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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 535. Thursday, November 13.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

N^o 535. Thursday, November 13.*Spem longam refecet*-----

Hor.

MY four hundred and seventy first speculation turned upon the subject of Hope in general. I design this paper as a speculation upon that vain and foolish Hope, which is misemployed on temporal objects, and produces many sorrows and calamities in human life.

It is a precept several times inculcated by *Horace*, that we should not entertain a hope of any thing in life which lies at a great distance from us. The shortness and uncertainty of our time here, makes such a kind of hope unreasonable and absurd. The grave lies unseen between us and the object which we reach after: where one man lives to enjoy the good he has in view, ten thousand are cut off in the pursuit of it.

It happens likewise unluckily, that one Hope no sooner dies in us, but another rises up in its stead. We are apt to fancy that we shall be happy and satisfied if we possess our selves of such and such particular enjoyments; but either by reason of their emptiness, or the natural inquietude of the mind, we have no sooner gained one point but we extend our hopes to another. We still find new inviting scenes and landskips lying behind those which at a distance terminated our view.

The natural consequences of such reflections are these; that we should take care not to let our hopes run out into too great a length; that we should sufficiently weigh the objects of our Hope, whether they be such as we may reasonably expect from them what we propose in their fruition, and whether they are such as we are pretty sure of attaining, in case our life extend it self so far. If we hope for things which are at too great a distance from us, it is possible that we may be intercepted by death in our progress towards them. If we hope for things of which we have not thoroughly considered the value, our disappointment will be greater than our pleasure in the fruition of them. If we hope for what we are not likely to possess, we act and think in vain, and make life a greater dream and shadow than it really is.

VOL. IV.

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Many

Many of the miseries and misfortunes of life proceed from our want of consideration, in one or all of these particulars. They are the rocks on which the sanguine tribe of lovers daily split, and on which the bankrupt, the politician, the alchymist and projector are cast away in every age. Men of warm imaginations and towering thoughts are apt to overlook the goods of fortune which are near them, for something that glitters in the sight at a distance; to neglect solid and substantial happiness, for what is showy and superficial; and to contemn that good which lies within their reach, for that which they are not capable of attaining. Hope calculates its schemes for a long and durable life; presses forward to imaginary points of bliss; and grasps at impossibilities; and consequently very often ensnares men into beggary, ruin and dishonour.

What I have here said, may serve as a moral to an *Arabian* fable, which I find translated into *French* by Monsieur Galland. The fable has in it such a wild, but natural simplicity, that I question not but my Reader will be as much pleased with it as I have been, and that he will consider himself, if he reflects on the several amusements of Hope which have sometimes passed in his mind, as a near relation to the *Persian* glass-man.

Alnaschar, says the fable, was a very idle fellow, that never would set his hand to any business during his father's life. When his father died, he left him to the value of a hundred Drachmas in *Persian* money. *Alnaschar*, in order to make the best of it, laid it out in glasses, bottles, and the finest earthen-ware. These he piled up in a large open basket, and having made choice of a very little shop, placed the basket at his feet, and leaned his back upon the wall, in expectation of customers. As he sat in this posture with his eyes upon the basket, he fell into a most amusing train of thought, and was over-heard by one of his neighbours as he talked to himself in the following manner: *This Basket*, says he, *cost me at the wholesale Merchant's a hundred Drachmas, which is all I have in the world. I shall quickly make two hundred of it, by selling it in retail. These two hundred Drachmas will in a very little while rise to four hundred, which of course will amount in time to four thousand. Four thousand Drachmas cannot fail of making eight thousand. As soon as by this means I am Master of ten thousand, I will lay aside my trade of glass-man, and turn Jeweller. I shall then deal in Diamonds, Pearls, and all sorts of rich stones. When I have got together as much wealth as I can well desire, I will make a purchase of the finest house I can find, with lands, slaves, eunuchs and horses. I shall then begin to enjoy my self, and make a noise in the world. I will not, however, stop there, but still continue*

tinne my traffick, till I have got together a hundred thousand Drachmas. When I have thus made my self master of a hundred thousand Drachmas, I shall naturally set my self on the foot of a Prince, and will demand the Grand Vizier's daughter in marriage, after having represented to that Minister the information which I have received of the beauty, wit, discretion, and other high qualities which his daughter possesses. I will let him know at the same time, that it is my intention to make him a present of a thousand pieces of gold on our marriage-night. As soon as I have married the Grand Vizier's daughter, I'll buy her ten black Eunuchs, the youngest and best that can be got for money. I must afterwards make my father-in-law a visit with a great train and equipage. And when I am placed at his right-hand, which he will do of course, if it be only to honour his daughter, I will give him the thousand pieces of gold which I promised him, and afterwards, to his great surprize, will present him with another purse of the same value, with some short speech; as, Sir, you see I am a man of my word: I always give more than I promise.

When I have brought the Princess to my house, I shall take particular care to breed in her a due respect for me, before I give the reins to love and dalliance. To this end I shall confine her to her own apartment, make her a short visit, and talk but little to her. Her women will represent to me, that she is inconsolable by reason of my unkindness, and beg me with tears to caress her, and let her sit down by me; but I shall still remain inexorable, and will turn my back upon her all the first night. Her mother will then come and bring her daughter to me, as I am seated upon my Sofa. The daughter, with tears in her eyes, will fling her self at my feet, and beg of me to receive her into my favour: then will I, to imprint in her a thorough veneration for my person, draw up my legs and spurn her from me with my foot, in such a manner that she shall fall down several paces from the Sofa.

Alnaschar was entirely swallowed up in this chimerical vision, and could not forbear acting with his foot what he had in his thoughts: so that unluckily striking his basket of brittle ware, which was the foundation of all his grandeur, he kicked his glasses to a great distance from him into the street, and broke them into ten thousand pieces.

