, and inspire the temper that alone can overcome its wrongs.

Politics, in which few then knew how to think calmly and recognise the worth of various opinion, Steele and Addison excluded from the pages of the *Spectator*. But the first paper in this volume is upon "Public Credit," and it did touch on the position of the country at a time when the

shock of change caused by the Revolution of 1688-89, and also the strain of foreign war, were being severely felt.

H. M.

PUBLIC CREDIT

—*Quoi quisque ferè studio devinctus adhæret
Aut quibus i rebus multùm sumus antè morati
Atque in quò ratione fuit contenta magis mens,
In somnis cadem plerumque videmur obire.*

Lucr., iv. 959.

—What studies please, what most delight,
And fill men's thoughts, they dream them o'er at night.

Creech.

In one of my rambles, or rather speculations, I looked into the great hall where the bank is kept, and was not a little pleased to see the directors, secretaries, and clerks, with all the other members of that wealthy corporation, ranged in their several stations, according to the parts they act in that just and regular economy. This revived in my memory the many discourses which I had both read and heard concerning the decay of public credit, with the methods of restoring it; and which, in my opinion, have always been defective, because they have always been made with an eye to separate interests and party principles.

The thoughts of the day gave my mind employment for the whole night; so that I fell insensibly into a kind of methodical dream, which disposed all my contemplations into a vision, or allegory, or what else the reader shall please to call it.

My thoughts I returned to the great hall, where I had been the morning before; but to my surprise, instead of the company that I left there, I saw, towards the upper end of the hall, a beautiful virgin, seated on a throne of gold. Her name, as they told me, was Public Credit. The walls, instead of being adorned with pictures and maps, were hung with many Acts of Parliament written in golden letters. At the upper end of the hall was the Magna Charta, with the Act of Uniformity on the right hand, and the Act of Toleration on the left. At the lower end of the hall was the Act of Settlement, which was placed full in the eye of the virgin that sat upon the throne. Both the sides of the hall were covered with such Acts of Parliament as had been made for the establishment of public funds.

The lady seemed to set an unspeakable value upon these several pieces of furniture, insomuch that she often refreshed her eye with them, and often smiled with a secret pleasure as she looked upon them; but, at the same time, showed a very particular uneasiness if she saw anything approaching that might hurt them. She appeared, indeed, infinitely timorous in all her behaviour: and whether it was from the delicacy of her constitution, or that she was troubled with vapours, as I was afterwards told by one who I found was none of her well-wishers, she changed colour and startled at everything she heard. She was likewise, as I afterwards found, a greater valetudinarian than any I had ever met with, even in her own sex, and subject to such momentary consumptions, that in the twinkling of an eye, she would fall away from the most florid complexion and the most healthful state of body, and wither into a skeleton. Her recoveries were often as sudden as her decays, insomuch that she would revive in a moment out of a wasting distemper, into a habit of the highest health and vigour.

I had very soon an opportunity of observing these quick turns and changes in her constitution.

There sat at her feet a couple of secretaries, who received every hour letters from all parts of the world, which the one or the other of them was perpetually reading to her; and according to the news she heard, to which she was exceedingly attentive, she changed colour, and discovered many symptoms of health or sickness.

Behind the throne was a prodigious heap of bags of money, which were piled upon one another so high that they touched the ceiling. The floor on her right hand and on her left was covered with vast sums of gold that rose up in pyramids on either side of her. But this I did not so much wonder at, when I heard, upon inquiry, that she had the same virtue in her touch, which the poets tell us a Lydian king was formerly possessed of; and that she could convert whatever she pleased into that precious metal.

After a little dizziness, and confused hurry of thought, which a man often meets with in a dream, methoughts the hall was alarmed, the doors flew open, and there entered half a dozen of the most hideous phantoms that I had ever seen, even in a dream, before that time. They came in two by two, though matched in the most dissociable manner, and mingled together in a kind of dance.

It would be tedious to describe their habits and persons; for which reason I shall only inform my reader, that the first couple were Tyranny and Anarchy; the second were Bigotry and Atheism; the third, the Genius of a commonwealth and a young man of about twenty-two years of age, whose name I could not learn. He had a sword in his right hand, which in the dance he often brandished at the Act of Settlement; and a citizen, who stood by me, whispered in my ear, that he saw a sponge in his left hand. The dance of so many jarring natures put me in mind of the sun, moon, and earth, in the *Rehearsal*, that danced together for no other end but to eclipse one another.

The reader will easily suppose, by what has been before said, that the lady on the throne would have been almost frightened to distraction, had she seen but any one of the spectres: what then must have been her condition when she saw them all in a body? She fainted, and died away at the sight.

*Et neque jam color est misto candore rubori;
Nec vigor, et vires, et quæ modò rise placebant;
Nec corpus remanet—.*

Ovid, Met. iii. 491.

—Her spirits faint,
Her blooming cheeks assume a pallid teint,
And scarce her form remains.

There was as great a change in the hill of money-bags and the heaps of money, the former shrinking and falling into so many empty bags, that I now found not above a tenth part of them had been filled with money.

The rest, that took up the same space and made the same figure as the bags that were really filled with money, had been blown up with air, and called into my memory the bags full of wind, which Homer tells us his hero received as a present from Æolus. The great heaps of gold on either side the throne now appeared to be only heaps of paper, or little piles of notched sticks, bound up together in bundles, like Bath faggots.

