THE SPECTATOR

No. 364.

Friday, Feb. 28.

D2.

with whatever may render them accomplished. Those who please to make trial of the Vigilance and Ability of the Persuasion, may enquire at the two Golden-Balls on Mile-End-Green, near Spurgeon, where they will receive further Satisfaction.

This is to give Notice, that the SPECTATOR has taken upon him to be Visitant of all Boarding-Schools where young Women are educated, and designs to proceed in the said Office after the same Manner that the Visitants of Colleges do in the two famous Universities of this Land.

All Lovers who write to the SPECTATOR, are desired to forbear one Expression which is in most of the Letters to him, either out of Laziness or Want of Invention, and is true of not above two thousand Women in the whole World; viz. She has in all her that is useful in Woman.

No. 315.

[ADDISON.] Saturday, March 1.

Ne divx intervix, nisi dignus vixit  
inciso. — Hor.

HorACE advises a Poet to consider thoroughly the Nature and Force of his Genius. Milton seems to have known, perfectly well, wherein his Strength lay, and has therefore chosen a Subject entirely conformable to those Talents, of which he was Master. As his Genius was wonderfully turned to the Sublime, his Subject is the noblest that could have entered into the Thoughts of Man. Every Thing that is truly great and astonishing, has a Place in it. The whole System of the intellectual World, the Chaos and the Creation; Heaven, Earth and Hell; enter into the Constitution of his Poem.

Having in the First and Second Book represented the Infernal World with all its Horrors, the Thread of his Fable naturally leads him into the opposite Regions of Bliss and Glory.

If Milton's Majesty forsakes him any where, it is in those Parts of his Poem, where the Divine Persons are introduced as Speakers. One may, I think, observe No. 353, that the Author proceeds with a Kind of Fear and Suspicion, trembling, whilst he describes the Sentiments of the Almighty. He does not give his Imagination its full Play, but chooses to confine himself to such Thoughts as are drawn from the Books of the most Orthodox Divines, and to such Expressions as may be met with in Scripture. The Beauties, therefore, which we are to look for in these Speeches, are not of a poetical Nature, or so proper to fill the Mind with Sentiments of Grandeur, as with Thoughts of Devotion. The Passions, which they are designed to raise, are a Divine Love and Religious Fear. The particular Beauty of the Speeches in the Third Book, consists in that Serenity and Perspicuity of Style, in which the Poet has touched the greatest Mysteries of Christianity, and drawn together, in a regular Scheme, the whole Illustration of Providence, with respect to Man. He has represented all the abstruse Doctrines of Predestination, Free-Will and Grace, as also the great Points of Incarnation and Redemption (which naturally grow up in a Poem that treats of the Fall of Man), with great Energy of Expression, and in a clearer and stronger Light than I ever met with in any other Writer. As these Points are dry in themselves to the Generality of Readers, the concise and clear Manner in which he has treated them, is very much to be admired, as is likewise that particular Art which he has made Use of, in the interposing of all those Graces of Poetry, which the Subject was capable of receiving.

The Survey of the whole Creation, and of every Thing that is transected in it, is a Prospect worthy of Ominiscience; and as much above that, in which Virgil in drawn his Jupiters, as the Christian Idea of the Supreme Being is more Rational and Sublime than that of the Heathen. The particular Object on which he is described to have cast his Eye, are represented in the most beautiful and lively Manner:

Now had th' Almighty Father from above  
From the pure Empyrean where he sits,  
High abode'd above all height, beat down his Eye,  
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His own Works and their Works at once to View. About him all the Vanities of Earth. Sweet thine as Stars, and from his Sight receive'd Gratitude past utterance. On his Right The Sublime length of his Glory set, His only Sun. On earth he first behold Our two first Parents, yet the only two, Reposing immoral fruits of joy and Love. Unfettered joy, unbridled love, In Gladsome Solitude; he then survey'd Hell sent by God hereon, and Satan there Creating the World of Hero's on this Side Night In the dim air unknown; and ready are To steep with weared Whig and willing Feet On the bare outside of this World, that would From Land unbounded without Circumference, Uncertain which, in Ocean or in Air. Him God beholding from his prospect high, Wherein past, present, before he beholds, Thus to his only Son foreseeing spoke.

Satan's Approach to the Confines of the Creation, in fiery images in the Beginning of the Speech, which immediately follows. The Effects of this Speech in the blessed Spirits, and in the divine Person to whom it was addressed, cannot but fill the Mind of the Reader with a secret Pleasure and Complacency.

