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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 483. Saturday, September 13.

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

“ one of this character, who in reality is more a woman than I am. He
 “ was bred up under the tuition of a tender mother, till she had made
 “ him as good an housewife as her self. He could preserve apricocks,
 “ and make jellies, before he had been two years out of the nursery.
 “ He was never suffered to go abroad, for fear of catching cold: when
 “ he should have been hunting down a buck, he was by his mother’s side
 “ learning how to season it, or put it in crust; and was making paper-
 “ boats with his sisters, at an age when other young Gentlemen are crof-
 “ sing the seas, or travelling into foreign countries. He has the whitest
 “ hand that you ever saw in your life, and raises paste better than any woman
 “ in *England*. These qualifications make him a sad husband: he is per-
 “ petually in the kitchen, and has a thousand squabbles with the cook-
 “ maid. He is better acquainted with the milk-score, than his steward’s
 “ accounts. I fret to death when I hear him find fault with a dish that
 “ is not dressed to his liking, and instructing his friends that dine with
 “ him in the best pickle for a walnut, or sauce for an haunch of venison.
 “ With all this, he is a very good-natured husband, and never fell out
 “ with me in his life but once, upon the over-roasting of a dish of wild-
 “ fowl: at the same time I must own I would rather he was a man of a
 “ rough temper, that would treat me harshly sometimes, than of such an
 “ effeminate busy nature in a province that does not belong to him. Since
 “ you have given us the character of a wife who wears the breeches,
 “ pray say something of a husband that wears the petticoat. Why should
 “ not a female character be as ridiculous in a man, as a male character in
 “ one of our sex?

I am, &c.

N^o 483.

Saturday, September 13.

Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus

Inciderit-----

Hor.

WE cannot be guilty of a greater act of uncharitableness, than to
 interpret the afflictions which befall our neighbours, as *Punish-*
ments and Judgments. It aggravates the evil to him who suffers,
 when

when he looks upon himself as the mark of divine vengeance, and abates the compassion of those towards him, who regard him in so dreadful a light. This humour of turning every misfortune into a judgment, proceeds from wrong notions of religion, which, in its own nature, produces good-will towards men, and puts the mildest construction upon every accident that befalls them. In this case, therefore, it is not religion that fours a man's temper, but it is his temper that fours his religion: people of gloomy uncheerful imaginations, or of envious malignant tempers, whatever kind of life they are engaged in, will discover their natural tincture of mind in all their thoughts, words, and actions. As the finest wines have often the taste of the soil, so even the most religious thoughts often draw something that is particular from the constitution of the mind in which they arise. When folly or superstition strike in with this natural depravity of temper, it is not in the power, even of religion it self, to preserve the character of the person who is possessed with it, from appearing highly absurd and ridiculous.

An old maiden Gentlewoman, whom I shall conceal under the name of *Nemesis*, is the greatest discoverer of judgments that I have met with. She can tell you what sin it was that set such a man's house on fire, or blew down his barns. Talk to her of an unfortunate young Lady that lost her beauty by the small-pox, she fetches a deep sigh, and tells you, that when she had a fine face she was always looking on it in her glass. Tell her of a piece of good fortune that has befallen one of her acquaintance; and she wishes it may prosper with her, but her mother used one of her nieces very barbarously. Her usual remarks turn upon people who had great estates, but never enjoyed them, by reason of some flaw in their own, or their father's behaviour. She can give you the reason why such an one died childless: why such an one was cut off in the flower of his youth: why such an one was unhappy in her marriage: why one broke his leg on such a particular spot of ground; and why another was killed with a back-sword, rather than with any other kind of weapon. She has a crime for every misfortune that can befall any of her acquaintance; and when she hears of a robbery that has been made, or a murder that has been committed, enlarges more on the guilt of the suffering person, than on that of the thief or the assassin. In short, she is so good a christian, that whatever happens to her self is a tryal, and whatever happens to her neighbours is a judgment.