Whilst I was lamenting this sudden desolation that had been made before me, the whole scene vanished. In the room of the frightful spectres, there now entered a second dance of apparitions, very agreeably matched together, and made up of very amiable phantoms: the first pair was Liberty with Monarchy at her right hand; the second was Moderation leading in Religion; and the third, a person whom I had never seen, with the Genius of Great Britain. At the first entrance, the lady revived; the bags swelled to their former bulk; the piles of faggots and heaps of paper changed into pyramids of guineas: and, for my own part, I was so transported with joy that I awaked, though I must confess I would fain have fallen asleep again to have closed my vision, if I could have done it.

HOUSEHOLD SUPERSTITIONS

*Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides?*

Hor., Ep. ii. 2, 208.

Visions and magic spells, can you despise,
And laugh at witches, ghosts, and prodigies?

Going yesterday to dine with an old acquaintance, I had the misfortune to find his whole family very much dejected. Upon asking him the occasion of it, he told me that his wife had dreamt a very strange dream the night before, which they were afraid portended some misfortune to themselves or to their children. At her coming into the room, I observed a settled melancholy in her countenance, which I should have been troubled for, had I not heard from whence it proceeded. We were no sooner sat down, but, after having looked upon me a little while, "My dear," says she, turning to her husband, "you may now see the stranger that was in the candle last night." Soon after this, as they began to talk of family affairs, a little boy at the lower end of the table told her that he was to go into join-hand on Thursday. "Thursday!" says she. "No, child; if it please God, you shall not begin upon Childermas-day; tell your writing-master that Friday will be soon enough." I was reflecting with myself on the oddness of her fancy, and wondering that anybody would establish it as a rule, to lose a day in every week. In the midst of these my musings, she desired me to reach her a little salt upon the point of my knife, which I did in such a trepidation and hurry of obedience that I let it drop by the way; at which she immediately startled, and said it fell towards her. Upon this I looked very blank; and observing the concern of the whole table, began to consider myself, with some confusion, as a person that had brought a disaster upon the family. The lady, however, recovering herself after a little space, said to her husband with a sigh, "My dear, misfortunes never come single." My friend, I found, acted but an under part at his table; and, being a man of more good-nature than understanding, thinks himself obliged to fall in with all the passions and humours of his yoke-fellow. "Do not you remember, child," says she, "that the pigeon-house fell the very afternoon that our careless wench spilt the salt upon the table?"—"Yes," says he, "my dear; and the next post brought us an account of the battle of Almanza." The reader may guess at the figure I made, after having done all this mischief. I despatched my dinner as soon as I could, with my usual taciturnity; when, to my utter confusion, the lady seeing me quitting my knife and fork, and laying them across one another upon my plate, desired me that I would humour her so far as to take them out of that figure and place them side by side. What the absurdity was which I had committed I did not know, but I suppose there was some traditionary superstition in it; and therefore, in obedience to the lady of the house, I disposed of my knife and fork in two parallel lines, which is the figure I shall always lay them in for the future, though I do not know any reason for it.

It is not difficult for a man to see that a person has conceived an aversion to him. For my own part, I quickly found, by the lady's looks, that she regarded me as a very odd kind of fellow, with an unfortunate aspect: for which reason I took my leave immediately after dinner, and withdrew to my own lodgings. Upon my return home, I fell into a profound contemplation on the evils that attend these superstitious follies of mankind; how they subject us to imaginary afflictions, and additional sorrows, that do not properly come within our lot. As if the natural calamities of life were not sufficient for it, we turn the most indifferent circumstances into misfortunes, and suffer as much from trifling accidents as from real evils. I have known the shooting of a star spoil a night's rest;

and have seen a man in love grow pale, and lose his appetite, upon the plucking of a merry-thought.

A screech-owl at midnight has alarmed a family more than a band of robbers; nay, the voice of a cricket hath struck more terror than the roaring of a lion. There is nothing so inconsiderable which may not appear dreadful to an imagination that is filled with omens and prognostics: a rusty nail or a crooked pin shoot up into prodigies.

I remember I was once in a mixed assembly that was full of noise and mirth, when on a sudden an old woman unluckily observed there were thirteen of us in company. This remark struck a panic terror into several who were present, insomuch that one or two of the ladies were going to leave the room; but a friend of mine taking notice that one of our female companions was big with child, affirmed there were fourteen in the room, and that, instead of portending one of the company should die, it plainly foretold one of them should be born. Had not my friend found this expedient to break the omen, I question not but half the women in the company would have fallen sick that very night.

An old maid that is troubled with the vapours produces infinite disturbances of this kind among her friends and neighbours. I know a maiden aunt of a great family, who is one of these antiquated Sibyls, that forebodes and prophesies from one end of the year to the other. She is always seeing apparitions and hearing death-watches; and was the other day almost frightened out of her wits by the great house-dog that howled in the stable, at a time when she lay ill of the toothache. Such an extravagant cast of mind engages multitudes of people not only in impertinent terrors, but in supernumerary duties of life, and arises from that fear and ignorance which are natural to the soul of man. The horror with which we entertain the thoughts of death, or indeed of any future evil, and the uncertainty of its approach, fill a melancholy mind with innumerable apprehensions and suspicions, and consequently dispose it to the observation of such groundless prodigies and predictions. For as it is the chief concern of wise men to retrench the evils of life by the reasonings of philosophy, it is the employment of fools to multiply them by the sentiments of superstition.

For my own part, I should be very much troubled were I endowed with this divining quality, though it should inform me truly of everything that can befall me. I would not anticipate the relish of any happiness, nor feel the weight of any misery, before it actually arrives.

