

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, April 19. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether Fleas have stings, or whether they only suck or bite, when they draw Blood from the Body?

Ans. Not to trouble you, Madam! with the Hebrew or Arabick Name of a Flea, or to transcribe Bochart's learned Dissertations on the little Animal, we shall for your satisfaction give such a Description thereof, as we have yet been able to discover.

It is, as we may partly discern by the naked Eye, of a lovely deep Red colour, most neatly polish'd, and arm'd with Scales, which can resist any thing but Fate and your Ladyships unmerciful Fingers; the Neck of it is exactly like the Tail of a Lobster, and by the Assistance of those strong Scales 'tis covered with, springs backwards and forward much in the same manner, and with equal Violence; it has two Eyes on either side of its Head, so pretty, that I'd preferr 'em, to any, Madam, but yours, and which it makes use of to avoid its Fate, and fly its Enemies, with as much nimbleness and success as your Sex manage those fatal Weapons (lovely Basilisks as you are) for the Ruine of your Adorers. Nature has provided it six substantial Legs, of a great strength, and incomparable agility, joynted like a Cane, cover'd with large Hairs, and armed each of 'em with two Claws, which appear of a horny substance, more sharp than Lancets, or the finest Needle you have in all your Needle-Book—'Twas a long while before we cou'd discover its Mouth, which we confess we han't yet so exactly done as we wou'd, the little bashful Creature always holding up its two fore-feet before it, which it uses instead of a Fan or Mask when't has no mind to be known—And here we were forced to be guilty of an Act both uncivil and cruel, without which we cou'd never have given you a Resolution to your Question—We were obliged to unmask this modest one, and cut off the two Legs on't to come to the Face, which being perform'd (tho' it makes our tender Hearts, as well as yours, almost bleed to think on't) we immediately discovered what your Ladyship desired, and found Nature had given it a strong Proboscis or Trunk, as a Gnat or Muschetto, tho' much Thicker and shorter, with which we may very well suppose it penetrates your fair Hand, feasts it self on the Nectar of your Blood, and then like a little faithless Fugitive of a Lover, skips away almost invisibly, no body knows whither.

Quest. 2. How may we shun the reproach of a rash Undertaking, if the Event prove contrary to our expectation?

Ans. The matter of fact may admit of such

alterations by different Circumstances, that 'tis impossible to give a just Solution—However in general terms we say, Persisting in an Error doubles it; and 'tis an ill Maxime of Medea in Senec. Traged. Scelus velandum scelere, we must cover one Wickedness with another; 'tis a much better Maxim which the same Author makes use of in another place, Qui poenitet peccasse pene est innocens, he is next to guiltless whom it grieves that he has been guilty. Utterly to avoid a Reproach is impossible, yet to lessen it, let the rash Undertaker Condemn and not Justifie his rashness before his reproaching Enemies, which will stop their Mouths, by anticipating the Subject of their Discourse; the Wound of his Friends will be secret, and there he has occasion more for his gratitude than his fear.

Quest. 3. I have sent you the trouble of an Experiment, which I have not only had practised on my self, but I have made use of it for the Benefit of several; it is this—That if any Person should be run through the Leg, Thigh, Arm, or any other place of their Bodies, provided it be not Mortal, if known to me within the space of 48 hours, although he be an hundred Miles off, I can by God's Blessing cure him, without any Plaister or any sort of Application, in a much shorter time than any Physitian in London, if they send their Names and place where they were wounded—Query, Whether this be lawful, if (being performed by) no ill Means?

Ans. We are not without several Instances of Sir Kenelm Digby's Sympathetick Powder, nor of the Weapon-salve treated on in Doctor Charleton's Ternary of Paradoxes: Nor want we Instances of Cures wrought by Words, and some unaccountable Gestures; under which of these, or what other Cases to reckon this Cure we know not, since 'tis not mentioned as to the manner of it. If the Querist has found out any such Experiment that may be useful to the Publick, and which may be performed by no ill Means, (as he alledges) it must certainly be lawful, and cannot want Encouragement, but if he pleases in his next to be more particular, what Means he uses, (we ask not the Secret) and whether he performs his Cures by Words, Sympathy, Antipathy, or by any Action that he can give a reasonable account how it comes about, then we shan't fail to recommend it to the publick, 'till then we shall suspend our sentiments thereof.

