

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, May 5. 1691.

A Gentleman having lately proposed several Questions relating to Love and Marriage, to oblige the fair Sex and him, we think fit to Answer 'em here all together.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether it is lawful to make Addresses to young Ladies, without a prior acquainting their Parents and Relatives therewith?

Ans. To speak strictly, no Contract can be justly made with any but such as are *sui juris*; nor can Children, at least while they are under Age be properly reckon'd of that Number. I confess Gallantry and Duty in this Case generally advise to very different measures, and as the World goes, a Mistress wou'd give her Servant but small thanks for first making Love to her Father and Mother. But to come closer, we may divide Addresses to a Lady like Attacks on a Town into two ranks, they are either loose Blockades or form'd Sieges — The first are not of so great consequence, whereas the latter ought not to be laid or raised without deeper Consideration: 'Tis easie to apply this — A general Conversation with a Lady is requisite to know (if possible) whether she deserves to be Lov'd; and this before any Application be made to the Parents for Liberty for a form'd Courtship, which were I a Lover, I shou'd chuse to make as near as possible both to young and old at the same time, that neither might conceive any Umbrage of each other. The latter part of the Question indeed admits of many distinctions: There is first a great difference between immediate Parents and more remote Relations; and perhaps too between some Parents and others, of which for the further clearing of this, see the 14th. Question, that which immediately follows this, viz. Whether a young Lady may lawfully entertain such private Amours, being included in the foregoing difficulty, needs no other Answer.

Quest. 2. Whether it is lawful to Marry a Person one cannot Love, only in compliance to Relations, and to get an Estate?

Ans. Had the Question only been Proposed of such as we don't Actually Love, it might perhaps have admitted of some limitation, since we sometimes see Persons Love tenderly after Marriage, who could hardly endure each others sight before; though even such an Experiment must be very dangerous and hazardous, and he must be a bold man who dares venture upon it: But as 'tis Proposed here, Whether we may Marry such as we cannot Love, 'tis beyond all doubt, and must be Answer'd in the Negative, since such a Practice wou'd be both the most cruel and imprudent thing in the World — Society is the main End of Marriage, Love is the bond of Society, without which there can neither be found in that State Pleasure, or Profit, or Honour: He then or She

that Marry for so base an End as profit without any possibility or prospect of Love, is guilty of the highest Brutality imaginable, is united to a Carcass without a Soul, and are as cruel to themselves as Mezentius was to those Wretches who had the ill Fortune to fall into his hands. This being also but too general a Truth, as one wittily observes, that he who marries a Woman he cou'd never Love, will, 'tis to be fear'd, soon Love a Woman he never marry'd.

Quest. 3. Whether a publick or private Courtship is the best?

Ans. A Private is the more safe as well as the more pleasant. 'Tis undoubtedly much more pleasant than the other, from that pretty fallacy which all mankind put upon themselves, in valuing what is rare and uncommon more than what is cheap, and easily attained. Now Secrecy has a kind of rarity in't, and an invisible Mistress has such Charms, or at least our Fancy makes such there, as the greatest noted Beauty in the World cannot rival. Every Assignment in a secret Amour, has infinitely more gust and relish in't than a formal Publick Interview, on purpose for two Persons to talk fine things, and look sillily upon one another. Difficulty renders any Pleasure more sapid and lively when 'tis obtain'd, and though there should be other Golden Apples as good as those which grew in the Hesperiden Garden, yet none will taste so sweet as those which are stol'n from a Dragon.

Nor has a private Amour less advantage as to the safety than the pleasure of it, especially where there are Rivals. This Fairy Treasure, as imaginary perhaps as that which is call'd so, runs a great hazard of being lost, if reveal'd. The best way to secure Fire, is to rake it up under the Ashes, where 'tis likely to live much longer than when exposed to every Wind that scatters it, no Body knows whither. This for Pleasure and Profit, but whether more Honourable or no, none but those concern'd can resolve, for that's e'ne as 'tis managed.

Quest. 4. What Course must a Person take to remove a Ladys Aversion to him, supposing her under some secret Pre- engagements?

Ans. A Preengagement of that Nature is so sacred a Thing, that though a Lover sticks at nothing to obtain his desires, no Man in his sober Reason ought to contribute any thing towards the breaking it — on which account 'twou'd scarce be honest to give Directions for the attempting it. But if the Question be simply — How to Conquer a Ladys Aversion, that indeed admits of a fair Answer: Ovid will tell you a thousand wayes, tho' many of 'em now as ridiculous to make Love in, as 'twou'd be to make War with Spear and Shield after the old System of Chivalry. The best way I know of, is, after having found her Humour, to ply her close, don't let her, if possible, so much as sleep, which they say will tame the wildest Creature in the World; or if she does, be so often with her that she can Dream of nothing but you. This only Receipt has the greatest effect on the most of the Fair Sex, who if you hold on long enough will be forc'd at last to Love you in their own defence, using you as they do Beggars, give you an Alms to be rid of you, for to speak truth of our own lewd Sex, there are few of us when onc'd lov'd who love long after.