I know but one way of fortifying my soul against these gloomy presages and terrors of mind; and that is, by securing to myself the friendship and protection of that Being who disposes of events and governs futurity. He sees, at one view, the whole thread of my existence, not only that part of it which I have already passed through, but that which runs forward into all the depths of eternity.

When I lay me down to sleep, I recommend myself to His care; when I awake, I give myself up to His direction. Amidst all the evils that threaten me, I will look up to Him for help, and question not but He will either avert them, or turn them to my advantage. Though I know neither the time nor the manner of the death I am to die, I am not at all solicitous about it; because I am sure that he knows them both, and that He will not fail to comfort and support me under them.

OPERA LIONS

Dic mihi, si fias tu leo, qualis eris?

Mart., xii. 93.

Were you a lion, how would you behave?

There is nothing that of late years has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signior Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain. Upon the first rumour of this intended combat, it was confidently affirmed, and is still believed, by many in both galleries, that there would be a tame lion sent from the tower every opera night in order to be killed by Hydaspes. This report, though altogether groundless, so universally prevailed in the upper regions of the playhouse, that some of the most refined politicians in those parts of the audience gave it out in whisper that the lion was a cousin-german of the tiger who made his appearance in King William's days, and that the stage would be supplied with lions at the public expense during the whole session.

Many likewise were the conjectures of the treatment which this lion was to meet with from the hands of Signior Nicolini: some supposed that he was to subdue him in recitativo, as Orpheus used to serve the wild beasts in his time, and afterwards to knock him on the head; some fancied that the lion would not pretend to lay his paws upon the hero, by reason of the received opinion that a lion will not hurt a virgin: several who pretended to have seen the opera in Italy, had informed their friends that the lion was to act a part in High Dutch, and roar twice or thrice to a thorough bass before he fell at the feet of Hydaspes. To clear up a matter that was so variously reported, I have made it my business to examine whether this pretended lion is really the savage he appears to be, or only a counterfeit.

But before I communicate my discoveries, I must acquaint the reader that upon my walking behind the scenes last winter, as I was thinking on something else, I accidentally jostled against a monstrous animal that extremely startled me, and, upon my nearer survey of it, appeared to be a lion rampant. The lion, seeing me very much surprised, told me, in a gentle voice, that I might come by him if I pleased; "for," says he, "I do not intend to hurt anybody." I thanked him very kindly and passed by him, and in a little time after saw him leap upon the stage and act his part with very great applause. It has been observed by several that the lion has changed his manner of acting twice or thrice since his first appearance, which will not seem strange when I acquaint my reader that the lion has been changed upon the audience three several times. The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who, being a fellow of a testy, choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done: besides, it was observed of him, that he grew more surly every time he came out of the lion, and having dropped some words in ordinary conversation, as if he had not fought his best, and that he suffered himself to be thrown upon his back in the scuffle, and that he would wrestle with Mr. Nicolini for what he pleased, out of his lion's skin, it was thought proper to discard him: and it is verily believed to this day, that, had he been brought upon the stage another time, he would certainly have done mischief. Besides, it was objected against the first lion, that he reared himself so high upon his hinder paws, and walked in so erect a posture, that he looked more like an old man than a lion.

The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the playhouse, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; inasmuch that, after a short modest walk upon the stage, he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspes, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of showing his variety of

Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh-colour doublet: but this was only to make work for himself in his private character of a tailor. I must not omit that it was this second lion who treated me with so much humanity behind the scenes.

The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman, who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He says very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain; that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it, and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner than in gaming and drinking: but at the same time says, with a very agreeable raillery upon himself, that if his name should be known, the ill-natured world might call him “the ass in the lion’s skin.” This gentleman’s temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the choleric, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man.

I must not conclude my narrative without taking notice of a groundless report that has been raised to a gentleman’s disadvantage, of whom I must declare myself an admirer; namely, that Signior Nicolini and the lion have been seen sitting peaceably by one another, and smoking a pipe together behind the scenes; by which their common enemies would insinuate that it is but a sham combat which they represent upon the stage: but upon inquiry I find, that if any such correspondence has passed between them, it was not till the combat was over, when the lion was to be looked upon as dead according to the received rules of the drama. Besides, this is what is practised every day in Westminster Hall, where nothing is more usual than to see a couple of lawyers, who have been tearing each other to pieces in the court, embracing one another as soon as they are out of it.

I would not be thought in any part of this relation to reflect upon Signior Nicolini, who, in acting this part, only complies with the wretched taste of his audience: he knows very well that the lion has many more admirers than himself; as they say of the famous equestrian statue on the Pont-Neuf at Paris, that more people go to see the horse than the king who sits upon it. On the contrary, it gives me a just indignation to see a person whose action gives new majesty to kings, resolution to heroes, and softness to lovers, thus sinking from the greatness of his behaviour, and degraded into the character of the London Prentice. I have often wished that our tragedians would copy after this great master in action. Could they make the same use of their arms and legs, and inform their faces with as significant looks and passions, how glorious would an English tragedy appear with that action which is capable of giving a dignity to the forced thoughts, cold conceits, and unnatural expressions of an Italian opera! In the meantime, I have related this combat of the lion to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain.

Audiences have often been reproached by writers for the coarseness of their taste; but our present grievance does not seem to be the want of a good taste, but of common sense.

WOMEN AND WIVES

Parva leves capiunt animos.—

Ovid, Ars Am., i. 159.

Light minds are pleased with trifles.

