



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 391. Thursday, May 29.

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

N° 391. Thursday, May 29.

-----*Non tu prece poscis emaci,
 Quæ nisi seductis nequeas committere Divis ;
 At bona pars procerum tacita libabit acerra.
 Haud curvis promptum est, murmurque humilesque susurros
 Tollere de Templis ; et aperto vivere voto.
 Mens bona, fama, fides, hæc clare, et ut audiat hospes.
 Illa sibi introrsum et sub lingua immurmurat : O si
 Ebullit patrum præclarum funus ! Et O si
 Sub rastris crepet argenti mihi seria dextro
 Hercule ! pupillumve utinam quem proximus hæres
 Impello, expungam ! -----*

Perf.

WHERE Homer represents *Phænix*, the tutor of *Achilles*, as persuading his pupil to lay aside his resentments, and give himself up to the entreaties of his countrymen, the Poet, in order to make him speak in character, ascribes to him a speech full of those Fables and Allegories which old men take delight in relating, and which are very proper for instruction. *The Gods*, says he, *suffer themselves to be prevailed upon by entreaties. When mortals have offended them by their transgressions, they appease them by vows and sacrifices. You must know, Achilles, that PRAYERS are the daughters of Jupiter. They are crippled by frequent kneeling, have their faces full of cares and wrinkles, and their eyes always cast towards heaven. They are constant attendants on the Goddess ATE, and march behind her. This Goddess walks forward with a bold and haughty air, and being very light of foot, runs through the whole earth, grieving and afflicting the sons of men. She gets the start of PRAYERS, who always follow her, in order to heal those persons whom she wounds. He who honours these daughters of Jupiter,*

piter,

puter, when they draw near to him, receives great benefit from them; but as for him who rejects them, they intreat their Father to give his orders to the Goddess ATE to punish him for his hardness of heart. This noble Allegory needs but little explanation; for whether the Goddess ATE signifies Injury, as some have explained it; or Guilt in general, as others; or divine Justice, as I am the more apt to think; the interpretation is obvious enough.

I shall produce another heathen Fable relating to prayers, which is of a more diverting kind. One would think by some passages in it, that it was compos'd by *Lucian*, or at least by some Author who has endeavour'd to imitate his way of writing; but as Dissertations of this nature are more curious than useful, I shall give my Reader the Fable, without any further enquiries after the Author.

Menippus the Philosopher was a second time taken up into heaven by Jupiter, when for his entertainment he lifted up a trap-door that was placed by his foot-stool. At its rising, there issued through it such a din of cries as astonished the Philosopher. Upon his asking what they meant, Jupiter told him they were the prayers that were sent up to him from the earth. Menippus, amidst the confusion of voices, which was so great, that nothing less than the ear of Jove could distinguish them, heard the words, Riches, Honour, and Long life repeated in several different tones and languages. When the first hubbub of sounds was over, the trap-door being left open, the voices came up more separate and distinct. The first prayer was a very odd one, it came from Athens, and desired Jupiter to increase the wisdom and the beard of his humble supplicant. Menippus knew it by the voice to be the prayer of his friend Lycander the Philosopher. This was succeeded by the petition of one who had just laden a ship, and promised Jupiter, if he took care of it, and returned it home again full of riches, he would make him an offering of a silver-cup. Jupiter thanked him for nothing; and bending down his ear more attentively than ordinary, heard a voice complaining to him of the cruelty of an Ephesian widow, and begging him to breed compassion in her heart: This, says Jupiter, is a very honest fellow, I have received a great deal of incense from him; I will not be so cruel to him as to hear his prayers. He was then interrupted with a whole volley of vows, which were made for the health of a tyrannical Prince by his subjects who prayed for him in his presence. Menippus was surprized, after having listned to prayers offered up with so much ardour and devotion, to hear low whispers from the same assembly, expostulating with Jove for suffering such a tyrant to live,

