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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N^o 90. *Wednesday, June 13.**-----Magnus sine viribus ignis
Incaustum furit-----*

Virg.

THERE is not, in my opinion, a consideration more effectual to extinguish inordinate desires in the Soul of man, than the notions of *Plato* and his followers upon that subject. They tell us, that every passion which has been contracted by the Soul during her residence in the body, remains with her in a separate state; and that the Soul in the body, or out of the body, differs no more than the man does from himself when he is in his house, or in open air. When therefore the obscene passions in particular have once taken root, and spread themselves in the Soul, they cleave to her inseparably, and remain in her for ever after the body is cast off and thrown aside. As an argument to confirm this their doctrine they observe, that a lewd youth who goes on in a continued course of voluptuousness, advances by degrees into a libidinous old man; and that the passion survives in the mind when it is altogether dead in the body; nay, that the desire grows more violent, and (like all other habits) gathers strength by age, at the same time that it has no power of executing its own purposes. If, say they, the Soul is the most subject to these passions at a time when she has the least instigation from the body, we may well suppose she will still retain them when she is entirely divested of it. The very substance of the Soul is festered with them; the gangrene is gone too far to be ever cured; the inflammation will rage to all eternity.

In this therefore (say the *Platonists*) consists the punishment of a voluptuous man after death: He is tormented with desires which it is impossible for him to gratify, solicited by a passion that has neither objects nor organs adapted to it: he lives in a state of invincible desire and impotence, and always burns in the pursuit of what he always despairs to possess. It is for this reason (says *Plato*) that the Souls of the dead appear frequently in cemeteries, and hover about the places where their

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bodies

bodies are buried, as still hankering after their old brutal pleasures, and desiring again to enter the body that gave them an opportunity of fulfilling them.

Some of our most eminent Divines have made use of this *Platonick* notion, so far as it regards the subsistence of our passions after death, with great beauty and strength of reason. *Plato* indeed carries his thought very far, when he grafts upon it his opinion of Ghosts appearing in places of burial. Though, I must confess, if one did believe that the departed Souls of men and women wandered up and down these lower regions, and entertained themselves with the sight of their species, one could not devise a more proper Hell for an impure Spirit than that which *Plato* has touched upon.

The Ancients seem to have drawn such a state of torments in the description of *Tantalus*, who was punished with the rage of an eternal thirst, and set up to the chin in water that fled from his lips whenever he attempted to drink it.

Virgil, who has cast the whole system of *Platonick* Philosophy, so far as it relates to the Soul of man, into beautiful allegories, in the sixth book of his *Æneid* gives us the punishment of a voluptuary after death, not unlike that which we are here speaking of.

— *Lucent genialibus altis*

*Aurea fulcra toris, epulaeque ante ora paratæ
Regifico luxu; furiarum maxima juxta
Accubat, et manibus prohibet contingere mensas;
Exurgitque facem attollens, atque intonat ore.*

*They lie below on golden beds display'd,
And genial feasts with regal pomp are made.
The Queen of Furies by their side is set,
And snatches from their mouths th' untasted meat;
Which if they touch, her hissing snakes she rears,
Tossing her torch, and thund'ring in their ears.*

Dryd.

That I may a little alleviate the severity of this my Speculation (which otherwise may lose me several of my polite Readers) I shall translate a story that has been quoted upon another occasion by one of the most learned men of the present age, as I find it in the original. The Reader will see it is not foreign to my present subject, and I dare say will think it a lively representation of a person lying under the torments of such a kind

kind of Tantalism, or *Platonick* Hell, as that which we have now under consideration. Monsieur *Pontignan*, speaking of a love-adventure that happened to him in the country, gives the following account of it.

“ When I was in the country last summer, I was often in company
“ with a couple of charming women, who had all the wit and beauty
“ one could desire in female companions, with a dash of coquetry, that
“ from time to time gave me a great many agreeable torments. I was,
“ after my way, in love with both of them, and had such frequent op-
“ portunities of pleading my passion to them when they were asunder,
“ that I had reason to hope for particular favours from each of them.
“ As I was walking one evening in my chamber with nothing about me
“ but my Night-gown, they both came into my room and told me, they
“ had a very pleasant trick to put upon a Gentleman that was in the same
“ house, provided I would bear a part in it. Upon this they told me
“ such a plausible story, that I laughed at their contrivance, and agreed
“ to do whatever they should require of me. They immediately began to
“ swaddle me up in my Night-gown with long pieces of linnen, which
“ they folded about me till they had wrapt me in above an hundred
“ yards of swathe: my arms were pressed to my sides, and my legs clo-
“ sed together by so many wrappers one over another, that I looked like
“ an *Egyptian* mummy. As I stood bolt upright upon one end in this
“ antique figure, one of the Ladies burst out a laughing. And now *Pon-*
“ *tignan*, says she, we intend to perform the promise that we find you
“ have extorted from each of us. You have often asked the favour of
“ us, and I dare say you are a better bred Cavalier than to refuse to go
“ to bed to Ladies that desire it of you. After having stood a fit of
“ laughter, I begged them to uncase me, and do with me what they plea-
“ sed. No, no, say they, we like you very well as you are; and upon
“ that ordered me to be carried to one of their houses, and put to bed
“ in all my swaddles. The room was lighted up on all sides; and I was
“ laid very decently between a pair of sheets, with my head (which was
“ indeed the only part I could move) upon a very high pillow: this was
“ no sooner done, but my two female friends came into bed to me in
“ their finest Night-cloaths. You may easily guess at the condition of a
“ man that saw a couple of the most beautiful women in the world un-
“ drest and abed with him, without being able to stir hand or foot. I
“ begged them to release me, and struggled all I could to get loose, which
“ I did with so much violence, that about mid-night they both leaped out
“ of the bed, crying out they were undone. But seeing me safe, they
took

“ took their posts again, and renewed their raillery. Finding all my
 “ prayers and endeavours were lost, I composd my self as well as I
 “ could; and told them, that if they would not unbind me, I would fall
 “ asleep between them, and by that means disgrace them for ever: But,
 “ alas! this was impossible, could I have been disposed to it, they would
 “ have prevented me by several little ill-natured careffes and endear-
 “ ments which they bestowed upon me. As much devoted as I am to
 “ womankind, I would not pass such another night to be master of the
 “ whole sex. My Reader will doubtless be curious to know what be-
 “ came of me the next morning: why truly my bed-fellows left me a-
 “ bout an hour before day, and told me if I would be good and lie still,
 “ they would send some body to take me up as soon as it was time for
 “ me to rise: accordingly about nine-a-clock in the morning an old wo-
 “ man came to unswathe me. I bore all this very patiently, being re-
 “ solved to take my revenge of my tormentors, and to keep no measures
 “ with them as soon as I was at liberty; but upon asking my old wo-
 “ man what was become of the two Ladies, she told me she believed
 “ they were by that time within sight of *Paris*, for that they went a-
 “ way in a coach and six before five-a-clock in the morning.

N^o 92. Friday, June 15.

-----*Convivæ prope dissentire videntur,*
Poscentes vario multum diversa palato;
Quid dem? quid non dem?-----

Hor.

LOOKING over the late packets of letters which have been sent to me, I found the following one.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

“ YOUR paper is a part of my Tea-equipage; and my servant knows
 “ my humour so well, that calling for my breakfast this morning
 “ (it being past my usual hour) she answered the SPECTATOR was not
 “ yet come in; but that the Tea-kettle boiled, and she expected it every
 “ moment.