When I was in France, I used to gaze with great astonishment at the splendid equipages, and party-coloured habits of that fantastic nation. I was one day in particular contemplating a lady that sat in a coach adorned with gilded Cupids, and finely painted with the Loves of Venus and Adonis. The coach was drawn by six milk-white horses, and loaden behind with the same number of powdered footmen. Just before the lady were a couple of beautiful pages, that were stuck among the harness, and, by their gay dresses and smiling features, looked like the elder brothers of the little boys that were carved and painted in every corner of the coach.

The lady was the unfortunate Cleanthe, who afterwards gave an occasion to a pretty melancholy novel. She had for several years received the addresses of a gentleman, whom, after a long and intimate acquaintance, she forsook upon the account of this shining equipage, which had been offered to her by one of great riches but a crazy constitution. The circumstances in which I saw her were, it seems, the disguises only of a broken heart, and a kind of pageantry to cover distress, for in two months after, she was carried to her grave with the same pomp and magnificence, being sent thither partly by the loss of one lover and partly by the possession of another.

I have often reflected with myself on this unaccountable humour in womankind, of being smitten with everything that is showy and superficial; and on the numberless evils that befall the sex from this light fantastical disposition. I myself remember a young lady that was very warmly solicited by a couple of importunate rivals, who, for several months together, did all they could to recommend themselves, by complacency of behaviour and agreeableness of conversation. At length, when the competition was doubtful, and the lady undetermined in her choice, one of the young lovers very luckily bethought himself of adding a supernumerary lace to his liveries, which had so good an effect that he married her the very week after.

The usual conversation of ordinary women very much cherishes this natural weakness of being taken with outside and appearance. Talk of a new-married couple, and you immediately hear whether they keep their coach and six, or eat in plate. Mention the name of an absent lady, and it is ten to one but you learn something of her gown and petticoat. A ball is a great help to discourse, and a birthday furnishes conversation for a twelvemonth after. A furbelow of precious stones, a hat buttoned with a diamond, a brocade waistcoat or petticoat, are standing topics. In short, they consider only the drapery of the species, and never cast away a thought on those ornaments of the mind that make persons illustrious in themselves and useful to others. When women are thus perpetually dazzling one another's imaginations, and filling their heads with nothing but colours, it is no wonder that they are more attentive to the superficial parts of life than the solid and substantial blessings of it. A girl who has been trained up in this kind of conversation is in danger of every embroidered coat that comes in her way. A pair of fringed gloves may be her ruin. In a word, lace and ribands, silver and gold galloons, with the like glittering gewgaws, are so many lures to women of weak minds or low educations, and, when artificially displayed, are able to fetch down the most airy coquette from the wildest of her flights and rambles.

True happiness is of a retired nature, and an enemy to pomp and noise; it arises, in the first place, from the enjoyment of one's self, and, in the next, from the friendship and conversation of a few

select companions; it loves shade and solitude, and naturally haunts groves and fountains, fields and meadows; in short, it feels everything it wants within itself, and receives no addition from multitudes of witnesses and spectators. On the contrary, false happiness loves to be in a crowd, and to draw the eyes of the world upon her. She does not receive any satisfaction from the applauses which she gives herself, but from the admiration she raises in others. She flourishes in courts and palaces, theatres and assemblies, and has no existence but when she is looked upon.

Aurelia, though a woman of great quality, delights in the privacy of a country life, and passes away a great part of her time in her own walks and gardens. Her husband, who is her bosom friend and companion in her solitudes, has been in love with her ever since he knew her. They both abound with good sense, consummate virtue, and a mutual esteem; and are a perpetual entertainment to one another. Their family is under so regular an economy, in its hours of devotion and repast, employment and diversion, that it looks like a little commonwealth within itself. They often go into company, that they may return with the greater delight to one another; and sometimes live in town, not to enjoy it so properly as to grow weary of it, that they may renew in themselves the relish of a country life. By this means they are happy in each other, beloved by their children, adored by their servants, and are become the envy, or rather the delight, of all that know them.

How different to this is the life of Fulvia! She considers her husband as her steward, and looks upon discretion and good housewifery as little domestic virtues unbecoming a woman of quality. She thinks life lost in her own family, and fancies herself out of the world when she is not in the ring, the playhouse, or the drawing-room. She lives in a perpetual motion of body and restlessness of thought, and is never easy in any one place when she thinks there is more company in another. The missing of an opera the first night would be more afflicting to her than the death of a child. She pities all the valuable part of her own sex, and calls every woman of a prudent, modest, retired life, a poor-spirited, unpolished creature. What a mortification would it be to Fulvia, if she knew that her setting herself to view is but exposing herself, and that she grows contemptible by being conspicuous!

I cannot conclude my paper without observing that Virgil has very finely touched upon this female passion for dress and show, in the character of Camilla, who, though she seems to have shaken off all the other weaknesses of her sex, is still described as a woman in this particular. The poet tells us, that after having made a great slaughter of the enemy, she unfortunately cast her eye on a Trojan, who wore an embroidered tunic, a beautiful coat of mail, with a mantle of the finest purple.

“A golden bow,” says he, “hung upon his shoulder; his garment was buckled with a golden clasp, and his head covered with a helmet of the same shining metal.” The Amazon immediately singled out this well-dressed warrior, being seized with a woman’s longing for the pretty trappings that he was adorned with:

—*Totumque incauta per agmen,
Fæmineo prædæ et spoliolum ardebat amore.*

Æn., xi. 781.

—So greedy was she bent
On golden spoils, and on her prey intent.

Dryden.

This heedless pursuit after these glittering trifles, the poet, by a nice concealed moral, represents to have been the destruction of his female hero.

