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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 195. Saturday, October 13.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53621)

It should be an indispenfable rule in life, to contract our desires to our present condition, and, whatever may be our expectations, to live within the compass of what we actually possess. It will be time enough to enjoy an estate when it comes into our hands; but if we anticipate our good fortune, we shall lose the pleasure of it when it arrives, and may possibly never possess what we have so foolishly counted upon.

N^o 195. *Saturday, October 13.*

Νήπιοι, εἰδὲ ἴσασιν ὅσῳ πλεόν ἡμῶν πανίβς,
 Οὐδὲ ὅσον ἐν μαλάχῃσι καὶ ἀσφοδέλω μέγ' ὄνειαρ.

Hef.

THERE is a story in the *Arabian Nights Tales*, of a King who had long languished under an ill habit of body, and had taken abundance of remedies to no purpose. At length, says the fable, a Physician cured him by the following method: he took an hollow ball of wood, and filled it with several drugs; after which he clofed it up so artificially that nothing appeared. He likewise took a mall, and after having hollowed the handle, and that part which strikes the ball, he enclosed in them several drugs after the same manner as in the ball it self. He then ordered the Sultan, who was his patient, to exercise himself early in the morning with these *rightly prepared* instruments, till such time as he should sweat. When, as the story goes, the vertue of the medicaments perspiring through the wood, had so good an influence on the Sultan's constitution, that they cured him of an indisposition which all the compositions he had taken inwardly had not been able to remove. This eastern Allegory is finely contrived to shew us how beneficial bodily labour is to health, and that Exercise is the most effectual physick. I have described, in my hundred and fifteenth paper, from the general structure and mechanism of an human body, how absolutely necessary Exercise is for its preservation: I shall in this place recommend another great preservative of health, which in many cases produces the same effects as Exercise, and may, in some measure, supply its place, where opportunities of Exercise are wanting. The preservative I am speaking

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of

of is Temperance, which has those particular advantages above all other means of health, that it may be practis'd by all ranks and conditions, at any season, or in any place. It is a kind of regimen into which every man may put himself, without interruption to business, expence of money, or loss of time. If Exercise throws off all superfluities, Temperance prevents them; if Exercise clears the vessels, Temperance neither fatiates nor overstrains them; if Exercise raises proper ferments in the humours, and promotes the circulation of the blood, Temperance gives nature her full play, and enables her to exert her self in all her force and vigour; if Exercise dissipates a growing distemper, Temperance starves it.

Physick, for the most part, is nothing else but the substitute of Exercise or Temperance. Medicines are indeed absolutely necessary in acute distempers, that cannot wait the slow operations of these two great instruments of health; but did men live in an habitual course of Exercise and Temperance, there would be but little occasion for them. Accordingly we find that those parts of the world are the most healthy, where they subsist by the chase; and that men lived longest when their lives were employed in hunting, and when they had little food besides what they caught. Blistering, cupping, bleeding, are seldom of use but to the idle and intemperate; as all those inward applications which are so much in practice among us, are for the most part nothing else but expedients to make luxury consistent with health. The Apothecary is perpetually employed in countermining the cook and the vintner. It is said of *Diogenes*, that meeting a young man who was going to a feast, he took him up in the street and carried him home to his friends, as one who was running into imminent danger, had not he prevented him. What would that Philosopher have said, had he been present at the gluttony of a modern meal? Would not he have thought the master of a family mad, and have begged his servants to tie down his hands, had he seen him devour fowl, fish and flesh; swallow oyl and vinegar, wines and spices; throw down sallads of twenty different herbs, sauces of an hundred ingredients, confections and fruits of numberless sweets and flavours? What unnatural motions and counterferments must such a medly of intemperance produce in the body? For my part, when I behold a fashionable table set out in all its magnificence, I fancy that I see goutts and dropies, feavers and lethargies, with other innumerable distempers lying in ambuscade among the dishes.

Nature delights in the most plain and simple diet. Every Animal, but Man, keeps to one dish. Herbs are the food of this species, Fish of that, and

and Flesh of a third. Man falls upon every thing that comes in his way, not the smallest fruit or excrescence of the earth, scarce a Berry or a Mushroom can escape him.

It is impossible to lay down any determinate rule for Temperance, because what is Luxury in one may be Temperance in another; but there are few that have lived any time in the world, who are not judges of their own constitutions, so far as to know what kinds and what proportions of food do best agree with them. Were I to consider my Readers as my Patients, and to prescribe such a kind of Temperance as is accommodated to all persons, and such as is particularly suitable to our climate and way of living, I would copy the following rules of a very eminent physician. Make your whole Repast out of one dish. If you indulge in a second, avoid drinking any thing strong 'till you have finished your Meal; at the same time abstain from all sauces, or at least such as are not the most plain and simple. A man could not well be guilty of gluttony, if he stuck to these few obvious and easy rules. In the first case there would be no variety of tastes to solicit his palate, and occasion excess; nor in the second any artificial provocatives to relieve satiety, and create a false appetite. Were I to prescribe a rule for drinking, it should be formed upon a saying quoted by Sir *William Temple*; *the first glass for my self, the second for my friends, the third for good humour, and the fourth for mine enemies.* But because it is impossible for one who lives in the world to diet himself always in so philosophical a manner, I think every man should have his days of abstinence, according as his constitution will permit. These are great reliefs to nature, as they qualify her for struggling with hunger and thirst, whenever any distemper or duty of life may put her upon such difficulties; and at the same time give her an opportunity of extricating herself from her oppressions, and recovering the several tones and springs of her distended vessels. Besides that Abstinence well timed often kills a sickness in embryo, and destroys the first seeds of an indisposition. It is observed by two or three ancient Authors, that *Socrates*, notwithstanding he lived in *Athens* during the great plague, which has made so much noise through all ages, and has been celebrated at different times by such eminent hands; I say, notwithstanding that he lived in the time of this devouring pestilence, he never caught the least infection, which those writers unanimously ascribe to that uninterrupted Temperance which he always observed.

And here I cannot but mention an observation which I have often made, upon reading the lives of the Philosophers, and comparing them
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with any series of Kings or great men of the same number. If we consider these ancient sages, a great part of whose Philosophy consisted in a temperate and abstemious course of life, one would think the life of a Philosopher and the life of a man were of two different dates. For we find that the generality of these wise men were nearer an hundred than sixty years of age at the time of their respective deaths. But the most remarkable instance of the efficacy of Temperance towards the procuring of long life, is what we meet with in a little book published by *Lewis Cornaro* the *Venetian*; which I the rather mention, because it is of undoubted credit, as the late *Venetian* Ambassador, who was of the same family, attested more than once in conversation, when he resided in *England*. *Cornaro*, who was the Author of the little treatise I am mentioning, was of an infirm constitution, till about forty, when by obstinately persisting in an exact course of Temperance, he recovered a perfect state of health; insomuch that at fourscore he published his book, which has been translated into *English* under the title of *Sure and certain methods of attaining a long and healthy life*. He lived to give a 3d or 4th Edition of it, and after having passed his hundredth year, died without pain or agony, and like one who falls asleep. The treatise I mention has been taken notice of by several eminent Authors, and is written with such a spirit of cheerfulness, religion, and good sense, as are the natural concomitants of temperance and sobriety. The mixture of the old man in it is rather a recommendation than a discredit to it.

Having designed this paper as the sequel to that upon Exercise, I have not here considered Temperance as it is a moral virtue, which I shall make the subject of a future Speculation, but only as it is the means of health.



And thus I conclude the mention of the Philosophers, and comparing them
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