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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 381. Saturday, May 17.

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

Samuel Felt, Haberdasher, wounded in his walk to *Islington* by Mrs. *Susannah Crossstitch*, as she was clambering over a stile.

R, F. T, W. S, I. M, P. &c. put to death in the last birth-day massacre.

Roger Blinko, cut off in the twenty first year of his age by a white-wash.

Musidorus, slain by an arrow that flew out of a dimple in *Belinda's* left cheek.

Ned Courtly presenting *Flavia* with her glove (which she had dropped on purpose) she received it, and took away his life with a curtsy.

John Gosselin having received a slight hurt from a pair of blue eyes, as he was making his escape was dispatched by a smile.

Strephon, killed by *Clarinda* as she looked down into the pit.

Charles Careless, shot flying by a girl of fifteen, who unexpectedly popped her head upon him out of a coach.

Josiah Wither, aged threescore and three, sent to his long home by *Elizabeth Fitt-well*, spinster.

Jack Freelove, murdered by *Melissa* in her hair.

William Wiseaker, Gent. drowned in a flood of tears by *Moll Common*.

John Pleadwell, Esq; of the *Middle Temple*, barrister at law, assassinated in his chambers the sixth instant by *Kitty Sly*, who pretended to come to him for his advice.

N^o 381. *Saturday, May 17.*

Æquam memento rebus in arduis

Servare mentem, non secus ac bonis

Ab insolenti temperatam

Letitiâ, moriture Deli.

Hor.

I Have always prefer'd Chearfulness to Mirth. The latter, I consider as an act, the former as an habit of the mind. Mirth is short and transient, Chearfulness fixed and permanent. Those are often raised

raised into the greatest transports of mirth, who are subject to the greatest depressions of melancholy: on the contrary, cheerfulness, though it does not give the mind such an exquisite gladness, prevents us from falling into any depths of sorrow. Mirth is like a flash of lightning, that breaks through a gloom of clouds, and glitters for a moment; cheerfulness keeps up a kind of day-light in the mind, and fills it with a steady and perpetual serenity.

Men of austere principles look upon mirth as too wanton and dissolute for a state of probation, and as filled with a certain triumph and insolence of heart, that is inconsistent with a life which is every moment obnoxious to the greatest dangers. Writers of this complexion have observed, that the sacred person who was the great pattern of perfection was never seen to laugh.

Cheerfulness of mind is not liable to any of these exceptions; it is of a serious and composed nature, it does not throw the mind into a condition improper for the present state of humanity, and is very conspicuous in the characters of those who are looked upon as the greatest Philosophers among the heathens, as well as among those who have been deservedly esteemed as Saints and holy men among christians.

If we consider Cheerfulness in three lights, with regard to our selves, to those we converse with, and to the great Author of our Being, it will not a little recommend it self on each of these accounts. The man who is possessed of this excellent frame of mind, is not only easy in his thoughts, but a perfect master of all the powers and faculties of his soul: his imagination is always clear, and his judgment undisturbed: his temper is even and unruffled, whether in action or in solitude. He comes with a relish to all those goods which nature has provided for him, tastes all the pleasures of the creation which are poured about him, and does not feel the full weight of those accidental evils which may befall him.

If we consider him in relation to the persons whom he converses with, it naturally produces love and good-will towards him. A cheerful mind is not only disposed to be affable and obliging, but raises the same good humour in those who come within its influence. A man finds himself pleased, he does not know why, with the cheerfulness of his companion: it is like a sudden sun-shine that awakens a secret delight in the mind, without her attending to it. The heart rejoices of its own accord, and naturally flows out into friendship and benevolence towards the person who has so kindly an effect upon it.

When

When I consider this chearful state of mind in its third relation, I cannot but look upon it as a constant habitual gratitude to the great Author of nature. An inward chearfulness is an implicit praise and thanksgiving to Providence under all its dispensations. It is a kind of acquiescence in the state wherein we are placed, and a secret approbation of the Divine Will in his conduct towards man.

There are but two things which, in my opinion, can reasonably deprive us of this chearfulness of heart. The first of these is the sense of guilt. A man who lives in a state of vice and impenitence, can have no title to that evenness and tranquillity of mind which is the health of the Soul, and the natural effect of virtue and innocence. Chearfulness in an ill man deserves a harder name than language can furnish us with, and is many degrees beyond what we commonly call folly or madness.

Atheism, by which I mean a disbelief of a supreme Being, and consequently of a future State, under whatsoever titles it shelters it self, may likewise very reasonably deprive a man of this chearfulness of temper. There is something so particularly gloomy and offensive to human nature in the prospect of Non-existence, that I cannot but wonder, with many excellent writers, how it is possible for a man to out-live the expectation of it. For my own part, I think the Being of a God is so little to be doubted, that it is almost the only truth we are sure of, and such a truth as we meet with in every object, in every occurrence, and in every thought. If we look into the characters of this tribe of Infidels, we generally find they are made up of pride, spleen, and cavil: It is indeed no wonder, that men, who are uneasy to themselves, should be so to the rest of the world; and how is it possible for a man to be otherwise than uneasy in himself, who is in danget every moment of losing his entire existence, and dropping into nothing?

The vicious man and Atheist have therefore no pretence to chearfulness, and would act very unreasonably, should they endeavour after it. It is impossible for any one to live in good humour, and enjoy his present existence, who is apprehensive either of torment or of annihilation; of being miserable, or of not being at all.

After having mentioned these two great principles, which are destructive of chearfulness in their own nature, as well as in right reason, I cannot think of any other that ought to banish this happy temper from a virtuous mind. Pain and sickness, shame and reproach, poverty and old age, nay death it self, considering the shortness of their duration, and the advantage we may reap from them, do not deserve the name of evils. A
good

good mind may bear up under them with fortitude, with indolence, and with chearfulness of heart. The tossing of a tempest does not discompose him, which he is sure will bring him to a joyful harbour.

A man, who uses his best endeavours to live according to the dictates of virtue and right reason, has two perpetual sources of chearfulness; in the consideration of his own nature, and of that Being on whom he has a dependance. If he looks into himself, he cannot but rejoice in that existence, which is so lately bestowed upon him, and which, after millions of ages, will be still new, and still in its beginning. How many self-congratulations naturally arise in the mind, when it reflects on this its entrance into Eternity, when it takes a view of those improveable faculties, which in a few years, and even at its first setting out, have made so considerable a progress, and which will be still receiving an increase of perfection, and consequently an increase of happiness? The consciousness of such a Being spreads a perpetual diffusion of joy through the Soul of a virtuous man, and makes him look upon himself every moment as more happy than he knows how to conceive.

The second source of chearfulness to a good mind, is its consideration of that Being on whom we have our dependance, and in whom, though we behold him as yet but in the first faint discoveries of his perfections, we see every thing that we can imagine as great, glorious, or amiable. We find our selves every where upheld by his goodness, and surrounded with an immensity of love and mercy. In short, we depend upon a Being, whose power qualifies him to make us happy by an infinity of means, whose goodness and truth engage him to make those happy who desire it of him, and whose unchangeableness will secure us in this happiness to all eternity.

Such considerations, which every one should perpetually cherish in his thoughts, will banish from us all that secret heaviness of heart which unthinking men are subject to when they lie under no real affliction, all that anguish which we may feel from an evil that actually oppresses us, to which I may likewise add those little cracklings of mirth and folly that are apter to betray virtue than support it; and establish in us such an even and chearful temper, as makes us pleasing to our selves, to those with whom we converse, and to him whom we were made to please.

Tuesday,