THE ITALIAN OPERA

—*Equitis quoque jam migravit ab aure voluptas
Omnis ad incertos oculos, et gaudia vana.*

Hor., Ep. ii. 1, 187.

But now our nobles too are fops and vain,
Neglect the sense, but love the painted scene.

Creech.

It is my design in this paper to deliver down to posterity a faithful account of the Italian opera, and of the gradual progress which it has made upon the English stage; for there is no question but our great-grandchildren will be very curious to know the reason why their forefathers used to sit together like an audience of foreigners in their own country, and to hear whole plays acted before them in a tongue which they did not understand.

Arsinoë was the first opera that gave us a taste of Italian music. The great success this opera met with produced some attempts of forming pieces upon Italian plans, which should give a more natural and reasonable entertainment than what can be met with in the elaborate trifles of that nation.

This alarmed the poetasters and fiddlers of the town, who were used to deal in a more ordinary kind of ware; and therefore laid down an established rule, which is received as such to this day, “That nothing is capable of being well set to music that is not nonsense.”

This maxim was no sooner received, but we immediately fell to translating the Italian operas; and as there was no great danger of hurting the sense of those extraordinary pieces, our authors would often make words of their own which were entirely foreign to the meaning of the passages they pretended to translate; their chief care being to make the numbers of the English verse answer to those of the Italian, that both of them might go to the same tune. Thus the famous swig in *Camilla*:

“Barbara si t’intendo,” &c.

“Barbarous woman, yes, I know your meaning,”

which expresses the resentments of an angry lover, was translated into that English lamentation,

“Frail are a lover’s hopes,” &c.

And it was pleasant enough to see the most refined persons of the British nation dying away and languishing to notes that were filled with a spirit of rage and indignation. It happened also very frequently, where the sense was rightly translated, the necessary transposition of words, which were drawn out of the phrase of one tongue into that of another, made the music appear very absurd in one tongue that was very natural in the other. I remember an Italian verse that ran thus, word for word:

“And turned my rage into pity;”

which the English for rhyme’s sake translated:

“And into pity turned my rage.”

By this means the soft notes that were adapted to pity in the Italian fell upon the word rage in the English; and the angry sounds that were turned to rage in the original, were made to express pity in the translation. It oftentimes happened, likewise, that the finest notes in the air fell upon the most insignificant words in the sentence. I have known the word “and” pursued through the whole gamut; have been entertained with many a melodious “the;” and have heard the most beautiful graces, quavers, and divisions bestowed upon “then,” “for,” and “from,” to the eternal honour of our English particles.

The next step to our refinement was the introducing of Italian actors into our opera; who sang their parts in their own language, at the same time that our countrymen performed theirs in our native tongue. The king or hero of the play generally spoke in Italian, and his slaves answered him in English. The lover frequently made his court, and gained the heart of his princess, in a language which she did not understand. One would have thought it very difficult to have carried on dialogues after this manner without an interpreter between the persons that conversed together; but this was the state of the English stage for about three years.

At length the audience grew tired of understanding half the opera; and therefore, to ease themselves entirely of the fatigue of thinking, have so ordered it at present, that the whole opera is performed in an unknown tongue. We no longer understand the language of our own stage; insomuch that I have often been afraid, when I have seen our Italian performers chattering in the vehemence of action, that they have been calling us names, and abusing us among themselves; but I hope, since we put such an entire confidence in them, they will not talk against us before our faces, though they may do it with the same safety as if it were behind our backs. In the meantime, I cannot forbear thinking how naturally an historian who writes two or three hundred years hence, and does not know the taste of his wise forefathers, will make the following reflection: “In the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Italian tongue was so well understood in England, that operas were acted on the public stage in that language.”

One scarce knows how to be serious in the confutation of an absurdity that shows itself at the first sight. It does not want any great measure of sense to see the ridicule of this monstrous practice; but what makes it the more astonishing, it is not the taste of the rabble, but of persons of the greatest politeness, which has established it.

If the Italians have a genius for music above the English, the English have a genius for other performances of a much higher nature, and capable of giving the mind a much nobler entertainment.

Would one think it was possible, at a time when an author lived that was able to write the *Phædra and Hippolitus*, for a people to be so stupidly fond of the Italian opera, as scarce to give a third day’s hearing to that admirable tragedy? Music is certainly a very agreeable entertainment: but if it would take the entire possession of our ears; if it would make us incapable of hearing sense; if it would exclude arts that have a much greater tendency to the refinement of human nature; I must confess I would allow it no better quarter than Plato has done, who banishes it out of his commonwealth.

At present our notions of music are so very uncertain, that we do not know what it is we like; only, in general, we are transported with anything that is not English: so it be of a foreign growth, let it be Italian, French, or High Dutch, it is the same thing. In short, our English music is quite rooted out, and nothing yet planted in its stead.

When a royal palace is burnt to the ground, every man is at liberty to present his plan for a new one; and, though it be but indifferently put together, it may furnish several hints that may be of use to a good architect. I shall take the same liberty in a following paper of giving my opinion upon the subject of music; which I shall lay down only in a problematical manner, to be considered by those who are masters in the art.

LAMPOONS

*Sævit atrox Volscens, nec teli conspicit usquam
Auctorem, nec quò se ardens immittere possit.*

Virg., Æn. ix. 420.

Fierce Volscens foams with rage, and, gazing round,
Descry'd not him who gave the fatal wound;
Nor knew to fix revenge.

Dryden.

