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**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

No 117. Saturday, January 7. 1709.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53633](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53633)

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*Durate, et vosmet rebus servate secundis.*

Virg.

*Sheer-Lane, January 6.*

**W**HEN I look into the frame and constitution of my own Mind, there is no part of it which I observe with greater satisfaction, than that Tenderness and Concern which it bears for the Good and Happiness of Mankind. My own circumstances are indeed so narrow and scanty, that I should taste but very little pleasure, could I receive it only from those enjoyments which are in my own possession; but by this great tincture of Humanity, which I find in all my thoughts and reflections, I am happier than any single person can be, with all the Wealth, Strength, Beauty, and Success, that can be conferred upon a Mortal, if he only relishes such a proportion of these blessings as is vested in himself, and is his own private property. By this means, every man that does Himself any real service, does Me a kindness. I come in for my share in all the good that happens to a man of Merit and Virtue, and partake of many gifts of Fortune and Power that I was never born to. There is nothing in particular in which I so much rejoice, as the deliverance of good and generous Spirits out of dangers, difficulties, and distresses. And because the world does not supply Instances of this kind to furnish out sufficient entertainments for such an Humanity and Benevolence of temper, I have ever delighted in reading the History of Ages past, which draws together into a narrow compass the great Occurrences and Events that are but thinly sown in those tracts of time which lie within our own knowledge and observation. When I see the life of a great Man, who has deserved well of his country, after having struggled through all the oppositions of Prejudice and Envy, breaking out with Lustre, and shining forth in all the splendor of Success, I close my book, and am an happy man for a whole evening.

But



But since in History, events are of a mixed nature, and often happen alike to the worthless and the deserving, insomuch that we frequently see a virtuous man dying in the midst of disappointments and calamities, and the vicious ending their days in prosperity and peace; I love to amuse my self with the accounts I meet with in fabulous Histories and Fictions: For in this kind of writings we have always the pleasure of seeing Vice punished, and Virtue rewarded. Indeed, were we able to view a Man in the whole circle of his Existence, we should have the satisfaction of seeing it close with happiness or misery, according to his proper merit: But though our view of him is interrupted by Death before the finishing of his Adventures, (if I may so speak) we may be sure that the Conclusion and Catastrophe is altogether suitable to his Behaviour. On the contrary, the whole Being of a Man, considered as an Heroe, or a Knight-errant, is comprehended within the limits of a Poem or Romance, and therefore always ends to our satisfaction; so that Inventions of this kind are like food and exercise to a good-natured Disposition, which they please and gratifie at the same time that they nourish and strengthen. The greater the Affliction is in which we see our Favourites in these relations engaged, the greater is the Pleasure we take in seeing them relieved.

Among the many feigned Histories which I have met with in my reading, there is none in which the Heroe's perplexity is greater, and the winding out of it more difficult, than that in a *French* Author whose name I have forgot. It so happens, that the Heroe's Mistress was the Sister of his most intimate Friend, who for certain reasons was given out to be dead, while he was preparing to leave his Country in quest of Adventures. The Heroe having heard of his Friend's death, immediately repaired to his Mistress, to condole with her, and comfort her. Upon his arrival in her garden, he discovered at a distance a Man clasped in her arms, and embraced with the most endearing tenderness. What should he do? It did not consist with the gentleness of a Knight-errant either to kill his Mistress, or the Man whom she was pleased to favour. At the same time, it would have spoiled a Romance, should he have laid violent hands on himself. In short, he immediately entered upon his Adventures; and after a long series of exploits, found out by degrees, that the Person he saw in his Mistress's arms was her own Brother, taking leave of her before he left his Country, and the Embrace she gave him nothing else but the affectionate Farewel of a Sister: So that he had at once the two greatest satisfactions that could enter into the heart of



man, in finding his Friend alive, whom he thought dead; and his Mistress faithful, whom he had believed inconstant.

There are indeed some Disasters so very fatal, that it is impossible for any Accidents to rectifie them. Of this kind was that of poor *Lucretia*; and yet we see *Ovid* has found an expedient even in a case like hers. He describes a beautiful and royal Virgin walking on the sea-shore, where she was discovered by *Neptune*, and violated after a long and unsuccessful importunity. To mitigate her sorrow, he offers her whatever she would wish for. Never certainly was the wit of Woman more puzzled in finding out a stratagem to retrieve her Honour. Had she desired to be changed into a Stock or Stone, a Beast, Fish or Fowl, she would have been a loser by it: Or had she desired to have been made a Sea-nymph, or a Goddess, her Immortality would but have perpetuated her Disgrace. Give me therefore, said she, such a shape as may make me incapable of suffering again the like calamity, or of being reproached for what I have already suffered. To be short, she was turned into a Man, and by that only means avoided the danger and imputation she so much dreaded.

I was once my self in agonies of grief that are unutterable, and in so great a distraction of mind, that I thought my self even out of the possibility of receiving comfort. The occasion was as follows: When I was a Youth in a part of the Army which was then quartered at *Dover*, I fell in love with an agreeable young woman, of a good family in those parts, and had the satisfaction of seeing my addresses kindly received, which occasioned the perplexity I am going to relate.

We were in a calm Evening diverting our selves upon the top of the Cliff with the prospect of the Sea, and trifling away the time in such little Fondnesses as are most ridiculous to people in business, and most agreeable to those in love.

In the midst of these our innocent endearments, she snatched a Paper of Verses out of my hand, and ran away with them. I was following her, when on a sudden the ground, though at a considerable distance from the verge of the precipice, sunk under her, and threw her down from so prodigious an height upon such a range of Rocks, as would have dashed her into ten thousand pieces, had her body been made of Adamant. It is much easier for my Reader to imagine my state of mind upon such an occasion, than for me to express it. I said to my self, It is not in the Power of Heaven to relieve me! when I Awaked, equally transported and astonished, to see my self drawn out of an Affliction which the very moment before appeared to me altogether inextricable.

The



The Impressions of Grief and Horror were so lively on this occasion, that while they lasted, they made me more miserable than I was at the real Death of this beloved Person, (which happened a few months after, at a time when the match between us was concluded) inasmuch as the Imaginary death was untimely, and I my self in a sort an Accessary; whereas her Decease had at least these alleviations, of being Natural and Inevitable.

The Memory of the Dream I have related still dwells so strongly upon me, that I can never read the description of *Dover-Cliff* in *Shakespear's* Tragedy of *King Lear*, without a fresh sense of my escape. The prospect from that place is drawn with such proper Incidents, that whoever can read it without growing giddy, must have a good head, or a very bad one.

*Come on, Sir, here's the place; stand still! how fearful  
And dizzy 'tis to cast ones Eyes so low?  
The Crows and Choughs that wing the midway air  
Show scarce as gross as Beetles. Half-way down  
Hangs one that gathers Samphire. Dreadful trade!  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
The Fishermen that walk upon the beach  
Appear like Mice, and yond' tall anchoring Bark  
Diminish'd to her Boat; her Boat a Buoy  
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring Surge  
(That on the unnumber'd idle Pebble beats)  
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,  
Lest my Brain turn.*



*Thursday,*