live, and asking him how his thunder could lie idle? Jupiter was so offended at these prevaricating rascals, that he took down the first vows, and puffed away the last. The Philosopher seeing a great cloud mounting upwards, and making its way directly to the trap-door, enquired of Jupiter what it meant. This, says Jupiter, is the smoke of a whole hecatomb that is offered me by the General of an army, who is very importunate with me to let him cut off an hundred thousand men that are drawn up in array against him: what does the impudent wretch think I see in him, to believe that I will make a sacrifice of so many mortals as good as himself, and all this to his glory, forsooth? But hark, says Jupiter, there is a voice I never heard but in time of danger; it is a rogue that is shipwrecked in the Ionian sea: I saved him on a plank but three days ago, upon his promise to mend his manners; the scoundrel is not worth a groat, and yet has the impudence to offer me a temple if I will keep him from sinking—But yonder, says he, is a special youth for you; he desires me to take his father, who keeps a great estate from him, out of the miseries of human life. The old fellow shall live till he makes his heart ake, I can tell him that for his pains. This was followed by the soft voice of a pious Lady, desiring Jupiter that she might appear amiable and charming in the sight of her Emperor. As the Philosopher was reflecting on this extraordinary petition, there blew a gentle wind through the trap-door, which he at first mistook for a gale of Zephyrs, but afterwards found it to be a breeze of sighs: They smelt strong of flowers and incense, and were succeeded by most passionate complaints of wounds and torments, fires and arrows, cruelty, despair and death. Menippus fancied that such lamentable cries arose from some general execution, or from wretches lying under the torture; but Jupiter told him that they came up to him from the isle of Paphos, and that he every day received complaints of the same nature from that whimsical tribe of mortals who are called Lovers. I am so trifled with, says he, by this generation of both sexes, and find it so impossible to please them, whether I grant or refuse their petitions, that I shall order a western wind for the future to intercept them in their passage, and blow them at random upon the earth. The last petition I heard was from a very aged man of near an hundred years old, begging but for one year more of life, and then promising to die contented. This is the rarest old fellow! says Jupiter. He has made this prayer to me for above twenty years together. When he was but fifty years old, he desired only that he might live to see his son settled in the world; I granted it. He then begged the same favour for his daughter, and afterwards

that he might see the education of a grandson: when all this was brought about, he puts up a petition that he might live to finish a house he was building. In short, he is an unreasonable old cur, and never wants an excuse; I will hear no more of him. Upon which, he flung down the trap-door in a passion, and was resolved to give no more audiences that day.

Notwithstanding the levity of this Fable, the moral of it very well deserves our attention, and is the same with that which has been inculcated by *Socrates* and *Plato*, not to mention *Juvenal* and *Persius*, who have each of them made the finest satire in their whole works upon this subject. The vanity of mens wishes, which are the natural prayers of the mind, as well as many of those secret devotions which they offer to the supreme Being, are sufficiently exposed by it. Among other reasons for set forms of prayer, I have often thought it a very good one, that by this means the folly and extravagance of mens desires may be kept within due bounds, and not break out in absurd and ridiculous petitions on so great and solemn an occasion.

N^o 393. Saturday, May 31.

Nescio quâ præter solitum dulcedine læti.

Virg.

LOOKING over the Letters that have been sent me, I chanced to find the following one, which I received about two years ago from an ingenious friend, who was then in *Denmark*.

Dear Sir,

Copenhagen, May 1. 1710.

“ THE Spring with you has already taken possession of the fields and
 “ woods: now is the season of solitude, and of moving complaints
 “ upon trivial sufferings: now the griefs of lovers begin to flow, and
 “ their wounds to bleed afresh. I too, at this distance from the softer
 “ climates, am not without my discontents at present. You perhaps may
 “ laugh at me for a most romantic wretch, when I have disclosed to you
 “ the occasion of my uneasiness; and yet I cannot help thinking my unhap-
 “ piness real, in being confined to a region, which is the very reverse of
 Paradise.