

The Athenian Mercury :

Saturday, May 16. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W** Herber it be lawful for Friends solemnly to engage, if one dyes first, to appear to the other, and inform them of the Condition of the Soul in another World?

Ans. The least that can be said of such an Attempt, is, that 'twould be

1. *Fruitless*, since Truth itself tells us — If they will not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they believe though one rose from the dead : For if the common methods of God's Providence will not convince an Atheist, neither is he to expect any new way of satisfaction ; nor if he had his desire would he be without some evasion or other still to continue his Infidelity.

2. *It would be dangerous* — on more accounts than one : If no such appearance, which unless we were better acquainted with the Oeconomy of the World of Spirits, we have little Reason to expect, this might incline a weak Man to doubt yet more of the Truth of those things which we are clearly taught both by natural and revealed Religion. If any Appearance, how should the Person to whom 'twas made, certainly know whether 'tis really the Spirit of his departed Friend, or some illusive Demon, which may either tell him a Falshood instead of a Truth, or mingle Truth and Falshood together, the more cunningly to deceive him : But besides the uncertainty and the danger there would be in such a practice which way soever it terminates, I think 'twould be also —

3. *Irreligious* ; since it too plainly implies a distrust of the Truth of God ; nay more, that those who use it, would believe humane Testimony, and perhaps Diabolical, rather than Divine. — No, say they, 'tis rather to confirm the Truth of such Testimony as is said to be divine. — But is there any want of all reasonable Confirmation ? han't we stronger Evidence that the Scriptures were written by inspired Men, or at least that the matter therein contained is true, than that there was ever such a Man as Alexander or Caesar, because one of these has all the Moral Demonstrations of Truth the other has, namely universal, or unanswerable humane Testimony both of Friends and Enemies, and yet more, to wit Miracles, which are the Testimony of Heaven. Now this Scripture gives us undeniable Evidence of the Existence of Souls after Death, and therefore whatever God may think fit to Order or permit in extraordinary Cases, as revealing Injustice, Murder, &c. It appears both fruitless, dangerous and irreligious, to expect any such thing ordinarily to happen, since the Course of Nature is not to be altered without the highest Necessity and Reason.

Quest. 2. Why doth the Sun at his rising in the Firmament play more on Easter-day than Whitsunday ?

Ans. This Question being proposed in Welch, which ancient Language we must confess none of us have the happiness to understand, we have been forc'd to make use of an Interpreter, and taking it for granted he has not injur'd the sense of it in the Translation, we thus reply.

That the matter of Fact is an old, weak, superstitious Error, and the Sun neither plays nor works on Easter-day more than any other. It's true, it may sometimes happen to shine brighter that morning than on the preceding or following Dayes, but if it does, 'tis purely accidental. In some parts of England they call it — *The Lamb playing*, which they look for as soon as the Sun rises, in some clear Spring or River, and is nothing but the pretty Reflexion it makes from the Water, which they may find at any time, if the Sun rises clear and they themselves early, and unprejudic'd with Fancy.

Quest. 3. I knew a Gentlewoman who wept the first Night she slept with her Husband, Whesher was it Joy, fear, or Modesty that caus'd these tears ?

Ans. We shall rather attribute it to a fearful Modesty,

than Joy, or any other Cause, because we find no Instances of Widows, when upon their marrying again have wept in going to Bed. Plutarch treating on Modesty, argues, that tho' it be a weakness, 'tis an argument of a Virtuous and Ingenuous Soul. Mandeflo in his Travels, lib. 2. p. 90. says a Young Gentlewoman of Japan being on her knees at the end of a Table, waiting on her Master in the Appartment of Women, and over-reaching her self to take a Flaggon that stood a little too far from her, she chanced to break Wind backwards, with which she was so much ashamed, that putting her Garment over her head, she would by no means shew her Face, but with an enraged Violence taking one of the Nipples of her Breasts into her Mouth she bit it off ; with the Anguish of which, and the shame she underwent, she immediately dyed in the place. This last Instance deserves our pity, but the Instance in the Question our Admiration, and wishes, that there were more Instances of this sort, and less of the Impudent and shameless behaviour of the contrary.

