

# "[The Spectator] Issue 10, March 12, 1711"

By Joseph Addison

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## THE SPECTATOR, #10

*Non aliter quam qui adverso vix flumine lembum*

*Remegiis subigit: si brachia forte remisit,*

*Atque illum in praeceps prono rapit alveus amni.* Virg

virgil

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*Monday, March 12 , 1711.*

It is with much Satisfaction that I hear this great City, city inquiring Day by Day after these my Papers, and receiving my Morning Lectures with a becoming Seriousness and Attention. My Publisher tells me, that there are already Three Thousand of them distributed every Day: So that if I allow Twenty Readers to every Paper, which I look upon as a modest Computation, I may reckon about Threescore thousand, threescore Disciples in *London* and *Westminster* , who I hope will take care to distinguish themselves from the thoughtless Herd of their ignorant and unattentive Brethren. Since I have raised to myself so great an Audience, I shall spare no Pains to make their Instruction agreeable, and their Diversion useful. For which Reasons I shall endeavour to enliven Morality with Wit, and to temper Wit with Morality, that my Readers may, if possible, both Ways find their account in the Speculation of the Day. And to the End that their Virtue and Discretion may not be short transient intermitting Starts of Thought, I have resolved to refresh their Memories from Day to Day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate State of Vice and Folly, into which the Age is fallen. The Mind that lies fallow, fallow but a single Day, sprouts up in Follies that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous, assiduous Culture. It was said of *Socrates* , that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-tables, and in Coffee houses.

I would therefore in a very particular Manner recommend these my Speculations to all well-regulated Families, that set apart an Hour in every Morning for Tea and Bread and Butter; and would earnestly advise them for their Good to order this Paper to be punctually served up, and to be looked upon as a Part of the Tea Equipage, equipage .

*Sir Francis Bacon* observes, that a well-written Book, compared with its Rivals and Antagonists, is like *Moses's* Serpent, that immediately swallow'd up and devoured those of the *Egyptians*. I shall not be so vain as to think, that where the SPECTATOR appears, the other publick Prints will vanish; but shall leave it to my Readers Consideration, whether, Is it not much better to be let into the Knowledge of ones-self, than to hear what passes in *Muscovy*, <sup>muscovy</sup> or *Poland*; and to amuse our selves with such Writings as tend to the wearing out of Ignorance; Passion, and Prejudice, than such as naturally conduce to inflame Hatreds, and make Enmities, <sup>enmities</sup> irreconcilable.

In the next Place, I would recommend this Paper to the daily Perusal of those Gentlemen whom I cannot but consider as my good Brothers and Allies, I mean the Fraternity of Spectators who live in the World without having any thing to do in it; and either by the Affluence of their Fortunes, or Laziness of their Dispositions, have no other Business with the rest of Mankind but to look upon them. Under this Class of Men are comprehended all contemplative Tradesmen, titular Physicians, Fellows of the Royal Society, <sup>royalsociety</sup>, Templers, <sup>templers</sup> that are not given to be contentious, and Statesmen that are out of business. In short, every one that considers the World as a Theatre, and desires to form a right Judgment of those who are the Actors on it.

There is another Set of Men that I must likewise lay a Claim to, whom I have lately called the Blanks of Society, as being altogether unfurnish'd with Ideas, till the Business and Conversation of the Day has supplied them. I have often considered these poor Souls with an Eye of great Commiseration, <sup>commiseration</sup>, when I have heard them asking the first Man they have met with, whether there was any News stirring? and by that Means gathering together Materials for thinking. These needy Persons do not know what to talk of; till about twelve a Clock in the Morning; for by that Time they are pretty good Judges of the Weather, know which Way the Wind sits, and whether the *Dutch Mail*, <sup>dutchmail</sup> be come in. As they lie at the Mercy of the first Man they meet, and are grave or impertinent, <sup>impertinent</sup> all the Day long, according to the Notions which they have imbibed, <sup>imbibed</sup> in the Morning, I would earnestly entreat, <sup>entreat</sup> them not to stir out of their Chambers till they have read this Paper, and

- verso -

do promise them that I will daily instil into them such sound and wholesome Sentiments, as shall have a good Effect on their Conversation for the ensuing twelve Hours.

