

The Athenian Mercury.

Resolving WEEKLY all the most

Nice and Curious Questions

Propos'd by the **I N G E N I O U S.**

Licensed and Entred according to Order.

Tuesday, March, 24th. 1690.

HAVING encouragement by a great many Letters to continue our *Gazett*, as an undertaking that will be very useful to many, (for we never expected of accomplishing that impossible Task of pleasing every Body,) we shall endeavour as general a satisfaction as we can, by answering whatsoever Questions or Objections are sent us, that are consistent with Modesty and pertinent for Information.

Quest. 1. *Whether the Author is not in League with the General Penny-Post Office?*

Answer. No, but we are in league with their Majesties Interest, having this first Week about forty Penny-Post Letters, which, (with what this number may probably increase to in a little time,) will be a considerable advancement *per Annum*, to that Branch of their Majesties Revenue.

Quest. 2. *What can Prompt that Monster of a Man, that calls himself by the Name of Protestant, to bring in the French, and restore King James?*

Answer. He may well be call'd a Monster (and a greater than *Polyphemus*, to whom Nature gave but one Eye) that cannot see the peculiar Hand of God in the late happy Revolution, and the particular Guardian Care of Heaven towards the Instrument, his Sacred Majesty, in his first Attempt, his Action at the *Boyne*, and his late Voyage into *Holland*. I know no reason these Opposers of Heaven can pretend for their Charge in the Question, but Interest, or a misguided Conscience, or both; and I am sure they themselves cannot find out any other so soon as they might find out their Error, if they took half the pains in unprejudic'd thinking, as they do in an unaccountable acting.

Quest. 3. *What probable Conjecture may be given of the Efficient Cause and Nature of the Spouts, which Mariners frequently meet with in the Mediterranean, but more especially in the East-Indian and Persian Voyages?*

Answer. Those Seas are notorious for various Winds; two Ships in a Right Line approaching each other, have sometimes both of them a very fair Gale of Wind; many such opposite Winds meeting together in one Center, produce that we call a Whirl-Wind, which finding a Cloud that is ready to break, buoy it up so long that coming too near the Water, it has not air enough under it to expand and scatter it into a Shower, but falls in many hundred Tuns together; You may experience this Truth by emptying a Cup or Glass of Water out of your Cham-

spread abroad, till it appears as thin as Paper, and then immediately flies into drops for a very great Breadth; but if you empty the Water near the Ground, it has not Air enough under it to bear it up for a dissipation, there is another sort of Spouts, if I have answered one for another, let the Inquirer distinguish in the next.

Quest. 4. *Whether it is better to cheat ones self or another?*

Answer. I don't yet see a possibility of being inevitably put upon such an unhappy Choice, so that this Question seems to be put for Arguments sake; however, upon a supposition of the possibility, we assert 'tis better to cheat another: In *Life* and *Death* the great Good and Evil of Nature, the Law of Self-preservation is taught by the meanest Insect, now if it holds in greater, it holds in lesser Circumstances, for 'tis an undeniable Maxim, that every particular is of the same Nature as its general, or else it is no particular of that general; 'Tis a common saying amongst some Persons, that they had rather spend five pound, than be cheated of five shillings, which is as much as to say they had rather cheat themselves of five pounds than be cheated by another of five shillings; or they had rather kill themselves twenty times, (if possible) than be killed by another once. Certainly he deserves to be beg'd who rather than defend himself upon an assault, will abuse himself and break his own Head; the Case is much the same, and the Application too, if the Inquirer pleases.

Quest. 5. *What sort of Men are the Poorest in the World?*

Answer. Poverty is but a suggestion of our own Fancy; therefore those Men are the Poorest, who think they want most, not those that possess least.