Quest. 4. Whether an unmarried Person ought to pray for a Husband or a Wife; and if it be a duty, whether it is not a sin to neglect it?

Ans. If it be a duty, 'tis a sin to neglect it, and whether it is a duty or no, you must consult the Constitution of Nature, the ends you design by it, as your own gratification.



tification, or a subserviency to a better answering the end of your Creation, I mean the Glory of God. I know not which of these, or what other ends you may propose to your self, but this I am sure, that every Person designing to enter into that State, ought to beg the assistance of Heaven as to a Choice in a matter of so great Moment, as always the Happiness of this World, and sometimes that of the other depends.

Quest. 5. What is the Efficient Cause of all Motion?

Ans. God — In him we live and move, &c. and if we, then the rest of the Creation. How things are said to move by heat, we shall speak more hereafter.

Quest. 6. What is the Reason that the Voice of Women is more shrill than the Voice of Men?

Ans. Not from the inequality of Organs, (as some suppose) some Men being every way less proportioned than Women; as also because Men are no less organized after Castration, and yet their Voice will then be changed. I can meet with no better a reason amongst the Naturalists, than an unequal diffusion of the Spermatick Aura; which is also the Cause of that we call rankness, or a strong offensive sort of a taste or smell of flesh in Bulls Rams, Goats, &c. above Oxen, Weethers, Capons, or the Females of those Kinds. From this Reason Hermaphrodites generally speak in two several Tones. A Boys speech enlarges at his Puberty, which generally happens about sixteen or seventeen, and an Eunuch loses his masculine voice when he loses that which causes it.

Quest. 7. Whence is the Production of Gahame's?

Ans. As other Stones are produced, and not (as some suppose) fallen from the Stars, for tho they are naturally figur'd with the resemblance of a Star, it follows not they fall from Stars, no more than that the Stone call'd Opheus, which cures Poyson, and bears the figure of a Serpent, should be produced by Serpents; or the Stone Maltha, which bears the figure of a Serpents Tongue, should be a Serpents Tongue petrified; we are not without resembling and sympathizing herbs. — Squill and Poppey resemble the head, and allwage the pains of it; Tansy and Eye-bright cure the Eyes, unto which they are like, tho we can't allow these Stones, Herbs, &c. of resemblance, to produce any effect by virtue of similitude, but by virtue and property of their own Nature and Quality.

Quest. 8. Whence comes the Production of Toads, Serpents, &c. in the midst of solid Rocks?

Ans. Not from any Seminal Virtue in the Rocks, but by the Rocks growing, and accidentally closing up such Creatures as well as other things in them: We have Instances enough of the growth both of Stone and Minerals, inclusive of Keys, Bones, &c. which they encompassed, and grew over in a few Yearstime.

Quest. 9. How are Eels produced, and whether have they any heat?

Ans. Not by the usual Methods that other Fish (if they may be call'd so) are generated by, spawning and smelting; but thus — As the Sun by it's periodical influence and Circulation does reduce into act that innate Seminal Virtue and power which the Earth has to produce Grass, Shrubs, and other things, in such places where Buildings have stood for many Ages, and afterwards dilapidated, and become ruinous, without the help of any Persons sowing the Seeds of Grass, &c. there, so the Sun may by it's influence act upon water only, to a production of Eels, as those innumerable sorts of Aqueous Insects, and Vermin. This is an experienced matter of fact; first as to Eels, as the inquisitive Virtuosi's in a Microscope found out, and is also to be seen by a Spoonful of rain water, which in three days time by the heat of the Sun will produce thousands of small Eels. As to the second, of Aqueous Insects, 'tis observable, that a new pit dug for water, will the first Summer be innumera- bly stocked with 'em: As to the other part of the Question, about their having heat, we answer affirmatively, that every thing that has an innate power of Motion has also Heat, Motion and Heat being inseperable as we shall quickly have occasion to speak more largely of, tho we deny not but that an Eel as well as other Fishes, (some of which are warmer than others from a greater or less activity) are colder than those Creatures that live upon Land, by reason of the Quality of their Element, every Element striving to reduce every thing in it to a similitude with it's self, if not in substance, yet in accidents, of which Cold is one.

Quest. 10. Supposing it to be possible for a great hole to be made quite through the Diameter of the Globe of this Earth and that a Millstone, or some other ponderous Body were

thrown into it, Whither would the said Millstone fall?

