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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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suitable to the season; and in the mean time, as the setting in our selves 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 over-looked by Divines, because they are but few who can be guilty of it.

N^o 25. *Thursday, March 29.*

----- *Ægrescitque medendo.*

Virg.

THE following Letter will explain it self, and needs no apology.

SIR,

“ I Am one of that sickly tribe who are commonly known by the name
 “ of *Valetudinarians*; and do confes to you, that I first contra-
 “ cted this ill habit of body, or rather of mind, by the study of
 “ Physick. I no sooner began to peruse books of this nature, but I found
 “ my pulse was irregular; and scarce ever read the account of any dis-
 “ ease that I did not fancy my self afflicted with. Doctor *Sydenham's*
 “ learned treatise of Fevers threw me into a lingering Hectick, which hung
 “ upon me all the while I was reading that excellent piece. I then ap-
 “ plied my self to the study of several Authors, who have written upon
 “ Phthysical distempers, and by that means fell into a Consumption; till at
 “ length, growing very fat, I was in a manner shamed out of that Imagi-
 “ nation. Not long after this I found in my self all the symptoms of
 “ the Gout, except pain; but was cured of it by a Treatise upon the
 “ Gravel, written by a very ingenious Author, who (as it is usual for
 “ Physicians to convert one distemper into another) eased me of the
 “ Gout by giving me the Stone. I at length studied my self into a com-
 “ plication of distempers; but, accidentally taking into my hand that in-
 “ genious discourse written by *Sanctorius*, I was resolved to direct my
 “ self by a scheme of Rules, which I had collected from his observati-
 “ ons

“ ons. The learned world are very well acquainted with that Gentle-
 “ man’s invention; who, for the better carrying on of his experiments,
 “ contrived a certain Mathematical Chair, which was so artificially hung
 “ upon springs, that it would weigh any thing as well as a pair of Scales.
 “ By this means he discovered how many ounces of his food passed by
 “ perspiration, what quantity of it was turned into nourishment, and
 “ how much went away by the other channels and distributions of
 “ Nature.

“ Having provided my self with this Chair, I used to study, eat, drink,
 “ and sleep in it; infomuch that I may be said, for these three last years,
 “ to have lived in a pair of Scales. I compute my self, when I am in
 “ full health, to be precisely two hundred weight, falling short of it about
 “ a pound after a day’s fast, and exceeding it as much after a very full
 “ meal; so that it is my continual employment, to trim the ballance be-
 “ tween these two volatile pounds in my constitution. In my ordinary
 “ meals I fetch my self up to two hundred weight and half a pound; and
 “ if after having dined I find my self fall short of it, I drink just so much
 “ small-beer, or eat such a quantity of bread, as is sufficient to make me
 “ weight. In my greatest excesses I do not transgress more than the other
 “ half pound; which, for my health’s sake, I do the first *Monday* in every
 “ month. As soon as I find my self duely poised after dinner, I walk till
 “ I have perspired five ounces and four scruples; and when I discover, by
 “ my Chair, that I am so far reduced, I fall to my books, and study away three
 “ ounces more. As for the remaining parts of the pound, I keep no
 “ accompt of them. I do not dine and sup by the Clock, but by my
 “ Chair; for when that informs me my pound of food is exhausted, I con-
 “ clude my self to be hungry, and lay in another with all diligence. In
 “ my days of abstinence I lose a pound and an half, and on solemn Fasts
 “ am two pound lighter than on other days in the year.

“ I allow my self, one night with another, a quarter of a pound of sleep
 “ within a few grains more or less; and if upon my rising I find that I
 “ have not consumed my whole quantity, I take out the rest in my Chair.
 “ Upon an exact calculation of what I expended and received the last
 “ year, which I always register in a book, I find the medium to be two
 “ hundred weight, so that I cannot discover that I am impaired one
 “ ounce in my health during a whole twelve-month. And yet, Sir, not-
 “ withstanding this my great care to ballast my self equally every day, and
 “ to keep my body in its proper poise, so it is that I find my self in a sick
 “ and languishing condition. My Complexion is grown very fallow, my
 “ Vol. II. N n n Pulse

“ Pulse low, and my Body hydropical. Let me therefore beg you, Sir,
 “ to consider me as your patient, and to give me more certain rules to
 “ walk by than those I have already observed, and you will very much
 “ oblige

Your humble Servant.

This Letter puts me in mind of an *Italian* Epitaph written on the monument of a *Valetudinarian*; *Stavo ben, ma per star meglio, sto qui:* which it is impossible to translate. The Fear of Death often proves mortal, and sets people on methods to save their lives, which infallibly destroy them. This is a reflection made by some Historians, upon observing that there are many more thousands killed in a flight than in a battel; and may be applied to those multitudes of imaginary sick persons that break their Constitutions by Physick, and throw themselves into the arms of Death, by endeavouring to escape it. This method is not only dangerous, but below the practice of a Reasonable Creature. To consult the preservation of life, as the only end of it, To make our health our business, To engage in no action that is not part of a regimen, or course of Physick; are purposes so abject, so mean, so unworthy Humane Nature, that a generous Soul would rather die than submit to them. Besides, that a continual anxiety for life vitiates all the relishes of it, and casts a gloom over the whole face of Nature; as it is impossible we should take delight in any thing that we are every moment afraid of losing.

I do not mean, by what I have here said, that I think any one to blame for taking due care of their health. On the contrary, as cheerfulness of mind, and capacity for business, are in a great measure the effects of a well-tempered Constitution, a man cannot be at too much pains to cultivate and preserve it. But this care, which we are prompted to, not only by common sense, but by duty and instinct, should never engage us in groundless fears, melancholy apprehensions, and imaginary distempers, which are natural to every man who is more anxious to live than how to live. In short, the preservation of life should be only a secondary concern, and the direction of it our principal. If we have this frame of mind, we shall take the best means to preserve life, without being over-sollicitous about the event; and shall arrive at that point of felicity which *Martial* has mentioned as the perfection of Happiness, of neither fearing nor wishing for Death.

In

In answer to the Gentleman, who tempers his health by ounces and by scruples, and instead of complying with those natural sollicitations of hunger and thirst, drowsiness or love of exercise, governs himself by the prescriptions of his Chair, I shall tell him a short fable. *Jupiter*, says the Mythologist, to reward the piety of a certain countryman, promised to give him whatever he would ask. The countryman desired that he might have the management of the weather in his own estate: He obtained his request, and immediately distributed rain, snow, and sunshine among his several fields, as he thought the nature of the soil required. At the end of the year, when he expected to see a more than ordinary crop, his harvest fell infinitely short of that of his neighbours: Upon which (says the fable) he desired *Jupiter* to take the weather again into his own hands, or that otherwise he should utterly ruine himself.

N^o 26. *Friday, March 30.*

*Pallida mors æquo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
Regumque turres, O beate Sexti.*

Vitæ summa brevis spem nos vetat inchoare longam:

Jam te premet nox, fabulæque manes,

Et domus exilis Plutonia-----

Hor.

WHEN I am in a serious humour, I very often walk by my self in *Westminster* Abby; where the gloominess of the place, and the use to which it is applied, with the solemnity of the building, and the condition of the people who lye in it, are apt to fill the mind with a kind of melancholy, or rather thoughtfulness, that is not disagreeable. I yesterday passed a whole afternoon in the Church-yard, the Cloysters, and the Church, amusing my self with the Tombstones and Inscriptions that I met with in those several regions of the dead. Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried person, but that he was born upon one day, and died upon another: The whole history of his life being

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