Thus while God spake, embossed Fragrance still All Hero's, and in the brighten Spirits实施细则 of new Joy incalculable; Beyond compare the Sea of God was vast Most glorious: in him all his Father shows Substantially express'd, and in his Face Divine Compassion visibly appear'd. Love without End, and without Measure Grace.

I need not point out the Beauty of that Circumstance, wherein the whole Host of Angels are represented as standing astir, nor show how proper the Occasion was to produce such a Silence in Heaven. The Close of this Divine Colloquy, with the Hymn of Angels that follows upon it, are so wonderfully beautiful and poetical, that I should not forbear inserting the whole Passage, if the Bounds of my paper would give me leave.

Satan's Walk upon the Outside of the Universe, which, at a Distance, appeared to him of a globose Form, but, upon his nearer Approach, looked like an unbounded Plain, in natural and noble. As his Restoring upon the Frontiers of the Creation, between that Mass of Matter, which was wrought into a World, and that shapeless unformed Heap of Materials, which still lay in Chaos and Confusion, strikes the Imagination with something astonishingly vast and wide. I have before spoken of the Limbo of Vanity, which the Poet places upon this common Surface of the Universe, and shall now explain my self more at large on that, and other Parts of the Poem, which are of the same shadowy Nature.

Aristotle observes, that the Fable of an Epic Poem should abound in Circumstances that are both credible and astonishing; or, as the French Critics chose to phrase it, the Fable should be filled with the Probable and the Marvelous. This Rule is at fine and just as truly: in Aesop's whole Art of Poetry.

If the Fable is only probable, it differs nothing from a true History; if it is only marvellous, it is no better than a Romance. The great Secret therefore of Herodick Poetry, is to relate such Circumstances, as may produce in the Reader at the same Time both Belief and Astonishment. This is brought to pass in a well chosen Fable, by the Account of such Things as have really happened, or at least of such Things as have happened according to the received Opinions of Mankind. Milton's Fable is a Master-piece of this Nature; as the War in Heaven, the Condition of the fallen Angels, the State of Innocence, the Temptation of the Serpent, and the Fall of Man, though they are very astonishing in themselves, are not only credible, but Actual Points of Fact. The same Method of reconciling Miracles with Credibility...
bility, is by a happy Invention of the Poet; as in par-
ticular, when he introduces Aganippe of a superior Nature,
who is not to be met with in the ordinary Course of Things,
into a Shaft of Water nymphs, though they are very
surprising accidents, are nevertheless probable, when we
are told that they were the Gods who thus trans-
formed them. It is this Kind of Machinery which fills
the Poets both of Homer and Virgil with such Cir-
sumstances as are wonderful, but not impossible, and
so frequently produce in the Reader the most pleasing
Pasion that can rise in the Mind of Man, which is
Admiration. If there be any Instance in the Aeneis
fable to Exception upon this Account, it is in the
Beginning of the Third Book, where Aeneas is re-
presented as tearing up the Myrtle that dropped Blood.
To qualify this wonderful Circumstance, Polydorus tells
a Story from the Root of the Myrtle, that the barbary
Inhabitants of the Country having pierced him with
Spear and Arrow, the Wood which was left in his
Body took Root in his Wounds, and gave Birth to that
bleeding Tree. This Circumstance seems to have the
Marvellous without the Probable, because it is represen-
ted as proceeding from natural Causes, without the
Interruption of any God, or other supernatural Power
capable of producing it. The Spears and Arrows grew
of themselves, without so much as the modern Help
of an Enchanter. If we look into the Fiction of
Milton’s Fable, though we find it full of surprising
Incidents, they are generally suited to our Notions of
the Things and Persons described, and tempered with
a due Measure of Probability. I must only make an
Exception to the Limbo of Vanity, with his Episode of
Sin and Death, and some of the Imaginary Persons in
his Chaos. These Passages are astonishing, but not
credible; the Reader cannot so far impose upon himself
as to see a Possibility in them, they are the Description
of Dreams and Shadows, not of Things or Persons.
I know that many Critics look upon the Stories of
Circe, Polyphemus, the Sirens, the whole Odyssey
and Aeneas to be Allegories; but allowing this to be true,
they are Fables, which considering the Opinions of
Mankind that prevailed in the Age of the Poet, might
possibly have been according to the Letter. The
Persons are such as might have existed what is ascribed
to them, as the Circumstances, in which they are re-
presented, might possibly have been Truths and Realities.
This Appearance of Probability is so absolutely requisite
in the greater Kinds of Poetry, that Aristotle observes
the ancient tragic Writers made Use of the Names of
such great Men as had actually lived in the World,
that the Tragedy proceeded upon Adventures they
were never engaged in, on Purpose to make the Subject
more credible. In a Word, besides the hidden Meaning
of an Epic Allegory, the plain literal Sense ought to
appear probable. The Story should be such as an
ordinary Reader may associate in, whatever natural,
moral, or political Truth may be discovered in it by
Men of greater Penetration.

