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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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-----*Semperque relinqui*

Sola sibi, semper longam incommitata videtur

Ire viam -----

Virg.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

“ **T**Hough you have considered virtuous love in most of its dis-
 “ stresses, I do not remember that you have given us any dis-
 “ sertation upon the Absence of lovers, or laid down any me-
 “ thods how they should support themselves under those long separations
 “ which they are sometimes forced to undergo. I am at present in this
 “ unhappy circumstance, having parted with the best of husbands, who
 “ is abroad in the service of his country, and may not possibly return
 “ for some years. His warm and generous affection while we were to-
 “ gether, with the tenderness which he expressed to me at parting, make
 “ his absence almost insupportable. I think of him every moment of the
 “ day, and meet him every night in my dreams. Every thing I see puts
 “ me in mind of him. I apply my self with more than ordinary dili-
 “ gence to the care of his family and estate; but this instead of relieving
 “ me, gives me but so many occasions of wishing for his return. I fre-
 “ quent the rooms where I used to converse with him, and not meet-
 “ ing him there, sit down in his chair, and fall a weeping. I love to
 “ read the books he delighted in, and to converse with the persons whom
 “ he esteemed. I visit his picture a hundred times a day, and place my
 “ self over-against it whole hours together. I pass a great part of my
 “ time in the walks where I used to lean upon his arm, and recollect
 “ in my mind the discourses which have there passed between us: I look
 “ over the several prospects and points of view which we used to sur-
 “ vey together, fix my eye upon the objects which he has made me take
 “ notice of, and call to mind a thousand agreeable remarks which he
 “ has made on those occasions. I write to him by every conveyance,
 “ and

“ and contrary to other people, am always in good humour when an east
 “ wind blows, because it seldom fails of bringing me a Letter from him.
 “ Let me intreat you, Sir, to give me your advice upon this occasion,
 “ and to let me know how I may relieve my self in this my widow-
 “ hood.

I am, SIR, your most humble Servant, ASTERIA.

Absence is what the Poets call Death in Love, and has given occasion to abundance of beautiful complaints in those Authors who have treated of this passion in verse. *Ovid's* Epistles are full of them. *Otway's* *Mominia* talks very tenderly upon this subject.

——— *It was not kind
 To leave me, like a Turtle, here alone,
 To droop, and mourn the absence of my mate.
 When thou art from me, every place is desert:
 And I methinks am savage and forlorn.
 Thy presence only 'tis can make me blessed,
 Heal my unquiet mind, and tune my soul.*

The consolations of lovers on these occasions are very extraordinary. Besides those mentioned by *Asteria*, there are many other motives of comfort, which are made use of by absent Lovers.

I remember in one of *Scudery's* romances, a couple of honourable Lovers agreed at their parting to set aside one half hour in the day to think of each other during a tedious absence. The romance tells us, that they both of them punctually observed the time thus agreed upon; and that whatever company or business they were engaged in, they left it abruptly as soon as the clock warned them to retire. The romance farther adds, that the Lovers expected the return of this stated hour with as much impatience, as if it had been a real assignation, and enjoyed an imaginary happiness that was almost as pleasing to them as what they would have found from a real meeting. It was an inexpressible satisfaction to these divided Lovers to be assured that each was at the same time employed in the same kind of contemplation, and making equal returns of tenderness and affection.

If I may be allowed to mention a more serious expedient for the alleviating of absence, I shall take notice of one which I have known two persons practise, who joined religion to that elegance of sentiments with which the passion of Love generally inspires its votaries. This was, at

the return of such an hour, to offer up a certain prayer for each other, which they had agreed upon before their parting. The husband who is a man that makes a figure in the polite world, as well as in his own family, has often told me that he could not have supported an absence of three years without this expedient.

Strada in one of his prolusions gives an account of a chimerical correspondence between two friends by the help of a certain loadstone, which had such a vertue in it, that if it touched two several needles, when one of the needles so touched began to move, the other, though at never so great a distance, moved at the same time and in the same manner. He tells us, that the two friends, being each of them possessed of one of these needles, made a kind of Dial-plate, inscribing it with the four and twenty letters, in the same manner as the hours of the day are marked upon the ordinary Dial-plate. They then fixed one of the needles on each of these plates in such a manner, that it could move round without impediment, so as to touch any of the four and twenty letters. Upon their separating from one another into distant countries, they agreed to withdraw themselves punctually into their closets at a certain hour of the day, and to converse with one another by means of this their invention. Accordingly when they were some hundred miles asunder, each of them shut himself up in his closet at the time appointed, and immediately cast his eye upon his Dial-plate. If he had a mind to write any thing to his friend, he directed his needle to every letter that formed the words which he had occasion for, making a little pause at the end of every word or sentence, to avoid confusion. The friend, in the mean while, saw his own sympathetick needle moving of it self to every letter which that of his correspondent pointed at. By this means they talked together across a whole Continent, and conveyed their thoughts to one another in an instant over cities or mountains, seas or desarts.

If Monsieur *Scudery*, or any other writer of romance, had introduced a Necromancer, who is generally in the train of a Knight-errant, making a present to two Lovers of a couple of these above-mentioned needles, the Reader would not have been a little pleased to have seen them corresponding with one another when they were guarded by spies and watches, or separated by castles and adventures.

In the mean while, if ever this invention should be revived or put in practice, I would propose, that upon the Lover's Dial-plate there should be written not only the four and twenty letters, but several entire words which have always a place in passionate epistles, as *Flames, Darts, Die,*
Languish

Languish, Absence, Cupid, Heart, Eyes, Hang, Drown, and the like. This would very much abridge the Lover's pains in this way of writing a letter, as it would enable him to express the most useful and significant words with a single touch of the needle.

Formam quidem ipsam, Marce fili, et tanquam faciem honesti vides: quæ si oculis cerneretur, mirabiles amores (ut ait Plato) excitaret sapientie. Tull. Offic.

I Do not remember to have read any discourse written expressly upon the beauty and loveliness of virtue, without considering it as a duty, and as the means of making us happy both now and hereafter. I design therefore this Speculation as an essay upon that subject, in which I shall consider virtue no further than as it is in it self of an amiable nature, after having premised, that I understand by the word Virtue such a general notion as is affixed to it by the writers of morality, and which by devout men generally goes under the name of Religion, and by men of the world under the name of Honour.

Hypocrisy it self does great honour, or rather justice, to religion, and tacitly acknowledges it to be an ornament to humane nature. The Hypocrite would not be at so much pains to put on the appearance of virtue, if he did not know it was the most proper and effectual means to gain the love and esteem of mankind.

We learn from *Hierocles* it was a common saying among the heathens, that the wise man hates no body, but only loves the virtuous.

Tully has a very beautiful gradation of thoughts, to shew how amiable virtue is. We love a virtuous man, says he, who lives in the remotest parts of the earth, though we are altogether out of the reach of his virtue, and can receive from it no manner of benefit; nay, one who died several ages ago, raises a secret fondness and benevolence for him in our minds, when we read his story: nay, what is still more, one who has been the