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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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N° 393. Saturday, May 31.

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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.

“ *Paradise*. The seasons here are all of them unpleasant, and the country quite destitute of rural charms. I have not heard a bird sing, nor a brook murmur, nor a breeze whisper, neither have I been blest with the sight of a flowry meadow these two years. Every wind here is a tempest, and every water a turbulent ocean. I hope, when you reflect a little, you will not think the grounds of my complaint in the least frivolous and unbecoming a man of serious thought; since the love of woods, of fields and flowers, of rivers and fountains, seems to be a passion implanted in our natures the most early of any, even before the fair sex had a being.

I am, Sir, &c.

Could I transport my self with a wish from one country to another, I should chuse to pass my winter in *Spain*, my spring in *Italy*, my summer in *England*, and my autumn in *France*. Of all these seasons there is none that can vie with the spring for beauty and delightfulness. It bears the same figure among the seasons of the year, that the morning does among the divisions of the day, or youth among the stages of life. The *English* summer is pleasanter than that of any other country in *Europe*, on no other account but because it has a greater mixture of spring in it. The mildness of our climate, with those frequent refreshments of dews and rains that fall among us, keep up a perpetual cheerfulness in our fields, and fill the hottest months of the year with a lively verdure.

In the opening of the spring, when all nature begins to recover her self, the same animal pleasure which makes the birds sing, and the whole brute creation rejoice, rises very sensibly in the heart of man. I know none of the Poets who have observed so well as *Milton* those secret overflowings of gladness which diffuse themselves through the mind of the beholder, upon surveying the gay scenes of nature; he has touched upon it twice or thrice in his *Paradise Lost*, and describes it very beautifully under the name of Vernal delight, in that passage where he represents the Devil himself as almost sensible of it.

Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue
Appear'd, with gay enamel'd colours mixt;
On which the Sun more glad impress'd his beams
Than in fair evening cloud, or humid bow,
When God hath shower'd the earth, so lovely seem'd
That Landskip: And of pure now purer air

N n n 2

Meets

*Meets his approach, and to the heart inspires
Vernal delight, and joy able to drive
All sadness but despair, &c.*

Many Authors have written on the Vanity of the Creature, and represented the barrenness of every thing in this world, and its incapacity of producing any solid or substantial happiness. As discourses of this nature are very useful to the sensual and voluptuous; those speculations which shew the bright side of things, and lay forth those innocent entertainments which are to be met with among the several objects that encompass us, are no less beneficial to men of dark and melancholy tempers. It was for this reason that I endeavoured to recommend a Cheerfulness of mind in my two last *Saturday's* papers, and which I would still inculcate, not only from the consideration of our selves, and of that Being on whom we depend, nor from the general survey of that universe in which we are placed at present, but from reflections on the particular season in which this paper is written. The Creation is a perpetual feast to the mind of a good man, every thing he sees cheers and delights him; Providence has imprinted so many smiles on Nature, that it is impossible for a mind, which is not sunk in more gross and sensual delights, to take a survey of them without several secret sensations of pleasure. The Psalmist has in several of his divine Poems celebrated those beautiful and agreeable scenes which make the heart glad, and produce in it that vernal delight which I have before taken notice of.

Natural Philosophy quickens this taste of the Creation, and renders it not only pleasing to the imagination, but to the understanding. It does not rest in the murmur of brooks, and the melody of birds, in the shade of groves and woods, or in the embroidery of fields and meadows, but considers the several ends of Providence which are served by them, and the wonders of divine Wisdom which appear in them. It heightens the pleasures of the eye, and raises such a rational admiration in the Soul as is little inferior to devotion.

It is not in the power of every one to offer up this kind of worship to the great Author of Nature, and to indulge these more refined meditations of heart, which are doubtless highly acceptable in his sight; I shall therefore conclude this short Essay on that pleasure which the mind naturally conceives from the present season of the year, by the recommending of a practice for which every one has sufficient abilities.

I would have my Readers endeavour to moralize this natural pleasure of the Soul, and to improve this vernal delight, as *Milton* calls it, into a christian virtue. When we find our selves inspired with this pleasing instinct, this secret satisfaction and complacency arising from the beauties of the Creation, let us consider to whom we stand indebted for all these entertainments of sense, and who it is that thus opens his hand and fills the world with good. The Apostle instructs us to take advantage of our present temper of mind, to graft upon it such a religious exercise as is particularly conformable to it, by that precept which advises those who are sad to pray, and those who are merry to sing psalms. The chearfulness of heart which springs up in us from the survey of Nature's works, is an admirable preparation for gratitude. The mind has gone a great way towards Praise and Thanksgiving, that is filled with such a secret gladness: a grateful reflection on the Supreme Cause who produces it, sanctifies it in the Soul, and gives it its proper value. Such an habitual disposition of mind consecrates every field and wood, turns an ordinary walk into a morning or evening sacrifice, and will improve those transient gleams of joy, which naturally brighten up and refresh the Soul on such occasions, into an inviolable and perpetual state of bliss and happiness.

N^o 397. *Thursday, June 5.*

----- *Dolor ipse disertum*
Fecerat-----

Ovid.

AS the *Stoick* Philosophers discard all passions in general, they will not allow a wise man so much as to pity the afflictions of another. If thou seest thy friend in trouble, says *Epictetus*, thou may'st put on a look of sorrow, and condole with him, but take care that thy sorrow be not real. The more rigid of this sect would not comply so far as to shew even such an outward appearance of grief; but when one told them of any calamity that had befallen even the nearest of their acquaintance,