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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

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pen, as is customary in old Manuscripts, they perhaps mistook the dash for a second figure, and by casting up both together composed out of them the figure 2. But this I shall leave to the learned, without determining any thing in a matter of so great uncertainty.

N^o 471. *Saturday, August 30.*

Ἐν ἐλπίσει χρεὶ τὰς σораὶς ἔχειν εἶον.

Euripid.

THE *Time present* seldom affords sufficient employment to the mind of man. Objects of pain or pleasure, love or admiration, do not lie thick enough together in life to keep the soul in constant action, and supply an immediate exercise to its faculties. In order, therefore, to remedy this defect, that the mind may not want business, but always have materials for thinking, she is endowed with certain powers, that can recall what is passed, and anticipate what is to come.

That wonderful faculty, which we call the Memory, is perpetually looking back, when we have nothing present to entertain us. It is like those repositories in several animals, that are filled with stores of their former food, on which they may ruminate when their present pasture fails.

As the memory relieves the mind in her vacant moments, and prevents any chasms of thought by ideas of what is *past*, we have other faculties that agitate and employ her upon what *is to come*. These are the passions of Hope and Fear.

By these two passions we reach forward into futurity, and bring up to our present thoughts objects that lie hid in the remotest depths of time. We suffer misery, and enjoy happiness, before they are in Being; we can set the Sun and Stars forward, or lose sight of them by wandering into those retired parts of eternity, when the heavens and earth shall be no more.

By the way, who can imagine that the existence of a creature is to be circumscribed by Time, whose thoughts are not? But I shall, in this paper, confine my self to that particular passion which goes by the name of Hope.

Our

Our actual enjoyments are so few and transient, that man would be a very miserable Being, were he not endowed with this passion, which gives him a taste of those good things that may possibly come into his possession. *We should hope for every thing that is good,* says the old Poet *Linus*, *because there is nothing which may not be hoped for, and nothing but what the Gods are able to give us.* Hope quickens all the still parts of life, and keeps the mind awake in her most remis and indolent hours. It gives habitual serenity and good humour. It is a kind of vital heat in the Soul, that cheers and gladdens her, when she does not attend to it. It makes pain easie, and labour pleasant.

Besides these several advantages which rise from *Hope*, there is another which is none of the least, and that is, its great efficacy in preserving us from setting too high a value on present enjoyments. The saying of *Cesar* is very well known. When he had given away all his estate in gratuities among his friends, one of them asked what he had left for himself; to which that great man replied, *Hope*. His natural magnanimity hindred him from prizing what he was certainly possessed of, and turned all his thoughts upon something more valuable that he had in view. I question not but every reader will draw a moral from this story, and apply it to himself without my direction.

The old story of *Pandora's* box (which many of the learned believe was formed among the heathens upon the tradition of the fall of man) shews us how deplorable a state they thought the present life without *Hope*. To set forth the utmost condition of misery they tell us, that our forefather, according to the Pagan Theology, had a great vessel presented him by *Pandora*: upon his lifting up the lid of it, says the fable, there flew out all the calamities and distempers incident to men, from which, 'till that time, they had been altogether exempt. *Hope*, who had been enclosed in the cup with so much bad company, instead of flying off with the rest, stuck so close to the lid of it, that it was shut down upon her.

I shall make but two reflections upon what I have hitherto said. First, that no kind of life is so happy as that which is full of *Hope*, especially when the *Hope* is well grounded, and when the object of it is of an exalted kind, and in its nature proper to make the person happy who enjoys it. This proposition must be very evident to those who consider how few are the present enjoyments of the most happy man, and how insufficient to give him an entire satisfaction and acquiescence in them.

My

My next observation is this, that a religious life is that which most abounds in a well-grounded Hope, and such an one as is fixed on objects that are capable of making us entirely happy. This Hope in a religious man, is much more sure and certain than the hope of any temporal blessing, as it is strengthened not only by reason, but by faith. It has at the same time its eye perpetually fixed on that state, which implies in the very notion of it the most full and most compleat happiness.

I have before shewn how the influence of Hope in general sweetens life, and makes our present condition supportable, if not pleasing; but a religious Hope has still greater advantages. It does not only bear up the mind under her sufferings, but makes her rejoice in them, as they may be the instruments of procuring her the great and ultimate end of all her hope.

Religious Hope has likewise this advantage above any other kind of Hope, that it is able to revive the *dying* man, and to fill his mind not only with secret comfort and refreshment, but sometimes with rapture and transport. He triumphs in his agonies, whilst the Soul springs forward with delight to the great object which she has always had in view, and leaves the body with an expectation of being re-united to her in a glorious and joyful Resurrection.

I shall conclude this Essay with those emphatical expressions of a lively Hope, which the Psalmist made use of in the midst of those dangers and adversities which surrounded him; for the following passage had its present and personal, as well as its future and prophetick sense. *I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my Soul in Hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*



Thursday,