Quest. 5. Whether most Persons do not Marry too young?

Ans. Some are young longer than others, and wou'd perhaps never come to Years of Discretion, tho' they liv'd to be a hundred Years old. 'Tis hardly any thing but want of Discretion can make Persons deeply unhappy in a Married State, and there being so many unhappy Marriages, and that Vertue being generally owing to Age and Experience, we may thence indeed conclude most Persons, Marry too young. But supposing that sufficiently perfect, regard too is to be had to the Body as well as Mind, in both Cases some being at the same years much more Vegetate than others.

But shou'd we reflect only on the latter, both extremes are bad in this Case, as in all others. 'Tis a little of the soonest for Infants to get 'em Wives among their other Playthings, and much of the latest for old Folks to Limp into their Bridall-Beds, when only fit for their Winding-sheets. Though on the whole, I don't look upon Marrying too soon to be the Vice of this Age, wherein 'tis so hard a matter to perswade People to Marry at all.

Quest. 6. *Whether the Womans Condition in Marriage be not worse than the Mans?*

Ans. That's much as she manages it. Nature has generally given the fair Sex Art enough, (if that don't look like a Contradiction) by which if either she her self, or Custom, or Law has given ours any advantage, they may if they please recover more than their own agen. In Child-birth only they have without doubt much the heavier part of the load now as of the Curse formerly; and they have much more reason to wish the World might propagate like Trees, than Man has to desire any such thing, tho' one of our own Sex first started that odd Whimsie.

Quest. 7. *Whether the Jewish Custom of obliging all Persons to marry at 25 years of Age, or else debarring 'em from publick Employment, were not unjust?*

Ans. Supposing any such Custom, I think it so far from being unjust, that 'tis rather highly commendable and imitable; not for the same Reason that the curtail'd Fox would have fain brought the rest of his Brethren into the same Fashion, but for the good of the Common-wealth, in the multitude of whose people as well as Counsellors, there is both Safety, Strength, and Honour. There is scarce such a thing as a useless mouth in a Kingdom, for though we sit infinitely easier than any of our Neighbours, yet there is not the meanest Beggar who smokes his Pipe, and drinks his Pot of Ale, but pays the Kings Taxes out of it, and thereby contributes to the support of the Government. Now were those hands too employ'd, as well as their mouths, either in the Manufactures of our Country, or the Fishery, or other probable business, what a prodigious advantage wou'd it quickly bring to the Nation? This is grounded upon the sole argument of increasing the number of Subjects. — But besides, such a Law wou'd have farther good Effects. 'Twou'd strengthen a Nation by having so many more, so firmly obliged to defend it; for if a man won't fight for his Wife and Children, for what will he do it? A married man is like a Pile driven into a Bank; he that's single, only like Mud thrown up against it, one stands to it when a high Tide comes, while t'other is easily wash'd away. Besides this State makes 'em fitter for Council as well as Action. When men are married, as we generally say, they begin to take up, and fall a thinking in good earnest, whatever they did before. Bodies Politick consist of Families, and were indeed at first nothing else, and have still such a relation to 'em, that one can't subsist without the other. If a man wou'd serve his Country in his Person, let him do so too in his Posterity, and do as much for the succeeding Age as his Father did for the present. The Philosophy of a certain late famous Gentleman, has to speak truth, almost unbing'd the World; it takes off all Love to a mans Country, and makes 'em consider themselves as perfect vesicles of the Earth, independent on any thing else, as they think their Forefathers were. But the sober part of the World will take leave both to think and act otherwise, they'll consider themselves as really they are, and not according to such a whimsical Hypothesis as seems rather calculated for the World in the Moon, than any Civil Community; not but that they may be short in some Instances of Policy, whereof I think this is one, for why should any man have it in his power to do mischief almost with Impunity, as that Person seems to have, who enjoys a publick Station without having before by entring into a married State, done little less than given Hostages for his Fidelity, and bound himself to his good Behaviour. If the Bachelors are angry with this Answer, let 'em thank those who sent the Question, nor need we much fear 'em, since the married men are much the stronger side, and have on their side as good as all the Burghers of Europe.

