

That the sudden announcement of some good fortune may easily have a fatal effect on us is due to the fact that our happiness and unhappiness depend upon the relation of our demands to what we get; accordingly, the good things we possess, or are quite sure of possessing, are not felt to be such, because the nature of all enjoyment is really only _negative_, and has only the effect of annulling pain; whilst, on the other hand, the nature of pain or evil is really positive and felt immediately. With the possession, or the certain prospect of it, our demands instantly rise and increase our desire for further possession and greater prospects. But if the mind is depressed by continual misfortune, and the claims reduced to a _minimum_, good fortune that comes suddenly finds no capacity for its acceptance. Neutralised by no previous claims, it now has apparently a positive effect, and accordingly its whole power is exercised; hence it may disorganise the mind--that is to say, be fatal to it. This is why, as is well known, one is so careful to get a man first to hope for happiness before announcing it, then to suggest the prospect of it, then little by little make it known, until gradually all is known to him; every portion of the revelation loses the strength of its effect because it is anticipated by a demand, and room is still left for more. In virtue of all this, it might be said that our stomach for good fortune is bottomless, but the entrance to it is narrow. What has been said does not apply to sudden misfortunes in the same way. Since hope always resists them, they are for this reason rarely fatal. That fear does not perform an analogous office in cases of good fortune is due to the fact that we are instinctively more inclined to hope than to fear; just as our eyes turn of themselves to light in preference to

darkness.