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

In Four Volumes

**Addison, Joseph**

**London, 1721**

N° 487. Thursday, September 18.

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N<sup>o</sup> 487. Thursday, September 18.

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-----*Cum prostrata sopore*  
*Urget membra quies, et mens sine pondere ludit.* Petr.

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**T**HOUGH there are many Authors, who have written on dreams, they have generally considered them only as revelations of what has already happened in distant parts of the world, or as prefaces of what is to happen in future periods of time.

I shall consider this subject in another light, as dreams may give us some idea of the great excellency of a human soul, and some intimations of its independency on matter.

In the first place, our dreams are great instances of that activity which is natural to the human soul, and which it is not in the power of sleep to deaden or abate. When the man appears tired and worn out with the labours of the day, this active part in his composition is still busied and unwearied. When the organs of sense want their due repose and necessary reparations, and the body is no longer able to keep pace with that spiritual substance to which it is united, the soul exerts her self in her several faculties, and continues in the action till her partner is again qualified to bear her company. In this case dreams look like the relaxations and amusements of the soul, when she is disencumbered of her machine, her sports and recreations, when she has laid her charge asleep.

In the second place, dreams are an instance of that agility and perfection which is natural to the faculties of the mind, when they are disengaged from the body. The soul is clogged and retarded in her operations, when she acts in conjunction with a companion that is so heavy and unwieldy in its motions. But in dreams it is wonderful to observe with what a sprightliness and alacrity she exerts her self. The flow of speech make unpremeditated harangues, or converse readily in languages that they are but little acquainted with. The grave abound in pleasantries, the dull in repartees and points of wit. There is not a more painful action of the mind, than invention; yet in dreams it works with that ease

ease and activity, that we are not sensible when the faculty is employed. For instance, I believe every one, sometime or other, dreams that he is reading papers, books, or letters; in which case the invention prompts so readily, that the mind is imposed upon, and mistakes its own suggestions for the compositions of another.

I shall, under this head, quote a passage out of the *Religio Medici*, in which the ingenious Author gives an account of himself in his dreaming and his waking thoughts. *We are somewhat more than our selves in our sleeps, and the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul. It is the ligation of sense, but the liberty of reason; and our waking conceptions do not match the fancies of our sleeps. At my nativity my ascendant was the watery sign of Scorpius: I was born in the planetary hour of Saturn, and I think, I have a piece of that leaden planet in me. I am no way facetious, nor disposed for the mirth and galliardize of company; yet in one dream I can compose a whole Comedy, behold the action, comprehend the jests, and laugh my self awake at the conceits thereof. Were my memory as faithful as my reason is then fruitful, I would never study but in my dreams; and this time also would I chuse for my devotions: but our grosser memories have then so little hold of our abstracted understandings, that they forget the story, and can only relate to our awaked souls a confused and broken tale of that that has passed—— Thus it is observed that men sometimes, upon the hour of their departure, do speak and reason above themselves; for then the soul beginning to be freed from the ligaments of the body, begins to reason like her self, and to discourse in a strain above mortality.*

We may likewise observe, in the third place, that the passions affect the mind with greater strength when we are asleep, than when we are awake. Joy and sorrow give us more vigorous sensations of pain or pleasure at this time, than any other. Devotion likewise, as the excellent Author above-mentioned has hinted, is in a very particular manner heightned and inflamed, when it rises in the soul at a time that the body is thus laid at rest. Every man's experience will inform him in this matter, though it is very probable, that this may happen differently, in different constitutions. I shall conclude this head with the two following problems, which I shall leave to the solution of my Reader. Supposing a man always happy in his dreams, and miserable in his waking thoughts, and that his life was equally divided between them, whether would he be more happy or miserable? Were a man a King in his dreams, and a beggar awake, and dreamt as consequentially, and in as continued un-

broken schemes as he thinks when awake, whether he would be in reality a King or a Beggar, or rather whether he would not be both?

There is another circumstance, which methinks gives us a very high idea of the nature of the soul, in regard to what passes in dreams, I mean that innumerable multitude and variety of ideas which then arise in her. Were that active and watchful Being only conscious of her own existence at such a time, what a painful solitude would her hours of sleep be? Were the soul sensible of her being alone in her sleeping moments, after the same manner that she is sensible of it while awake, the time would hang very heavy on her, as it often actually does when she dreams that she is in such a solitude;

——— *Semperque relinqui*

*Sola sibi semper longam incomitata videtur*

*Ire viam* ——

Virg.

But this observation I only make by the way. What I would here remark, is that wonderful power in the soul, of producing her own company upon these occasions. She converses with numberless Beings of her own creation, and is transported into ten thousand scenes of her own raising. She is her self the Theatre, the Actor, and the Beholder. This puts me in mind of a saying which I am infinitely pleased with, and which *Plutarch* ascribes to *Heraclitus*, *That all men whilst they are awake are in one common world; but that each of them, when he is asleep, is in a world of his own.* The waking man is conversant in the world of nature, when he sleeps he retires to a private world that is particular to himself. There seems something in this consideration that intimates to us a natural grandeur and perfection in the soul, which is rather to be admired than explained.

I must not omit that argument for the excellency of the soul, which I have seen quoted out of *Tertullian*, namely, its power of divining in dreams. That several such divinations have been made, none can question, who believes the Holy writings, or who has but the least degree of a common historical faith; there being innumerable instances of this nature in several Authors, both ancient and modern, sacred and profane. Whether such dark presages, such visions of the night proceed from any latent power in the soul, during this her state of abstraction, or from any communication with the Supreme Being, or from any operation of subordinate spirits, has been a great dispute among the learned; the matter of fact is, I think, incontestable, and has been looked upon as such by the

the greatest writers, who have been never suspected either of superstition or enthusiasm.

I do not suppose, that the soul in these instances is entirely loose and unfettered from the body: it is sufficient, if she is not so far sunk, and immersed in matter, nor intangled and perplexed in her operations, with such motions of blood and spirits, as when she actuates the machine in its waking hours. The corporeal union is slackned enough to give the mind more play. The soul seems gathered within her self, and recovers that spring which is broke and weakned, when she operates more in concert with the body.

The Speculations I have here made, if they are not arguments, they are at least strong intimations, not only of the excellency of a human soul, but of its independance on the body; and if they do not prove, do at least confirm these two great points, which are established by many other reasons that are altogether unanswerable.

N<sup>o</sup> 488. *Friday, September 19.*

*Quanti emptæ? parvi. Quanti ergo? octo assibus. Eheu! Hor.*

I Find, by several Letters which I receive daily, that many of my Readers would be better pleased to pay three half-pence for my paper, than two-pence. The ingenious *T. W.* tells me, that I have deprived him of the best part of his breakfast, for that, since the rise of my paper, he is forced every morning to drink his dish of Coffee by it self, without the addition of the *Spectator*, that used to be better than lace to it. *Eugenius* informs me very obligingly, that he never thought he should have disliked any passage in my paper, but that of late there have been two words in every one of them, which he could heartily wish left out, *viz.* *Price Two-pence.* I have a Letter from a Soap-boiler, who condoles with me very affectionately, upon the necessity we both lie under of setting an higher price on our commodities, since the late Tax has been laid upon them, and desiring me, when I write next on that subject, to speak a word or two upon the present duties on castle-soap. But there is none

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