There is nothing that more betrays a base, ungenerous spirit than the giving of secret stabs to a man's reputation. Lampoons and satires, that are written with wit and spirit, are like poisoned darts, which not only inflict a wound, but make it incurable. For this reason I am very much troubled when I see the talents' of humour and ridicule in the possession of an ill-natured man. There cannot be a greater gratification to a barbarous and inhuman wit, than to stir up sorrow in the heart of a private person, to raise uneasiness among near relations, and to expose whole families to derision, at the same time that he remains unseen and undiscovered. If, besides the accomplishments of being witty and ill-natured, a man is vicious into the bargain, he is one of the most mischievous creatures that can enter into a civil society. His satire will then chiefly fall upon those who ought to be the most exempt from it. Virtue, merit, and everything that is praiseworthy, will be made the subject of ridicule and buffoonery. It is impossible to enumerate the evils which arise from these arrows that fly in the dark; and I know no other excuse that is or can be made for them, than that the wounds they give are only imaginary, and produce nothing more than a secret shame or sorrow in the mind of the suffering person. It must indeed be confessed that a lampoon or a satire do not carry in them robbery or murder; but at the same time, how many are there that would not rather lose a considerable sum of money, or even life itself, than be set up as a mark of infamy and derision? And in this case a man should consider that an injury is not to be measured by the notions of him that gives, but of him that receives it.

Those who can put the best countenance upon the outrages of this nature which are offered them, are not without their secret anguish. I have often observed a passage in Socrates's behaviour at his death in a light wherein none of the critics have considered it. That excellent man entertaining his friends a little before he drank the bowl of poison, with a discourse on the immortality of the soul, at his entering upon it says that he does not believe any the most comic genius can censure him for talking upon such a subject at such a time. This passage, I think, evidently glances upon Aristophanes, who writ a comedy on purpose to ridicule the discourses of that divine philosopher. It has been observed by many writers that Socrates was so little moved at this piece of buffoonery, that he was several times present at its being acted upon the stage, and never expressed the least resentment of it. But, with submission, I think the remark I have here made shows us that this unworthy treatment made an impression upon his mind, though he had been too wise to discover it.

When Julius Cæsar was lampooned by Catullus, he invited him to a supper, and treated him with such a generous civility, that he made the poet his friend ever after. Cardinal Mazarine gave the same kind of treatment to the learned Quillet, who had reflected upon his eminence in a famous Latin poem. The cardinal sent for him, and, after some kind expostulations upon what he had written, assured him of his esteem, and dismissed him with a promise of the next good abbey that should fall, which he accordingly conferred upon him in a few months after. This had so good an effect upon

the author, that he dedicated the second edition of his book to the cardinal, after having expunged the passages which had given him offence.

Sextus Quintus was not of so generous and forgiving a temper. Upon his being made Pope, the statue of Pasquin was one night dressed in a very dirty shirt, with an excuse written under it, that he was forced to wear foul linen because his laundress was made a princess. This was a reflection upon the Pope's sister, who, before the promotion of her brother, was in those mean circumstances that Pasquin represented her. As this pasquinade made a great noise in Rome, the Pope offered a considerable sum of money to any person that should discover the author of it. The author, relying upon his holiness's generosity, as also on some private overtures which he had received from him, made the discovery himself; upon which the Pope gave him the reward he had promised, but, at the same time, to disable the satirist for the future, ordered his tongue to be cut out, and both his hands to be chopped off. Aretine is too trite an instance. Every one knows that all the kings of Europe were his tributaries. Nay, there is a letter of his extant, in which he makes his boast that he had laid the Sophi of Persia under contribution.

Though in the various examples which I have here drawn together, these several great men behaved themselves very differently towards the wits of the age who had reproached them, they all of them plainly showed that they were very sensible of their reproaches, and consequently that they received them as very great injuries. For my own part, I would never trust a man that I thought was capable of giving these secret wounds; and cannot but think that he would hurt the person, whose reputation he thus assaults, in his body or in his fortune, could he do it with the same security. There is indeed something very barbarous and inhuman in the ordinary scribblers of lampoons. An innocent young lady shall be exposed for an unhappy feature; a father of a family turned to ridicule for some domestic calamity; a wife be made uneasy all her life for a misinterpreted word or action; nay, a good, a temperate, and a just man shall be put out of countenance by the representation of those qualities that should do him honour; so pernicious a thing is wit when it is not tempered with virtue and humanity.

I have indeed heard of heedless, inconsiderate writers that, without any malice, have sacrificed the reputation of their friends and acquaintance to a certain levity of temper, and a silly ambition of distinguishing themselves by a spirit of raillery and satire; as if it were not infinitely more honourable to be a good-natured man than a wit. Where there is this little petulant humour in an author, he is often very mischievous without designing to be so. For which reason I always lay it down as a rule that an indiscreet man is more hurtful than an ill-natured one; for as the one will only attack his enemies, and those he wishes ill to, the other injures indifferently both friends and foes. I cannot forbear, on this occasion, transcribing a fable out of Sir Roger L'Estrange, which accidentally lies before me. A company of waggish boys were watching of frogs at the side of a pond, and still as any of them put up their heads, they would be pelting them down again with stones. "Children," says one of the frogs, "you never consider that though this be play to you, 'tis death to us."

As this week is in a manner set apart and dedicated to serious thoughts, I shall indulge myself in such speculations as may not be altogether unsuitable to the season; and in the meantime, as the settling in ourselves a charitable frame of mind is a work very proper for the time, I have in this paper endeavoured to expose that particular breach of charity which has been generally overlooked by divines, because they are but few who can be guilty of it.

