

**I B.A. English**

**Semester – II**

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**Unit –II Prose**

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***Fortune Hunters***

**- Joseph Addison**

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Joseph Addison was an English essayist, poet, playwright and politician. It is mostly as an essayist that Addison is remembered today. He founded *The Spectator* magazine with his long - standing friend Richard Steele. During the eighteenth century the periodical *The Spectator* joined its readership into a union of collective thoughts with the ability to influence the political, social and financial world around. The journal lends to our understanding of daily English life on many levels.

In the periodical *The Spectator No.99*, entitled *Fortune Hunters*, Joseph Addison expresses his views on young men who sought after young rich girls and marry them for their riches. He calls such young men as Fortune Hunters.

The essay *Fortune Hunters* begins with a letter from Mr. Jim Watchwell to the persona Mr. Spectator. Mr. Watchwell expresses his apprehension on those whom he addresses as Fortune Hunters. He informs Mr. Spectator of his anxiety as a father of a young heiress of marriageable age. He feels that they are after her and try to impress his daughter in order to marry her. As a father he has been very cautious of her safety. The safety measures undertaken to protect her had been futile. She had been kept locked in the house till her eighteenth year and the windows of her room had been cross barred. She had been permitted go out only with her

keeper and this keeper was also a reliable distant relative of his.

Mr. Watchwell feels that inspite of all his precautions, a tall Irish man loitered near his house on wintry nights. Besides, his daughter loved to go to church often, unlike her earlier character. She had also made a mention of a young man to her keeper. The worst part of it was that one fine day, he found his daughter missing. On her return after an hour, she had very casually told him that she had gone for a walk at the Rosamond's Pond. This incident made Mr. Watchwell tighten her security. The anxious father Mr. Watchwell appealed to the persona Mr. Spectator to express his views on such young men known as fortune hunters as they steal a father's daughter for making up their own fortunes.

They persona Mr. Spectator replies to Mr. Watchwell and agrees that the modern fortune hunters were good for nothing fellows. He gives the example of the great Athenian general Themistocles who had wished to marry his daughter to a poor diligent man rather than a rich spendthrift. Mr. Spectator regards that the fortune hunters opt for short cut ways to become rich soon. He adds that such fortune hunters are idle and proud.

The cheap charms of the fortune hunters such as colourful gloves, lecherous glances, talking aloud etc. are the baits. These traps do not allow the young rich girls to realize their mistakes of falling in love with such men.

Next Mr. Spectator distinguishes between Fortune Hunters and Fortune Stealers. Mr. Suffanus, Mr. Cottilus and Mr. Will Honey Comb are quoted as examples of Fortune Hunters. They are regarded as gentlemen who employed their whole life in the chase of women. Mr. Suffanus had not been successful in marrying a rich heiress and had grown old. On the other hand Mr. Cottilus had been successful in marrying a city lady with 20,000 sterling pounds. But he had died before enjoying the money and the life he had got. Mr. Will Honey Comb had tried to marry a childless widow of a rich man for twenty years successively, but had failed to marry one as he found such widows always pre - engaged Mr. Spectator regards the widows as greatest targets of fortune hunters. The widows who remarry fortune hunters hastily are answerable to no one but their own selves.

However, Addison is more concerned of the security of girls in their teens. These girls are innocent as they do not possess knowledge and experience of the world. The stealing of such innocent young girls by young men should be liable to punishment. He compares this type of stealing to rape and seducing of a ten year old child. He calls such men as fortune stealers and appeals for their severe punishment.

Thus this essay of Joseph Addison expresses his concern on the anxiety of every parent who possesses a teen age daughter. Though the essay seems to be humorous superficially, the theme dealt in it requires serious attention to protect young inexperienced rich girls of society.

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