Sated after having long wandered upon the Surface,
or outmost Wall of the Universe, discovers at last a
wide Gap in it, which led into the Creation, and is
described as the Opening through which the Angels
pass to and fro into the lower World upon their
Errands to Mankind. His Sitting upon the Brink of
this Passage, and taking a Survey of the whole Face of
Nature, that appeared to him new and fresh in all
its Beauties, with the Simile illustrating this Circum-
stance, fills the Mind of the Reader with as surprising
and glorious an Idea as any that arises in the whole
Poem. He looks down into that vast Hollow of the
Universe with the Eye, or (as Milton calls it in his
first Book) with the Kenn of an Angel. He surveys
all the Wonders in this immense Amphitheatre that
lay between both the Poles of Heaven, and takes in
at one View the whole Round of the Creation.
His Flight between the several Worlds that shined
on every Side of him, with the particular Description
of the Sun, are set forth in all the Wonders of a
luxuriant Imagination. His Shape, Speech and
Behaviour upon his transforming himself into an
Angel
Angel of Light, are touched with exquisite Beauty, The Poet’s Thought of directing Satan to the Sun, which in the Vedgar Opinion of Mankind is the most conspicuous Part of the Creation, and the placing in it an Angel, is a Circumstance very finely conceived, and the more attended to a poetical Probability, as it was a received Doctrine among the most famous Philosophers, that every Orb had its Intelligence; and as an Apostle in sacred Wit is said to have seen such an Angel in the Sun. In the Answer which this Angel returns to the disguised Evil Spirit, there is such a becoming Majesty as is altogether suitable to a superior Being. The Part of it in which he represents himself as present at the Creation, is very noble in itself, and not only proper where it is introduced, but requisite to prepare the Reader for what follows in the Seventh Book.

I saw where on the Way of the forementioned Mars, This World’s Material Mould came to a Hea, Calming heard his Voice, and will appear Stood still, stood west (indulgentas confiteri) Till on his second bidding Darkness hid.

Light shin, lo.

In the following Part of the Speech he points out the Earth with such Circumstances that the Reader can scarce forbear fancying himself employed on the same distant View of it.

Look downward on that Globe whose bedding Site With light from hence, tho’ but reflected, etherees; That Place is Earth, the Seat of Man, that light Site by, lo.

I must not conclude my Reflections upon this third Book of Paradise Lost, without taking Notice of that celebrated Complaint of Milton with which it opens, and which certainly deserves all the Praises that have been given it; tho’ as I have before hinted, it may rather be looked upon as an Expression, than as an essential Part of the Poem. The same Observation might be applied to that beautiful Digression upon Hypocritick, in the same Book.

MONDAY

Liberate quae vera tamen respectus inventa—Virg. Eccl. i.

The Spectator


If you ever read a Letter, which is sent, with the more Pleasure for the Reality of its Complaints, this may have Reason to hope for a favourable Answer; and if Time be the most irretrievable Law, the Regrets which follow will be thought, I hope, the most justifiable. The remainder of my Liberty from a long State of Indolence and Inactivity, and the Desire of resuming the farther Enquiries of Idleness, make me apply to you; and the Unaccountable with which I recollect the past Years, and the Apprehensions with which I expect the Future, soon determined me to it. Idleness is so general a Distemper, that I cannot but imagine a Speculation on this Subject will be of universal Use. There is hardly any one Person without some Alloy of it; and thousands besides my self spend more Time in an idle Inactivity which to begin first of two Affairs, than would have been sufficient to have ended them both. The Occasion of this seems to be the Want of some necessary Employment, to put the Spirits in Motion, and awaken them out of their Lethargy. If I had less Letters, I should have more; for I should then find my Time distinguish’d into Portions, some for Business, and others for the indulging of Pleasures; But now one Face of Indolence ever-spreads the Whole, and I have no Landmark to direct my self by. Were once Time a little restrained by Business, like Water inclosed in its Banks, it would have some determined Course, but unless it be put into some Channel it has no Current, but becomes a Deluge without either Use or Motion.

When Snaederbeg Prince of Epirus was dead, the Turks, who had but too often felt the Force of his Arm in the Battles he had won from them, imagined that by wearing a Piece of his Bones near their Heart, they should be animated with a Vigour and Force like to that which inspired him when living. As I am like to be

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