Quest. 4. Since in your Advertisement you make it known that a Chyrurgeon is taken into your Society, I have thought fit to propound the following Question, withal assuring you that the matter of Fact is true. A Sailor on board the Fleet, by an unlucky Accident broke his Leg, being in Drink, and refusing the assistance of the Surgeon of the Ship, called for a piece of new Tarpauling that lay on the Deck, which he rolled some turns round his Leg, tying up all close with a few Hoop-sticks, and was able immediately after to walk round the ship, never keeping his Bed one day. I would know whether the Cure is to be attributed to the Emplastick Nature of the tarr'd and pitch'd Cloth bound on strait with the Hoop-sticks, &c. or rather whether it may not be solved according to the Cartesian Philosophy.

Ans. Des Cartes has less to do with this Question than Copernicus, who in a drunken fit by the Course of his Brain found out the great Secret of the Worlds turning round, and so might our Drunken Sailor be inspir'd with this Novel way of curing himself ; but to the Question : — If the lesser focal was only broken, he might not be decumbent one day ; the greater (his Head being pretty light) being able to support his Body ; but if both the Bones were broken, he could not stand unless the Splinters that were tyed round his Leg came below his heel, and rested upon his Ham, which would take away that weight the Leg would otherwise bear : Besides, the Tarpauling is a good Catemattick, which with a sober and a regular dyet, might succeed, tho' 'tis no rule to walk by.

Quest. 5. What became of the Waters after Noah's Flood ?

Ans. The Earth was inviron'd with Water, before it was made a Terraqueous Globe : And now the Waters are Globulous, and higher than the Earth, whereby (and with those waters above the Firmament) the Earth might easily be overwhelmed. Now knowing whence the water came, we easily affirm, that it receded again to its old Stations, tho' no doubt but the Earth drank up some, and some were rarified into Air.

Quest. 6. Seeing Astrologers do acknowledge the Sun to be a Body of Fire, pray what is that that nourishes and supplies it ?

Ans. We design to reserve the Solution of this and all such Questions for our New System of Elementary Philosophy, which will be finished in a little time.

Quest. 7. What is the Difference betwixt Genus and Species ?

Ans. As much as betwixt Generality and Distinction. As for instance, Genus signifies a Stock in general Terms, whether vegetative or animal, &c. but Species is the distinction in those Stocks, as they are in Animal, Rational or Irrational : Thus there is a Species Generis, but not a Genus Species.

Quest. 8.

Quest. 8. What's the true meaning of the word Superstition?

Ans. *Supra* or *super Statutum* in the Civil Law it comes from beyond or above the Statute; in Divinity it means a necessary Observance of those indifferent things which God has neither commanded nor forbidden; as for instance, 'Tis Superstition to believe the wearing a Surplice in religious Worship a sin, because God has not forbidden it, and 'tis Superstition to believe the not wearing it in it self a sin, because God has not commanded it, and so in Meats, Times, &c.

Quest. 9. Which is the most ancient and populous Nation in the World?

Ans. China bids fair for the former, and clearly carries the latter, by many Millions against all the World. They are at least as ancient as the Chaldeans or Egyptians, and deduce their authentick Records from a very few Years after the universal Deluge, whereof, and of Noah himself, it may be more than Fancy, should we affirm their eldest Books contain very clear and distinct Notices, their first Monarch Fohi bidding much fairer for Noah than ever the Italian Janus did, they acknowledging him for the first King and Father of their Nation after the great Deluge; and what's more remarkable, tell us that he first reform'd 'em from drinking the Blood of Beasts — The abstaining from which all men know was one of the Precepts of Noah, besides other passages too long to be insisted on. This may also be probably proved from the great progress of Arts and Arms amongst 'em, especially those which are the unquestioned effects of long Experience — Navigation, the Compass, Printing, Guns, Sculpture and Architecture, besides many other useful Inventions, having been time out of mind, and some of 'em in great perfection, common among them. For their number, we shou'd find it a difficult matter to believe the account the Fathers give us thereof, were it not deduced from the authentick Records of that Countrey, attested by all who write on the same subject, and that or something near it, even by Protestants who have Travelled thither: (vid. Dutch Embassy.) The Royal Society, who I suppose have it out of Father Magellans, because several other of their accounts agree with his, tell us the Number of the Subjects of that Empire amount to fifty odd Millions, reckoning only the Males, and of those, only such as live on the Land, whereas 'tis notoriously known they have many Millions, (perhaps more than half as many as are on the Land) who live only upon the Water, are born, and bred, and dyethere. Nor will this number seem so prodigious, if we consider how vast a tract of ground they possess; 'tis at least 1380 Italian Miles (which are very near the English in length; and at the largest computation 1800, the first reaches to 23 Degrees of Longitude, the latter to 30, and wants not more than a third part of the same in breadth, from whence without the help of Weekly Bills, it might be no difficult matter, allowing so many for a City, and so proportionable, to give some guess at the probability of so vast a number of Inhabitants.

