

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **H**ow comes it to pass, that Clouds being composed of Rain, and much heavier than the Air, do not fall to the Earth?

Ans. They do, when they come to be so condens'd, that the Air can bear 'em up no longer: But naturally they are but a little thicker Air than Ordinary, and Exhal'd by the Heat, which an agitation of Winds can easily buoy up, so long as they meet not with more Exhalations, which jostling together with their own force, are Contracted and Condens'd as before.

Quest. 2. What will the General Conflagration of the World produce?

Ans. The Extent of Natural Fire terminates in vitrification, as Chymists or Spagerick Artists have experienced in all terrene Bodies; but what this will produce, we can't easily determine, unless we know of what Nature the last Fire will be.

Quest. 3. Whether Nature produces such a Quadrupede as an Unicorn?

Ans. Yes, of several Species; Philostratus in the Life of Apollonius, speaks of an As in the Fens of Colchis, having one single Horn in his Forehead. Pliny says, 'tis like an Horse, and to be found in the Desarts of Æthiopia. Garsus ab Horto, says, 'tis an amphibious Animal, bred on Land near the Cape of Good Hope. Marcus Sherer, that there are whole Herds in the Arabian Desarts. Paulus Venetus, that there are of 'em in the Kingdom of Bosman almost as big as Elephants; with several others too tedious to repeat: but by the Character of their Shapes, I can read of none like what is painted in our Churches; those mentioned by Pliny in Æthiopia, are the nearest to it, only a shorter Neck and Mane.

Quest. 4. Why Copper yeilds a better price than Brass, Brass being made of Copper with much Labour and Art?

Ans. Copper is fitter to mix with more Mettals than Brass, and more durable; now a little Mixture of Copper with a great allay of other cheap Ingredients, will make a great Quantity of Brass, which for that reason may be afforded Cheaper.

Quest. 5. Whether the Departed have any Knowledge of, or ever concern themselves with the affairs of their Friends in this Life?

Ans. The Platonists have made many bold Assertions, both concerning the State of the Soul before it came into the Body, as also after; but their Reasons are as strange as their Assertions. What Priviledges some Souls may enjoy in their separate state above others, is yet a Riddle, but there are some Instances of this Nature unaccountable. To mention one; Caesar Baronius in his Annals, mentions an entire Friendship, betwixt one Michael Mercatus, and Marsilius Ficinus, and this Friendship was the stronger betwixt them, by reason of a mutual Agreement in their Studies, and an addictedness to the Doctrins of Plato. It fell out, that these Two discoursing together (as they used) of the State of Man after Death, according to Plato's Opinions (there is extant a Learned Epistle of Marsilius, to Michael Mercatus upon the same subject,) but when their Disputation and Discourse was drawn out something long, they shut it up with this firm agreement, that whichever of them two should first depart out of this life, (if it might be) should ascertain the Survivor of the State of the other life, and whether the Soul be Immortal or not: this Agreement being made and mutually sworn unto, they departed. In a short time, it fell out, that while Michael Mercatus, was one Morning early at his Study, upon the sudden he heard the noise of an Horse upon the Gallop, and then stopping at his Doo, withal he heard the Voice of Marsilius his Friend, crying to him, Oh Michael, Oh Michael, those things are true, they are true; Michael wondring to hear his Friends Voice, rose up, and opening the Casement, he saw the backside of him whom he had heard in White, and Galloping away upon a White Horse; he called after him, Marsilius, Marsilius, and followed him with his Eye, but he soon vanish'd out of sight. He amazed at this extraordinary accident, very solicitously enquired if any thing had happened to Marsilius, who then lived at Florence, where he had breath'd his last; and he found upon strict enquiry, that he died at

that very time wherein he was thus heard and seen by him. This with some other credible Instances, which have occur'd, argue, that either some departed Souls, have particular Commissions, in this Case, or that all of them have a Cognizance of our Affairs, agreeable to the Parable of Dives and Lazarus, and that of the Angels in Heaven, rejoycing at the Conversion of a Sinner. And it must be a truth, if Departed Souls and Angels come under the same predicament as to their Essence; and I don't yet know in what they differ.

Quest. 6. Whether every thing that nourishes an Animal, ought to have life?

Ans. As there are two Classes or Ranks in living Nature, viz. Animal and Vegetative; so ordinarily there are two distinct Nutritions: The Vegetative is fed by the Juice of the Earth, and the Animal by the Vegetative. But yet I can't see but there are besides these, some extraordinary sorts of Nutritions, or at least what is equivalent unto it, as Heat, Sleep, Fire, Water, &c. Nay, 'tis reported in the Siege of Sancerre, that they did eat Bread made of Slate; all which things can be very hardly rank'd amongst those that have Life, and yet must be granted to be Nutritions.

Quest. 7. Which is the best Sect of Philosophers?

Ans. Our allotted limits won't suffer us to be particular in Recitals, and Comparison of one with another, whose very Names would more than fill up our little room: We are of Josephus his Opinion, that the antientest and best Philosophy, and from which the Great Plato and Pythagoras borrowed theirs, was that of the Hebrews called Cabbala, which they divided into Names (or Schemot) and things (Sephiroth.) Josephus argues thus, all other Philosophers have had their Sects, but this always remain'd the same, and would lose its Name, if it were not transmitted from Father to Son in its Integrity. Yet in Commending the Jewish Cabbala in general terms, we despise not what is good in the rest. The Moral of the Industrious Bee is applicable in this Case, viz. Cull what we find best; That of the Stoicks is a Majestical Philosophy; that of Aristotle, Honourable; that of the Scepticks, Easie; and that of the Academicks, Safe.