Quest. 6. *What is the Cause of Dreams? and why doth a Person receive equal, if not more enjoyment in a Dream than in a thing real?*

Answer. Many Causes are by Naturalists assign'd; the chiefest is our Complexion or Constitution; the Phlegmatick Dreams of Water, Snails, &c. The Chollerick of Fire, Quarrels, &c. and so of the rest, as to our Enjoyments, Fears, Escapes, &c. 'tis effected by the Cooperation of our Constitution, with the Power of our Imagination, our Constitution being the efficient Cause, and our Imagination the Formal.

Quest. 7. *Whether since 'tis your Opinion that if a Man be a discreet and prudent Man, he may correct the misbehaviour of his Wife by beating; vice versa, a Wife being so qualified, and having a Sor to her Husband, whether she may not (if*

Answ. The power was at first vested in Man specifically, without Provisions, distinctions, or Limitations of Sex, foolish, weak, &c. Therefore these altering not his Species by consequence, cannot annul his Privilege.

Quest. 9. *Whether 'tis possible to commit a Sin, whereof we have no former Idea in our Mind?*

Answ. The committing a Sin supposes a Breach of some Law, but there is no Law against what is not, and where there is no Law, there is no Transgression.

Quest. 10. *What is the Circumference and thickness of the Earth?*

Answ. *Elias Veneti* commenting on *Sacroboscus*, affirmeth the Earths compass to extend 250000 *Stadia*, (8 whereof make a mile,) which does far exceed the received Opinion of the most expert Mathematicians of all Nations, whose diversity in Assertions proceeds not from a mistaking the Truth, but from the diversity of Miles in divers Nations, which if you consult the Maps, you will find to be great. If the Question be asked in *British* miles, we say, He that Travels 60 miles towards the North, shall perceive the Pole to rise a degree higher, and the Equinoctial to fall a degree lower. Now 60 miles answering a Degree, and there being 360 in the great Circle, it follows, that 360 multiplied by 60, produces 21600 miles *British* — As to the thickness of the Earth, the proportion of a Circles Circumference to its Diameter, is something more than triple, called by Mathematicians *Sesquiseptima*, or as 22 to 7. Now upon working by the Rule of proportion, the Diameter or Thickness of the Earth is found to be near 7000 miles *British*.

Quest. 11. *Why does the Needle in the Sea Compass always turn to the North?*

Answ. *Aristotle* in his *Physicks*, affirms, (*lib. 7.* and with him most Philosophers,) that the Load-stone attracteth Iron unto it by their similitude and likeness of Substances; for so you see they are both of the like Colour; *Caspar Boetholomy* says, That the Load-stone does not merely and solely by its attractive Faculty draw Iron unto it, but that it is nourished and fed by Iron. The most receiv'd Opinion is, That there is under our North Pole an huge black Rock, from under which the Ocean issueth forth in four Currents, answerable to the four Corners of the Earth, or four Winds, which Rock is thought to be all of Load-stone; so that by a kind of affinity, it draweth all such like Stones or other Metals touched by them towards it.

Quest. 12. *Why the Sea is salt?*

Answ. The reason of it is the Sun, by whose Beams the more thin and subtle parts are exhal'd in Vapours, when the more gross and terrestrial parts are left behind, and become Adust and Salt. This is evident, in that the Southern Seas are saltier, and that more in Summer than the others are: And therefore it is, that the deeper the Water the fresher it is, the Sun having most power at the top; Upon the same account our Urine is salt, in respect that the thinner and purer part of that Moisture, by our inbred Heat is convey'd and carry'd from our Stomach through the Pores, when the other settles; and the longer time it is kept in the Body, the saltier it grows by the power of Heat working upon it, as 'tis evident, by our much Drinking, when Urine passes quickly, it is almost of the same Nature as it was in the Liquor.