Ans. It's own force would drive it beyond the Center of Gravity, or middle of the Earth, perhaps for some hundred Miles; when it's force being spent, and not finding it's Center there, it would fall back again towards us, beyond the Centre for some Miles, and so return again, falling backward and forward, till it's force being spent, it would hang just in the middle of the Earth; but more of this and the reason of it hereafter.

Quest. 11. We have heard of some who to all appearance have been dead for two or three days, and have recovered. Now this Mystery in Nature is worth your explaining; and I beg the Solution of it, as well for my own satisfaction as of several other Gentlemen that put me on?

Ans. As the Appetite for a considerable time may be suspended from it's Office by an excessive Grief or Trouble, and yet be not altogether lost: So may the Soul for a time seem to be departed out of the Body, and yet not really be so; the first from the same Reason that Bears, Snails, Dormice, &c. live several Months without food, occasioned thus: The less Spirits and Heat there is, the less is the digestion, and consequently a less appetite, not that they are altogether without Appetite; but that the fat and viscous flegm wherewith they are provided, are sufficient Nourishment, and as much as their small heat requires for all that time: But that the Soul, and the whole frame of Nature should imitate a separation, when there really is not one, is more strange; yet possibly it may proceed from a Natural Reason, (if a natural one can be assign'd;) Sicknefs by degrees does sometimes cause that Effect upon the Animal Spirits, as a sudden Joy or Grief: but as all violent actions are short, so the Effects of a sudden Joy or Grief either kill or return again presently; but the Effects of a lingering Sicknefs, as they fix slowly, so they remove difficultly — In this they both agree, the Heart being oppress'd, the Spirits fly thither with the blood for its succour, and there remain till they are either extinct or dispers'd by a New Circulation, commencing as soon as the Heart can spare their retreat, which is sooner or later according to the Cause that brought 'em thither: The Soul all the while having but little room to act in, I mean the Animal Spirits, and the Animal Spirits as little, I mean the retreated Blood.

||| The several Ingenious Questions lately sent us by a Young Gentlewoman, (they relating chiefly to the Fair Sex) shall be speedily answered all together in one Paper.

\* \* The Gentleman that sent us three Elementary Questions last week, may expect to hear from us in that New System of Philosophy that we promised in Numb. 15.

## Advertisements.

That nothing might be wanting to render our Athenian Project serviceable to the Publick, and thoroughly known, we shall again give an Account of what we design'd from our very first engaging in it — which was not only to confine our selves to Answer all manner of Nice and Curious Questions in Divinity, Philick, Law, Philosophy, History, Trade, Mathematicks, &c. and all other Questions whatever proposed by either SEX, or in any Language, fit for a Resolution, (which shall also be perform'd from Week to Week either in single Numbers, or at the end of every Volume, for the Reasons hinted in Numb. 2.) but also to give Accounts of the most considerable Books Printed in England, or transmitted to us from Forreign Parts, in Order whereto we have settled a Correspondence beyond Sea, being resolved to spare no Charges to gratifie the Ingenious.

We design also to insert the Conferences and Transactions of several English Virtuoso's, and whatever else is CURIOUS and REMARKABLE, (if well attested) that shall be sent us from time to time, and to transcribe (that so we may the more fully make good our Title) from the Acta Eruditorum, Lippia, the Paris Journal des Scavans, the Giornali de Letterati, Printed at Rome and the Universal Historical Bibliothek, &c. all that we conceive will be lookt upon here as valuable — ALL which we intend to add (together with our Answers to Objections) at the end of every Volume, the being Licensed and Enter'd, and now Translating in order to it.

If any Person whatever will send in any New Experiment, or curious Instance, which they know to be truth, and matter of fact, circumstantiated with Time and Place, we will insert it in our Mercury; (but we shan't use the Authors Name without his license) and if it wants a Demonstration to the Senders, we will endeavour to find one, for the satisfaction of them as well as of all other Ingenious Enquirers into Natural Speculations.

Direct your Letters to Mr. Smith's Coffee-house in Stocks-market, but pray pay the Postage, or they will not be taken in; and forbear sending till we give Publick Notice that we have answered all those Questions we have already received.

This Paper will be Publisht every Tuesday and Saturday, the Authors of it having Obliged themselves to be constant to those two days.