

Chapter III: The Wants of Him that Wants Nothing

ON the next day his old instructor, imagining that he had now made himself acquainted with his [\[infopopup:diseaseofmind\]](#), was in hope of curing it by counsel, and officiously sought an opportunity of conference, which the prince, having long considered him as one whose intellects were exhausted, was not very willing to afford: "Why, said he, does this man thus intrude upon me; shall I be never [24] suffered to forget those lectures which please only while they were new, and to become new again must be forgotten?" He then walked into the wood, and composed himself to his usual meditations; when before his thoughts had taken any settled form, he perceived his persuer at his side, and was at first prompted by his impatience to go hastily away; but, being unwilling to offend a man whom he had once revered and still loved, he invited him to sit down with him on the bank.

The old man, thus encouraged, began to lament the change which had been lately observed in the prince, and to enquire why he so often retired from the pleasures of the palace, to loneliness and silence. "I fly from pleasure, said the prince [25], because pleasure has ceased to please; I am lonely because I am miserable, and am unwilling to cloud with my presence the happiness of others."

"You, Sir, said the sage, are the first who has complained of misery in the happy valley. I hope to convince you that your complaints have no real cause. You are here in full possession of all that the emperour of Abyssinia can bestow; here is neither labour to be endured nor danger to be dreaded, yet here is all that labour or danger can procure or purchase. Look round and tell me which of your wants is without supply: if you want nothing, how are you unhappy?"

“That I want nothing, said the prince, or that I know not what I want, is the cause of my complaint; if I had any known [26] want, I should have a certain wish; that wish would excite endeavour, and I should not then repine to see the sun move so slowly towards the western mountain, or lament when the day breaks and sleep will no longer hide me from myself. When I see the [\[infopopup:kids\]](#) and the lambs chasing one another, I fancy that I should be happy if I had something to persue. But, possessing all that I can want, I find one day and one hour exactly like another, except that the latter is still more tedious than the former. Let your experience inform me how the day may now seem as short as in my childhood, while nature was yet fresh, and every moment shewed me what I never had observed before. I have already enjoyed too much; give me something to desire.” [27]

The old man was surprized at this new species of affliction, and knew not what to reply, yet was unwilling to be silent.

“Sir, said he, if you had seen the miseries of the world, you would know how to value your present state.”

“Now, said the prince, you have given me something to desire; I shall long to see the miseries of the world, since the sight of them is necessary to happiness.”