Quest. 13. *Whether Fishes may be said to Breathe?*

Answ. This Question hath been long agitated *pro & contra*, *Aristotle* denying that they can breathe, *Plato* and his Followers affirm they can: *Aristotle* maintaining the Negative, Reasons thus: Creatures that want Organs and Instruments of breathing, cannot be said to breathe or respire; but such are all Fishes; therefore, &c. — The *Platonists* thus maintain their Breathing: All living Creatures denied of Breath, dye. But Fishes are living Creatures: Therefore, &c. The Major is Erroneous, For I have known a Quarry or Rock of Stone broke a-funder for building, and in a solid place of it, there lay a Toad, with just room for her Body and no more; and when the Rock was broken, and the Toad came into the open Air, it immediately dyed, which shews that

Creatures may live without Air. The *Aristotelian* Doctrine is certainly the Truth, *viz.* That Fishes do not breathe, having no Lungs the Instruments of Breathing.

Questions sent in this Week yet unanswered, which we shall take Notice of in the next.

Quest. 1. *Why Master Smith the Coffee-man in your Advertisement, and plain Mathew and Luke in your Quotations?*

Quest. 2. *Why a Horse, &c.* The Querist knows well enough what the rest was.

Quest. 3. *What causes the Ebbing and flowing of the Sea?*

Quest. 4. *What's the reason that some Men have no Beards?*

Quest. 5. *Whence proceeds laughing and weeping from one and the same thing?*

Quest. 6. *Whether there be Witches? and what good Books have been written on that Subject?*

Quest. 7. *Why Fish that live in Salt Water taste fresh, as Whitings, &c.*

Quest. 8. *Whether there is a Vacuum, and where?*

Quest. 9. *Whether there is a Philosophers Stone?*

Quest. 10. *Why do the Hair and Nails of Dead People grow?*

Quest. 11. *How Beasts came into Islands?*

Quest. 12. *Whether is happier a married or unmarried State?*

Quest. 13. *What sort of Government is best?*

Quest. 14. *Who is the Author of the last Query?*

Quest. 15. *If the Star in the Constellation of Cassiopeia, seen about 1619, and never before or since, was a Miracle?*

Quest. 16. *Whether what Dr. Sherlock cites out of Bishop Overall's Convocation Book, and other his Assertions, be sufficient to ground an Oath of Allegiance upon?*

Quest. 17. *Whether a Confessor may discover Secrets committed to him?*

Quest. 18. *Quæritur num Argentum Vivum a natura productum (quod nomen Liquoris æterni apud Plinium meruit,) inveniri poterit decies septies aqua Thamisi ponderosius, & apud quem venale reperitur Londini.*

Quest. 19. *Are Miracles ceas'd?*

Quest. 20. *What are we to think of those that dye in Infancy?*

Quest. 21. *Whether Poligamy was lawful to the Jews?*

Quest. 22. *What is the cause of Titillation?*

We have receiv'd some Questions which we think not proper to take any notice of, our Design being to answer only what is a fitting Entertainment for the Ingenious, or what does consist with Faith and good Manners: And if we have now, or should hereafter omit the Resolution of any such Questions sent us, (through over-sight or otherwise,) upon fresh notice given by the Enquirer, he may expect an Answer to his full satisfaction. 'Tis true, we have already receiv'd some Questions that are very fit to be answered, but are not so proper for *Coffee-houses*; as to all such we shall preserve them carefully by us till the conclusion of our first Volume, which will be *Numb. 30.* and then they shall be publish'd with a full resolution, together with a Preface and Index to the whole; And this will be the method we shall always observe. As to the Objections which we receive from time to time, we design to answer them every three Weeks; for by that time we suppose we shall have enough to fill one Paper.

Continue to send your Questions as directed in the first Gazette, *viz.* To be left at Mr. Smith's Coffee-house in Stocks-market.

ADVERTISEMENT.

There being through a Mistake several seeming Reflections inserted in *Religio Bibliopolæ*, (which being altogether both undeserved and undesigned,) are now left out throughout the whole Impression. The said Book was both Licens'd and Entred according to Order before ever publish'd.

P. Smart.