TRUE AND FALSE HUMOUR

—*Risu inepto res ineptior nulla est.*

Catull., Carm. 39 in Egnat.

Nothing so foolish as the laugh of fools.

Among all kinds of writing, there is none in which authors are more apt to miscarry than in works of humour, as there is none in which they are more ambitious to excel. It is not an imagination that teems with monsters, a head that is filled with extravagant conceptions, which is capable of furnishing the world with diversions of this nature; and yet, if we look into the productions of several writers, who set up for men of humour, what wild, irregular fancies, what unnatural distortions of thought do we meet with? If they speak nonsense, they believe they are talking humour; and when they have drawn together a scheme of absurd, inconsistent ideas, they are not able to read it over to themselves without laughing. These poor gentlemen endeavour to gain themselves the reputation of wits and humorists, by such monstrous conceits as almost qualify them for Bedlam; not considering that humour should always lie under the check of reason, and that it requires the direction of the nicest judgment, by so much the more as it indulges itself in the most boundless freedoms. There is a kind of nature that is to be observed in this sort of compositions, as well as in all other; and a certain regularity of thought which must discover the writer to be a man of sense, at the same time that he appears altogether given up to caprice. For my part, when I read the delirious mirth of an unskilful author, I cannot be so barbarous as to divert myself with it, but am rather apt to pity the man, than to laugh at anything he writes.

The deceased Mr. Shadwell, who had himself a great deal of the talent which I am treating of, represents an empty rake, in one of his plays, as very much surprised to hear one say that breaking of windows was not humour; and I question not but several English readers will be as much startled to hear me affirm, that many of those raving, incoherent pieces, which are often spread among us, under odd chimerical titles, are rather the offsprings of a distempered brain than works of humour.

It is, indeed, much easier to describe what is not humour than what is; and very difficult to define it otherwise than as Cowley has done wit, by negatives. Were I to give my own notions of it, I would deliver them after Plato's manner, in a kind of allegory, and, by supposing Humour to be a person, deduce to him all his qualifications, according to the following genealogy. Truth was the founder of the family, and the father of Good Sense. Good Sense was the father of Wit, who married a lady of a collateral line called Mirth, by whom he had issue Humour. Humour therefore being the youngest of this illustrious family, and descended from parents of such different dispositions, is very various and unequal in his temper; sometimes you see him putting on grave looks and a solemn habit, sometimes airy in his behaviour and fantastic in his dress; insomuch that at different times he appears as serious as a judge, and as jocular as a merry-andrew. But, as he has a great deal of the mother in his constitution, whatever mood he is in, he never fails to make his company laugh.

But since there is an impostor abroad, who takes upon him the name of this young gentleman, and would willingly pass for him in the world; to the end that well-meaning persons may not be imposed upon by cheats, I would desire my readers, when they meet with this pretender, to look into his parentage, and to examine him strictly, whether or no he be remotely allied to Truth, and lineally descended from Good Sense; if not, they may conclude him a counterfeit. They may likewise distinguish him by a loud and excessive laughter, in which he seldom gets his company to join with him. For as True Humour generally looks serious while everybody laughs about him, False Humour

is always laughing whilst everybody about him looks serious. I shall only add, if he has not in him a mixture of both parents—that is, if he would pass for the offspring of Wit without Mirth, or Mirth without Wit, you may conclude him to be altogether spurious and a cheat.

The impostor of whom I am speaking descends originally from Falsehood, who was the mother of Nonsense, who was brought to bed of a son called Phrensy, who married one of the daughters of Folly, commonly known by the name of Laughter, on whom he begot that monstrous infant of which I have been here speaking. I shall set down at length the genealogical table of False Humour, and, at the same time, place under it the genealogy of True Humour, that the reader may at one view behold their different pedigrees and relations:—

Falsehood

Nonsense

Phrensy.—Laughter

False Humour

Truth

Good Sense

Wit.—Mirth,

Humour

I might extend the allegory, by mentioning several of the children of False Humour, who are more in number than the sands of the sea, and might in particular enumerate the many sons and daughters which he has begot in this island. But as this would be a very invidious task, I shall only observe in general that False Humour differs from the True as a monkey does from a man.

First of all, he is exceedingly given to little apish tricks and buffooneries.

Secondly, he so much delights in mimicry, that it is all one to him whether he exposes by it vice and folly, luxury and avarice; or, on the contrary, virtue and wisdom, pain and poverty.

Thirdly, he is wonderfully unlucky, insomuch that he will bite the hand that feeds him, and endeavour to ridicule both friends and foes indifferently. For, having but small talents, he must be merry where he can, not where he should.

Fourthly, Being entirely void of reason, he pursues no point either of morality or instruction, but is ludicrous only for the sake of being so.

Fifthly, Being incapable of anything but mock representations, his ridicule is always personal, and aimed at the vicious man, or the writer; not at the vice, or at the writing.

I have here only pointed at the whole species of false humorists; but, as one of my principal designs in this paper is to beat down that malignant spirit which discovers itself in the writings of the present age, I shall not scruple, for the future, to single out any of the small wits that infest the world with such compositions as are ill-natured, immoral, and absurd. This is the only exception which I shall make to the general rule I have prescribed myself, of attacking multitudes; since every honest man ought to look upon himself as in a natural state of war with the libeller and lampooner, and to annoy them wherever they fall in his way. This is but retaliating upon them, and treating them as they treat others.

SA GA YEAN QUA RASH TOW'S IMPRESSIONS OF LONDON

Nunquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicit.

Juv., Sat. xiv. 321.