Quest. 8. *Whether most matches in this Age are not made for Money, and whether they are not generally Smithfield Bargains?*

Ans. I don't admire the Humour of those who either to shew their Wisdom or Ill-nature, are always railing at the present Age, and admiring the former; and therefore affirm that both in this Age, and all other since the Golden one, (if any can tell where to find that) 'tis Gold has been the truest Philtrum to procure Love, or at least the Chain that has tied persons together without it. But then that Marriages thus made may be properly stiled Smithfield Bargains, is I think a mistake, for there you see your Horse rode about, see all his Paces at least, if not all his humours; and yet more, if you are not a Fool of a Jockey, will see his Saddle taken off before you buy him. But when you marry a Wife — your Servant!

Ans. I'm apt to think not so many, at least if they only were to court and we to be silent; for as Courage is the more proper virtue of a Man, so Modesty is of a Woman, (though we meet with 'em sometimes in the contrary Sexes,) for which reason, many Ladies wou'd dye sooner than stoop to what they think so mean a practice, as we have had Instances of some who have actually done it. But there's yet more in't than this — 'tis their Interest as well as their Inclination, to be (I won't say only Passive, but) on the Defensive; for whether or no they'll be so ingenuous to confess it, 'tis certain that most men slight even what they find Loves 'em, much more would they do so should they easily obtain it, most of all, should it be proffer'd and almost forc'd upon 'em.

Quest. 10. *Whether Marriages of Persons under Age are lawful, the reason of this Question being an Observation of the ill Success of such Marriages?*

Ans. The reason has been shewn already in the case of Couzen Germans, to be very fallacious. For the Question, we must consider those two Terms [under Age] [lawful] One and twenty is the Age appointed by the Laws of our Nation, supposing a Guardian, &c. though the Law of Nature has perhaps fixed a far shorter Limit. A Marriage then before the Laws of the Land make Persons in that case sui Juris, may be reckon'd valid, tho' not legal in respect of that Law; whereas at the same time it may be both valid and legal too if we consult the Law of Nature, which ties none from marrying which are not too young for the ends thereof.

Quest. 11. *Whether a Woman may be believed when she says she'll never marry?*

Ans. Yes, as long as she keeps her word, and longer than that you'll hardly believe a man.

Quest. 12. *Whether Quakers Marriages be lawful?*

Ans. We shall answer as the great L. C. J. Hales did, Whatever has the Essence of Marriage may so far be reckon'd a lawful Marriage, though it may want some external Circumstances required by the Law of the Land. At least, therefore Quakers Marriages are, as was said in a former Question, valid, if not strictly legal, and accordingly their Children sue for Inheritance; where there is actual and constant Cohabitation with its consequences, and a stipulation besides intervening, which any wise and honest Persons would also have as publick and solemn as their Occasions permit.

Quest. 13. *Whether 'tis convenient for a Lady to marry one she has an aversion for, in Obedience to her Parents?*

Ans. Undoubtedly 'tis not convenient, but the Querist intends necessary, we answer 'tis by no means so. Parents are not to dispose of their Children like Cattel, nor to make 'em miserable because they happened to give 'em Being; they are indeed generally granted a Negative Voice, nor am I sure that will always hold, if they are signally unreasonable, if they have given permission or connivance before, and after Engagements too deep to be broken, wou'd endeavour to retract it: But that they have an irresistible despotical, positive Veto, none but a Spaniard will pretend, and I'm sure our English Ladies will very unwillingly grant.

We'll add to these Questions two more which are near a kin to 'em, though sent by another hand.

Quest. 14. *How shall a man know when a Lady loves him?*

Ans. First find out, if you can, whether she has ever lov'd any other before, for that renders the case much more difficult, for one that has been deceiv'd her self, knows how to deceive you. Jealousie is counted one pretty sure sign of Love, but I think it much such another as Convulsions are of Life. If a Woman tells you she loves, there's no way but believing her; indeed there are hardly any of the Tokens of that Passion but are fallible, though the browdest sign that a woman Loves ye, is her marrying ye.

Quest. 15. *What way shall a shamefac'd Virgin take to let a Person know she Loves him?*

Ans. If the Lady who proposes this Question has either Hands or Eyes, she need not be taught how to use 'em, unless her Spark is a Fool, or blind, or never leads her.

Advertisements.

WE have now taken into our Society a Civilian, a Doctor in Physick, and a Chyrurgeon, on purpose to be more serviceable to the Age; wherefore we think fit to give Notice that all the most nice Physick, Chyrurgical, Anatomical, and Law Questions (that shall be sent us) shall also have their Answer either in single Numbers, or at the end of every Volume. We have receiv'd this week a very ingenuous Letter from a Lady in the Country, who desires to know whether her Sex might not send us Questions as well as men, to which we answer, Yes, they may, our design being to answer all manner of Questions sent us by either Sex, that may be either useful to the publick or to particular Persons. — But for