The very description of this folly, in ordinary life, is sufficient to expose it; but when it appears in a pomp and dignity of stile, it is very apt
to

to amuse and terrify the mind of the Reader. *Herodotus* and *Plutarch* very often apply their judgments as impertinently as the old woman I have before mentioned, though their manner of relating them makes the folly it self appear venerable. Indeed, most historians, as well christian as pagan, have fallen into this idle superstition, and spoken of ill success, unforeseen disasters, and terrible events, as if they had been let into the secrets of providence, and made acquainted with that private conduct by which the world is governed. One would think several of our own historians in particular had many revelations of this kind made to them. Our old *English* Monks seldom let any of their Kings depart in peace, who had endeavoured to diminish the power or wealth of which the ecclesiasticks were in those times possessed. *William the Conqueror's* race generally found their Judgments in the *New Forest*, where their father had pulled down churches and monasteries. In short, read one of the chronicles written by an author of this frame of mind, and you would think you were reading a history of the Kings of *Israel* or *Judah*, where the historians were actually inspired, and where, by a particular scheme of providence, the Kings were distinguished by judgments or blessings, according as they promoted idolatry or the worship of the true God.

I cannot but look upon this manner of judging upon misfortunes, not only to be very uncharitable in regard to the person on whom they fall, but very presumptuous in regard to him who is supposed to inflict them. It is a strong argument for a state of retribution hereafter, that in this world virtuous persons are very often unfortunate, and vicious persons prosperous; which is wholly repugnant to the nature of a Being who appears infinitely wise and good in all his works, unless we may suppose that such a promiscuous and undistinguishing distribution of good and evil, which was necessary for carrying on the designs of providence in this life, will be rectified and made amends for in another. We are not therefore to expect that fire should fall from Heaven in the ordinary course of providence; nor when we see triumphant guilt or depressed virtue in particular persons, that omnipotence will make bare its holy arm in the defence of the one, or punishment of the other. It is sufficient that there is a day set apart for the hearing and requiting of both according to their respective merits.

The folly of ascribing temporal judgments to any particular crimes, may appear from several considerations. I shall only mention two: first, that generally speaking, there is no calamity or affliction, which is supposed to have happened as a judgment to a vicious man, which does not some-
times

times happen to men of approved religion and virtue. When *Diagoras* the atheist was on board one of the *Athenian* Ships, there arose a very violent tempest; upon which the mariners told him, that it was a just judgment upon them for having taken so impious a man on board. *Diagoras* begged them to look upon the rest of the ships that were in the same distress, and asked them whether or no *Diagoras* was on board every vessel in the fleet. We are all involved in the same calamities, and subject to the same accidents; and when we see any one of the species under any particular oppression, we should look upon it as arising from the common lot of human nature, rather than from the guilt of the person who suffers.

Another consideration, that may check our presumption in putting such a construction upon a misfortune, is this, that it is impossible for us to know what are calamities and what are blessings. How many accidents have passed for misfortunes, which have turned to the welfare and prosperity of the persons in whose lot they have fallen? How many disappointments have, in their consequences, saved a man from ruin? If we could look into the effects of every thing, we might be allowed to pronounce boldly upon blessings and judgments; but for a man to give his opinion of what he sees but in part, and in its beginnings, is an unjustifiable piece of rashness and folly. The story of *Biton* and *Clitobus*, which was in great reputation among the heathens, for we see it quoted by all the ancient Authors, both *Greek* and *Latin*, who have written upon the immortality of the soul, may teach us a caution in this matter. These two brothers, being the sons of a Lady who was Priestess of *Juno*, drew their mother's chariot to the temple at the time of a great solemnity, the persons being absent, who by their office were to have drawn her chariot on that occasion. The mother was so transported with this instance of filial duty, that she petitioned her Goddess to bestow upon them the greatest gift that could be given to men; upon which they were both cast into a deep sleep, and the next morning found dead in the temple. This was such an event, as would have been construed into a judgment, had it happened to the two brothers after an act of disobedience, and would doubtless have been represented as such by any ancient historian who had given us an account of it.



Thursday,