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**The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.**

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

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*Auream quisquis mediocritatem  
Diligit, tutus caret obsoleti  
Sordibus tecti, caret invidendâ  
Sobrius aulâ.*

Hor.

I Am wonderfully pleased when I meet with any passage in an old Greek or Latin Author, that is not blown upon, and which I have never met with in any quotation. Of this kind is a beautiful saying in *Theognis*; *Vice is covered by wealth, and virtue by poverty*; or to give it in the verbal translation, *Among men there are some who have their vices concealed by wealth, and others who have their virtues concealed by poverty*. Every man's observation will supply him with instances of rich men, who have several faults and defects that are overlooked, if not entirely hidden, by means of their riches; and, I think, we cannot find a more natural description of a poor man, whose merits are lost in his poverty, than that in the words of the wise man. *There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great King against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he, by his wisdom, delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, wisdom is better than strength; nevertheless, the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard.*

The middle condition seems to be the most advantageously situated for the gaining of wisdom. Poverty turns our thoughts too much upon the supplying of our wants, and riches upon enjoying our superfluities; and, as *Cowley* has said in another case, *It is hard for a man to keep a steady eye upon truth, who is always in a battel or a triumph.*

If we regard poverty and wealth, as they are apt to produce virtues or vices in the mind of man, one may observe, that there is a set of each of these growing out of poverty, quite different from that which rises out of wealth. Humility and patience, industry and temperance, are very of-



ten the good qualities of a poor man. Humanity and good-nature, magnanimity, and a sense of honour, are as often the qualifications of the rich. On the contrary, poverty is apt to betray a man into envy, riches into arrogance. Poverty is too often attended with fraud, vicious compliance, repining, murmur and discontent. Riches expose a man to pride and luxury, a foolish elation of heart, and too great a fondness for the present world. In short, the middle condition is most eligible to the man who would improve himself in virtue; as I have before shown, it is the most advantageous for the gaining of knowledge. It was upon this consideration that *Agur* founded his prayer, which for the wisdom of it is recorded in holy Writ. *Two things have I required of thee, deny me them not before I dye. Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me. Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

I shall fill the remaining part of my paper with a very pretty allegory, which is wrought into a Play by *Aristophanes* the Greek Comedian. It seems originally designed as a satyr upon the rich, though, in some parts of it, it is like the foregoing discourse, a kind of comparison between wealth and poverty.

*Chremylus*, who was an old and a good man, and withal exceeding poor, being desirous to leave some riches to his son, consults the oracle of *Apollo* upon the subject. The oracle bids him follow the first man he should see upon his going out of the Temple. The person he chanced to see was to appearance an old sordid blind man, but upon his following him from place to place, he at last found by his own confession, that he was *Plutus* the god of Riches, and that he was just come out of the house of a miser. *Plutus* further told him, that when he was a boy he used to declare, that as soon as he came to age he would distribute wealth to none but virtuous and just men; upon which *Jupiter*, considering the pernicious consequences of such a resolution, took his sight away from him, and left him to strole about the world in the blind condition wherein *Chremylus* beheld him. With much ado *Chremylus* prevailed upon him to go to his house, where he met an old woman in a tattered raiment, who had been his guest for many years, and whose name was *Poverty*. The old woman refusing to turn out so easily as he would have her, he threatned to banish her not only from his own house, but out of all *Greece*, if she made any more words upon the matter. *Poverty* on this occasion pleads her cause very notably, and represents to her old



old landlord, that should she be driven out of the country, all their trades, arts and sciences would be driven out with her; and that if every one was rich, they would never be supplied with those pomps, ornaments and conveniences of life which made riches desirable. She likewise represented to him the several advantages which she bestowed upon her votaries, in regard to their shape, their health, and their activity, by preserving them from gouts, dropsies, unwieldiness and intemperance. But whatever she had to say for her self, she was at last forced to troop off. *Chremylus* immediately considered how he might restore *Plutus* to his sight; and in order to it conveyed him to the Temple of *Æsculapius*, who was famous for cures and miracles of this nature. By this means the Deity recovered his eyes, and begun to make a right use of them, by enriching every one that was distinguished by piety towards the Gods, and justice towards men; and at the same time by taking away his gifts from the impious and undeserving. This produces several merry incidents, till in the last Act *Mercury* descends with great complaints from the Gods, that since the good men were grown rich, they had received no sacrifices, which is confirmed by a Priest of *Jupiter*, who enters with a remonstrance, that since this late innovation he was reduced to a starving condition, and could not live upon his office. *Chremylus*, who in the beginning of the Play was religious in his poverty, concludes it with a proposal which was relished by all the good men who were now grown rich as well as himself, that they should carry *Plutus* in a solemn procession to the Temple, and install him in the place of *Jupiter*. This allegory instructed the *Athenians* in two points; first, as it vindicated the conduct of providence in its ordinary distributions of wealth; and in the next place, as it shewed the great tendency of riches to corrupt the morals of those who possessed them.