Quest. 10. What is Majesty?

Ans. It comes from the word Major, and won't admit a Rival. 'Tis generally taken for Royalty; but in strictness of Speech 'tis a Prebeminency of one person to another in respect of Grandure, Stature, &c. But now a days it may very well pass for a Creature called a Coach and Six.

Quest. 11. Why the water on one side Kingston Bridge runs always one way, and the other according to the motion of the Tide, and what's the Cause of the Tides motion?

Ans. No doubt that one way is downward, according to the natural motion of the current, tho not express in the Question. — I suppose then, (having never seen the place) that there may be some Head-land jutting forth below the Bridge, which may break the Force of the Tide in its flowing, and consequently give the stream liberty to continue on that side in its usual motion; but the other side having no such defence, the Tide has its full power there, and giv'es that part of the Stream such a motion as it self has, at least as to the surface and upper parts of the water. If this won't do, the Eddy may lye on that side where it always runs the same way; and we see daily in the Thames, that when the Tide comes in, it runs quite contrary ways by the sides and the middle. As for the Reason of the Tides motion, something has been formerly endeavour'd on that Head, vide Numb. 2. according to the commonly receiv'd Hypothesis; but we intend more largely to consider it in a New one of our own, which shall be shortly published, if this Design continues to receive that Encouragement it has hitherto met withal from the Candid and Ingenious.

Quest. 12. Why does the Fruit of a Tree in grafting always take after the Cion, and not after the Root?

Ans. The Juice which ascends from the Earth for the Trees nourishment is the same in all Trees; but the particular Fruits, and their different Formation, seem to depend on the internal Disposition of those more immediate parts from whence they are produced. Thus we commonly enough see not only very good Fruits rais'd from a Thorn, and good Apples from a Crab-stock: But what appears yet much more strange and diverting, several sorts of Fruits, Pears, Apples, Plumbs and Cherries on the same Tree, which seems evidently to demonstrate that those particular fine meatus's or channels in the Graft, from those Juices which the Root receives from the Earth according to their own Nature, and thence produce their own proper Fruits, as Seals, or rather Moulds instamp such Impressions on a large piece of wax, not as it had before, but as they themselves represent.

Quest. 13. In regard the Double Consonant, Ch, doth not always sound it self, but often sounds K, (as in the words Character, Chebar, Lachish, Baruch, and the like) what certain Rule in this case can you give a stranger for pronouncing [such] words aright?

Ans. This double Consonant is indeed as we find by Forraigners, one of the most difficult sounds in all our Language, the French Ch, as in the word Chagrin, &c. comes nothing near it, being much more effeminate, and no more than our sh. Their c is a little nearer it, but neither comes that up to it. Those three Letters, Th, yield a sound nearer than both, and wants little of expressing it's whole power, tho not quite so masculine; and after all, the particular pronunciation is better learnt by hearing an English man speak it, than any other way. As for the Rule, when it's to be pronounced, this way or the other, as a K, or C, mute, it's easily enough found out. In all words properly of our own Language, where we meet with it either as an Initial or Final, it has this peculiar different sound before described; as Chamber, Chide, Churn, &c. or in the end of words, as scratch, rich, such, and I think 'twill hold in all other which can be produced. In all words of Modern Languages, or those adopted thence unto ours, 'tis to be pronounced according to the Custom of the Countrey whence it came. But in those of the Greek or Hebrew, where 'tis only a single Letter, a Chi, χ or a Cheth, ח, it sounds no more than K, which as it holds in all the Instances the Gentleman proposes in the Question, so I believe it will in all others.

Advertisements.

All Persons are hereby desired to forbear sending in any more Questions (till we give publick notice we have dispatch'd all those we have already on our hands, which will be in a little time) except such as relate to Elementary Bodies. And all such Questions must be sent to us by the 20th of this Instant May, or cannot be answered in that new System of Philosophy that we promised to add at the end of one of our Volumes.