Good taste and nature always speak the same.

When the four Indian kings were in this country about a twelvemonth ago, I often mixed with the rabble, and followed them a whole day together, being wonderfully struck with the sight of everything that is new or uncommon. I have, since their departure, employed a friend to make many inquiries of their landlord the upholsterer relating to their manners and conversation, as also concerning the remarks which they made in this country; for next to the forming a right notion of such strangers, I should be desirous of learning what ideas they have conceived of us.

The upholsterer finding my friend very inquisitive about these his lodgers, brought him sometime since a little bundle of papers, which he assured him were written by King Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow, and, as he supposes, left behind by some mistake. These papers are now translated, and contain abundance of very odd observations, which I find this little fraternity of kings made during their stay in the Isle of Great Britain. I shall present my reader with a short specimen of them in this paper, and may perhaps communicate more to him hereafter. In the article of London are the following words, which without doubt are meant of the church of St. Paul:—

“On the most rising part of the town there stands a huge house, big enough to contain the whole nation of which I am the king. Our good brother E Tow O Koam, King of the Rivers, is of opinion it was made by the hands of that great God to whom it is consecrated. The Kings of Granajar and of the Six Nations believe that it was created with the earth, and produced on the same day with the sun and moon. But for my own part, by the best information that I could get of this matter, I am apt to think that this prodigious pile was fashioned into the shape it now bears by several tools and instruments, of which they have a wonderful variety in this country. It was probably at first a huge misshapen rock that grew upon the top of the hill, which the natives of the country, after having cut into a kind of regular figure, bored and hollowed with incredible pains and industry, till they had wrought in it all those beautiful vaults and caverns into which it is divided at this day. As soon as this rock was thus curiously scooped to their liking, a prodigious number of hands must have been employed in chipping the outside of it, which is now as smooth as the surface of a pebble; and is in several places hewn out into pillars that stand like the trunks of so many trees bound about the top with garlands of leaves. It is probable that when this great work was begun, which must have been many hundred years ago, there was some religion among this people; for they give it the name of a temple, and have a tradition that it was designed for men to pay their devotion in. And indeed, there are several reasons which make us think that the natives of this country had formerly among them some sort of worship, for they set apart every seventh day as sacred; but upon my going into one of these holy houses on that day, I could not observe any circumstance of devotion in their behaviour. There was, indeed, a man in black, who was mounted above the rest, and seemed to utter some thing with a great deal of vehemence; but as for those underneath him, instead of paying their worship to the deity of the place, they were most of them bowing and curtsying to one another, and a considerable number of them fast asleep.

“The queen of the country appointed two men to attend us, that had enough of our language to make themselves understood in some few particulars. But we soon perceived these two were great enemies to one another, and did not always agree in the same story. We could make a shift to gather out of one of them that this island was very much infested with a monstrous kind of animals, in the shape of men, called Whigs; and he often told us that he hoped we should meet with none of them in our way, for that, if we did, they would be apt to knock us down for being kings.

“Our other interpreter used to talk very much of a kind of animal called a Tory, that was as great a monster as the Whig, and would treat us as ill for being foreigners. These two creatures, it seems, are born with a secret antipathy to one another, and engage when they meet as naturally as the elephant and the rhinoceros. But as we saw none of either of these species, we are apt to think that our guides deceived us with misrepresentations and fictions, and amused us with an account of such monsters as are not really in their country.

“These particulars we made a shift to pick out from the discourse of our interpreters, which we put together as well as we could, being able to understand but here and there a word of what they said, and afterwards making up the meaning of it among ourselves. The men of the country are very cunning and ingenious in handicraft works, but withal so very idle, that we often saw young, lusty, raw-boned fellows carried up and down the streets in little covered rooms by a couple of porters, who were hired for that service. Their dress is likewise very barbarous, for they almost strangle themselves about the neck, and bind their bodies with many ligatures, that we are apt to think are the occasion of several distempers among them, which our country is entirely free from. Instead of those beautiful feathers with which we adorn our heads, they often buy up a monstrous bush of hair, which covers their heads, and falls down in a large fleece below the middle of their backs, with which they walk up and down the streets, and are as proud of it as if it was of their own growth.

“We were invited to one of their public diversions, where we hoped to have seen the great men of their country running down a stag, or pitching a bar, that we might have discovered who were the persons of the greatest abilities among them; but instead of that, they conveyed us into a huge room lighted up with abundance of candles, where this lazy people sat still above three hours to see several feats of ingenuity performed by others, who it seems were paid for it.

“As for the women of the country, not being able to talk with them, we could only make our remarks upon them at a distance. They let the hair of their heads grow to a great length; but as the men make a great show with heads of hair that are none of their own, the women, who they say have very fine heads of hair, tie it up in a knot, and cover it from being seen. The women look like angels, and would be more beautiful than the sun, were it not for little black spots that are apt to break out in their faces, and sometimes rise in very odd figures. I have observed that those little blemishes wear off very soon; but when they disappear in one part of the face, they are very apt to break out in another, insomuch that I have seen a spot upon the forehead in the afternoon which was upon the chin in the morning.”

The author then proceeds to show the absurdity of breeches and petticoats, with many other curious observations, which I shall reserve for another occasion: I cannot, however, conclude this paper without taking notice that amidst these wild remarks there now and then appears something very reasonable. I cannot likewise forbear observing, that we are all guilty in some measure of the same narrow way of thinking which we meet with in this abstract of the Indian journal, when we fancy the customs, dresses, and manners of other countries are ridiculous and extravagant if they do not resemble those of our own.

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