But there are none to whom this Paper will be more useful than to the female World. I have often thought there has not been sufficient Pains taken in finding out proper Employments and Diversions for the Fair ones. Their Amusements seem contrived for them rather as they are Women, than as they are reasonable Creatures; and are more adapted to the Sex, than to the Species. The Toilet, <sup>toilet</sup> is their great Scene of Business, and the right adjusting of their Hair the principal Employment of their Lives. The sorting of a Suit of Ribbons is reckoned a very good Morning's Work; and if they make an Excursion to a Mercer's, <sup>mercier</sup> or a Toy-shop, so great a Fatigue makes them unfit for any thing else all the Day after. Their more serious Occupations are Sowing, <sup>sewing</sup> and Embroidery, and their greatest Drudgery, <sup>drudgery</sup> the Preparation of Jellies and Sweet-meats, <sup>sweet-meats</sup>. This, I say, is the State of ordinary Women; tho' I know there are Multitudes of those of a more elevated Life and Conversation, that move in an exalted Sphere of Knowledge and Virtue, that join all the Beauties of the Mind to the Ornaments of Dress, and inspire a kind of Awe and Respect, as well as Love, into their Male-Beholders. I hope to encrease the Number of these by publishing this daily Paper, which I shall always endeavour to make an innocent if not an improving Entertainment, and by that

Means at least divert the Minds of my female Readers from greater Trifles. At the same Time, as I would fain give some finishing Touches to those which are already the most beautiful Pieces in humane Nature, I shall endeavour to point out all those Imperfections that are the Blemishes, as well as those Virtues which are the Embellishments, of the Sex. In the mean while I hope these my gentle Readers, who have so much Time on their Hands, will not grudge throwing away a Quarter of an Hour in a Day on this Paper, since they may do it without any Hindrance to Business.

I know several of my Friends and Well-wishers are in great Pain for me, lest I should not be able to keep up the Spirit of a Paper which I oblige myself to furnish every Day: But to make them easy in this Particular, I will promise them faithfully to give it over as soon as I grow dull. This I know will be Matter of great Raillery, <sup>raillery</sup> to the small Wits; who will frequently put me in mind of my Promise, desire me to keep my Word, assure me that it is high Time to give over, with many other little Pleasantries of the like Nature, which men of a little smart Genius cannot forbear throwing out against their best Friends, when they have such a Handle given them of being witty. But let them remember, that I do hereby enter my Caveat against this Piece of Raillery.

C.

## Footnotes

virgil "It is just like when a rower is trying to pull his boat upstream with his oars; as soon as he relaxes, the current pulls him downstream." From the first of the *Georgics* by the Roman poet Virgil

city London

threescore Score equals twenty; thus threescore thousand would be sixty thousand readers. Papers would be sold to coffeehouses, where, Addison is claiming, an average of twenty readers would read each copy in the course of a day. Addison is probably being accurate in the number of copies being printed, and 3000 was a large print run at the time, especially for a new journal. The figure of twenty readers for each issue is probably a best guess, perhaps a very optimistic one.

fallow barren or uncultivated

assiduous diligent

equipage that is, part of the equipment for serving tea

muscovy Before the Russian empire was founded by Peter the Great in 1721, the Russian state was often referred to as "Muscovy" as its central city was Moscow.

enmities ill will

royal society A British learned society, founded in 1660, that is the oldest national scientific institution in the world. The society is still around today.

templers Law students at the Middle Temple, one of the Inns of Court where lawyers were trained. The stereotype of law students in this period was that they were loafers without a lot to do, which may or may not have been merited.

commiseration sympathy

dutchmail mail from the Netherlands, carrying key financial information from the markets in that country

impertinent irrelevant or disconnected.

imbibed absorbed or taken in, probably with a literal sense of drinking, since he is thinking of men who hang out all day in coffee-houses

entreat request or ask, with a sense of urgency

toilet a small table with makeup, brushes, combs and other things a woman would use in getting dressed

mercenary a person who deals in fabrics and textiles.

sewing that is, sewing

drudgery toil or wearisome labor

sweet-meats A type of confection that is made by preserving fruits or flowers in honey or sugar.

railery Good-humoured banter; jest. Source: Oxford English Dictionary