



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

Universitätsbibliothek Paderborn

The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

N° 505. Thursday, October 9.

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

N^o 505. Thursday, October 9.

*Non habeo denique nauci Marsum augurem,
 Non vicanos aruspices, non de circo astrologos,
 Non Isiacos conjectores, non interpretes somnium;
 Non enim sunt ii aut scientia, aut arte divini,
 Sed superstitiosi vates, impudentesque harioli,
 Aut inertes, aut insani, aut quibus egestas imperat:
 Qui sui quæstus causa fictas suscitant sententias,
 Qui sibi semitam non sapiunt, alteri monstrant viam,
 Quibus divitias pollicentur, ab iis drachmam petunt;
 De divitiis deducant drachmam, reddant cætera.* Ennius.

THOSE who have maintained that men would be more miserable than beasts, were their hopes confined to this life only; among other considerations take notice that the latter are only afflicted with the anguish of the present evil, whereas the former are very often pained by the reflection on what is passed, and the fear of what is to come. This fear of any future difficulties or misfortunes is so natural to the mind, that were a man's sorrows and disquietudes summed up at the end of his life, it would generally be found that he had suffered more from the apprehension of such evils as never happened to him, than from those evils which had really befallen him. To this we may add, that among those evils which befall us, there are many that have been more painful to us in the prospect, than by their actual pressure.

This natural impatience to look into futurity, and to know what accidents may happen to us hereafter, has given birth to many ridiculous arts and inventions. Some found their prescience on the lines of a man's hand, others on the features of his face; some on the signatures which nature has impressed on his body, and others on his own hand-writing: some

read

read mens fortunes on the stars, as others have searched after them in the entrails of beasts, or the flights of birds. Men of the best sense have been touched, more or less, with these groundless horrors and presages of futurity, upon surveying the most indifferent works of Nature. Can any thing be more surprizing than to consider *Cicero*, who made the greatest figure at the bar, and in the Senate of the *Roman* Commonwealth, and, at the same time, outshined all the Philosophers of Antiquity in his library and in his retirements, as busying himself in the college of Augurs, and observing, with a religious attention, after what manner the chickens pecked the several grains of corn which were thrown to them?

Notwithstanding these follies are pretty well worn out of the minds of the wise and learned in the present age, multitudes of weak and ignorant persons are still slaves to them. There are numberless arts of prediction among the vulgar, which are too trifling to enumerate; and infinite observations of days, numbers, voices, and figures, which are regarded by them as portents and prodigies. In short, every thing prophesies to the superstitious man, there is scarce a straw or a rusty piece of iron that lies in his way by accident.

It is not to be conceived how many wizards, gypsies and cunning-men are dispersed through all the countries and market-towns of *Great Britain*, not to mention the Fortune-tellers and Astrologers, who live very comfortably upon the curiosity of several well-disposed persons in the cities of *London* and *Westminster*.

Among the many pretended arts of Divination, there is none which so universally amuses as that by dreams. I have indeed observed in a late Speculation, that there have been sometimes, upon very extraordinary occasions, supernatural revelations made to certain persons by this means; but as it is the chief business of this paper to root out popular errors, I must endeavour to expose the folly and superstition of those persons, who, in the common and ordinary course of life, lay any stress upon things of so uncertain, shadowy, and chimerical a nature. This I cannot do more effectually than by the following letter, which is dated from a quarter of the town that has always been the habitation of some prophetick *Philomath*; it having been usual, time out of mind, for all such people as have lost their wits, to resort to that place either for their cure or for their instruction.

Mr.

Mr. SPECTATOR,

Moorfields, Octob. 4. 1712.

“ HAVING long considered whether there be any trade wanting in
“ this great city, after having surveyed very attentively all kinds
“ of ranks and professions, I do not find in any quarter of the town an
“ *Oneirocritick*, or, in plain *English*, an interpreter of dreams. For want
“ of so useful a person, there are several good people who are very much
“ puzzled in this particular, and dream a whole year together without be-
“ ing ever the wiser for it. I hope I am pretty well qualified for this of-
“ fice, having studied by candlelight all the rules of art which have been
“ laid down upon this subject. My great uncle by my wife’s side was a
“ *Scotch Highlander*, and second-sighted. I have four fingers and two thumbs
“ upon one hand, and was born on the longest night of the year. My
“ christian and sir-name begin and end with the same letters. I am lodg-
“ ed in *Morefields*, in a house that for these fifty years has been always
“ tenanted by a conjurer.

“ If you had been in company, so much as my self, with ordinary wo-
“ men of the town, you must know that there are many of them who
“ every day in their lives, upon seeing or hearing of any thing that is un-
“ expected, cry, *My Dream is out*; and cannot go to sleep in quiet the
“ next night, till something or other has happened which has expounded
“ the visions of the preceding one. There are others who are in very
“ great pain for not being able to recover the circumstances of a Dream,
“ that made strong impressions upon them while it lasted. In short, Sir,
“ there are many whose waking thoughts are wholly employed on their
“ sleeping ones. For the benefit therefore of this curious and inquisitive
“ part of my fellow-subjects, I shall in the first place tell those persons what
“ they dreamt of, who fancy they never dream at all. In the next place,
“ I shall make out any dream, upon hearing a single circumstance of it;
“ and in the last place, shall expound to them the good or bad fortune
“ which such dreams portend. If they do not presage good luck, I shall
“ desire nothing for my pains; not questioning at the same time that those
“ who consult me will be so reasonable as to afford me a moderate share
“ out of any considerable estate, profit or emolument which I shall thus
“ discover to them. I interpret to the poor for nothing, on condition
“ that their names may be inserted in publick Advertisements, to attest
“ the truth of such my interpretations. As for people of quality or
“ others, who are indisposed, and do not care to come in person, I can in-
“ terpret their dreams by seeing their water. I set aside one day in a
“ week

“ week for lovers; and interpret by the great for any Gentlewoman who
“ is turned of sixty, after the rate of half a crown *per* week, with the
“ usual allowances for good luck. I have several rooms and apartments
“ fitted up, at reasonable rates, for such as have not conveniencies for
“ dreaming at their own houses.

Titus Trophonius.

“ *N. B.* I am not dumb.

The End of the Third Volume.

