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The Works Of The Right Honourable Joseph Addison, Esq.

In Four Volumes

Addison, Joseph

London, 1721

No 117. Saturday, July 25.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-53597)

It happens very oddly that the Pope and I should have the same thought much about the same time. My enemies will be apt to say that we hold a correspondence together, and act by concert in this matter. Let that be as it will, I shall not be ashamed to join with his Holiness in those particulars which are indifferent between us, especially when it is for the reformation of the finer half of mankind. We are both of us about the same age, and consider this fashion in the same view. I hope that it will not be able to resist his Bull and my Lion. I am only afraid that our Ladies will take occasion from hence to show their zeal for the protestant religion, and pretend to expose their naked bosoms only in opposition to Popery.

N° 117. Saturday, July 25.

Cura pii Diis sunt-----

Ov.

LOOKING over the late edition of Monsieur *Boileau's* works, I was very much pleased with the article which he has added to his notes on the translation of *Longinus*. He there tells us, that the Sublime in writing rises either from the nobleness of the thought, the magnificence of the words, or the harmonious and lively turn of the phrase, and that the perfect sublime arises from all these three in conjunction together. He produces an instance of this perfect sublime in four verses from the *Atthaliab* of Monsieur *Racine*. When *Abner*, one of the chief Officers of the Court, represents to *Joad* the High-Priest, that the Queen was incensed against him, the High-Priest, not in the least terrified at the news, returns this answer.

*Celui qui met un frein à la fureur des flots,
Sçait aussi des mechans arrêter les complots.
Soumis avec respect à sa volonté Sainte,
Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et n'ai point d'autre crainte.*

He who ruleth the raging of the sea, knows also how to check the designs of the ungodly. I submit my self with reverence to his holy will. O Abner,

Abner, *I fear my God, and I fear none but him.* Such a thought gives no less a sublimity to human nature, than it does to good writing. This religious fear, when it is produced by just apprehensions of a Divine power, naturally over-looks all human greatness that stands in competition with it, and extinguishes every other terror that can settle it self in the heart of man; it lessens and contracts the figure of the most exalted Person; it disarms the tyrant and executioner, and represents to our minds the most enraged and the most powerful as altogether harmless and impotent.

There is no true fortitude which is not founded upon this fear, as there is no other principle of so settled and fixed a nature. Courage that grows from constitution very often forsakes a man when he has occasion for it; and when it is only a kind of instinct in the soul, breaks out on all occasions without judgment or discretion. That courage which proceeds from the sense of our duty, and from the fear of offending him that made us, acts always in an uniform manner, and according to the dictates of right reason.

What can the man fear, who takes care in all his actions to please a Being that is Omnipotent? A Being who is able to crush all his adversaries? A Being that can divert any misfortune from befalling him, or turn any such misfortune to his advantage? The Person who lives with this constant and habitual regard to the great Superintendant of the world, is indeed sure that no real evil can come into his lot. Blessings may appear under the shape of pains, losses, and disappointments, but let him have patience, and he will see them in their proper figures. Dangers may threaten him, but he may rest satisfied that they will either not reach him, or that if they do, they will be the instruments of good to him. In short, he may look upon all crosses and accidents, sufferings and afflictions, as means which are made use of to bring him to happiness. This is even the worst of that man's condition whose mind is possessed with the habitual fear of which I am now speaking. But it very often happens, that those which appear evils in our own eyes, appear also as such to him who has human nature under his care, in which case they are certainly averted from the person who has made himself, by this virtue, an object of Divine favour. Histories are full of instances of this nature, where men of virtue have had extraordinary escapes out of such dangers as have enclosed them, and which have seemed inevitable.

There is no example of this kind in Pagan history, which more pleases me than that which is recorded in the life of *Timoleon*. This extraordinary man was famous for referring all his successes to Providence. *Cornelius Nepos* acquaints us that he had in his house a private chappel, in which

he used to pay his devotions to the Goddesses who represented Providence among the heathens. I think no man was ever more distinguished, by the Deity whom he blindly worshipped, than the great person I am speaking of, in several occurrences of his life, but particularly in the following one which I shall relate out of *Plutarch*.

Three persons had entered into a conspiracy to assassinate *Timoleon* as he was offering up his devotions in a certain Temple. In order to it they took their several stands in the most convenient places for their purpose. As they were waiting for an opportunity to put their design in execution, a stranger having observed one of the conspirators, fell upon him and slew him. Upon which the other two, thinking their Plot had been discovered, threw themselves at *Timoleon's* feet and confessed the whole matter. This stranger, upon examination, was found to have understood nothing of the intended assassination, but having several years before had a brother killed by the conspirator, whom he here put to death, and having till now fought in vain for an opportunity of revenge, he chanced to meet the murderer in the Temple, who had planted himself there for the abovementioned purpose. *Plutarch* cannot forbear, on this occasion, speaking with a kind of rapture on the schemes of Providence, which, in this particular, had so contrived it, that the stranger should for so great a space of time, be debarred the means of doing justice to his brother, untill, by the same blow that revenged the death of one innocent man, he preserved the life of another.

For my own part, I cannot wonder that a man of *Timoleon's* religion should have his intrepidity and firmness of mind, or that he should be distinguished by such a deliverance as I have here related.



Monday