Quest. 8. Whence comes the word Cuckoldry, and whether is it in all Cases so Infamous as is generally esteem'd?

Ans. Possibly it may come from the word Cuckoo, which Bird never Hatches for herself, but having suck'd the Eggs of another Birds Nest, she lays one of her own, which the mistaken Bird Hatches and Feeds, not knowing but 'tis her own. But as to the Infamy of Cuckoldry, I think the World strangely abused, by having such scornful abject Sentiments of the Injured's Case; God nor Nature ever required Impossibilities from us; a vicious Action ought to be only imputed to the Author, and so ought the shame and dishonour which follows it; if we expect such Sentences as we give now, at the Day of Judgment, we shall be deceived; he only that consents and is Pimp to his own Cuckoldry, is really Infamous and Base. But besides, 'tis not that Dishonour as is usually thought, because not so esteemed universally. It has been the custom of some Nations, to let their Prince lie with their Wives on the Marriage Night, and was so in some parts of this Kingdom not many Ages since. The Romans were Honourable, and yet Pompey, Caesar, Augustus, Lucullus, Cato, and others, had this fate, but not its Infamy and Scandal.

Quest. 9. Who are the most happy in this World, Wise Men or Fools?

Ans. Much may be said of either, but the manner very different: If the Fool be the happier, the World's a very desirable place, there being such a great tribe of happy Men in't. Parties concern'd, were never thought fit Judges; but here's a new president, a Case where every one must be both Judge and Party, not only of the way of arguing, but of the matter argued. However if possible, we will lay down a Rule of Justice; that state of the Case which neither Wise nor Fool can confute, must certainly be the truth: therefore supposing all for once to take the Fools part to answer this.—The Supream Being is essential Happiness; those therefore that act the likent

to him, are consequently happiest. There's but one right line, and infinite crooked ones; one Wisdom, but Follies innumerable; one real Goodness, but diverse appearances of it; and but one best way to every thing, and to judge of every thing, to wit, Reason or Understanding: Here is only the Paradox, the Fools happiness consists in a privation of Grief, and the happiness of a Wise Man, in the possession of Good; which being a little consider'd, the result of this next Question will answer the first, viz. Whether would be more Miserable, a Wise man that wanted his Good, or the Fool that had a sense of his Grief? In this reverse the Wise man would be more miserable, because he that wants his Happiness, wants every thing; but he that has a sense of Grief, may have a sense of Happiness. Now this reverse making a Wise man miserable, the Direct (or contrary to the reverse) must necessarily make him happy; viz. his possession of Good, is preferable to the Fools privation of Grief.

Quest. 10. Whether Origen was to be censur'd or praised for his voluntary Castration?

Ans. The Learned make Three sorts of Eunuchs, the Natural, the Facitious, and the Voluntary; agreeable to our Saviours Division in the Gospel, viz. that some are born so, some made so by Men, and others make themselves so for the Kingdom of Heaven; of this last sort was Origen, who as the Fathers say, being troubled with St. Paul's Thorn in the Flesh, and considering the case of Candace the Ethiopian Eunuch, the first Gentile called to the light of the Gospel, and for other reasons dealt so severely with himself. He did very ill, if we consider the physical end of Nature, the Sixth Command, and the lawful Remedies that God had prescribed for Incontinency; but if we consider his great Courage and Zeal, an irreconcilable hatred of Vice, though in himself, and what is yet more, and understanding that Passage literally of making himself an Eunuch for the Kingdom of Heavens sake, (as some have that of plucking out the Eye, &c.) and not mystically, as a voluntary renouncing that Pleasure, which whatever is sensible, is so much inclin'd to: These things considered, we must with St. Jerome rather admire than blame the Action.

Quest. 11. How can we suppose so many Beasts lived in the Ark, and upon what they lived, and to what Place went their Dung, and why did they not Devour one another?

Ans. Apelles the Marstonist believed the Ark by Moses's Dimensions, could not hold Four Elephants; and on the contrary, Celsus believed that the Ark was a Vessel so large, that it could not be made in any time, by Noah and his Family. The Ark according to Scripture, contained 45000 Square Cubits, divided into Three Stories or Floors in Height; the height of which Rooms would admit Perches for Fowls, being 10 Cubits high. Gesner, Pliny, and other Naturalists, will have but Forty kinds of Creatures, (Fishes excepted,) that were originally Created, and all the rest to be Mongrel Creatures, got betwixt Two of different Species; although if we allow 12 Square Cubits to every pair of Beasts, the Ark would contain 1250 pair, upon one Floor. As for their Food, no doubt but he that took care for saving their Lives, ordered Provisions for their Sustenance during the Flood, as also Conveniences in the Ark, for exonerating their Dung. Fuller in his Holy State, reports upon the overflowing of Severn, Dogs, Foxes, Hares, Cats, Rats, Mice, &c. swam for their Lives, and agreed together while their Danger lasted, and when that was over, they return'd to their Nature again. In New England they take up Wild Colts out of the Woods, and ship them for a few Leagues to tame them; so that if there were such things as Grates, &c. that the Savage Creatures in Noah's Ark could see the Waters, there would be no need of a Miracle to keep them from Devouring one another.

Quest. 12. How comes a Cane and a Tobacco-pipe to emit Fire?

Ans. From the same reason as a Flint and Steel, a Horseshoe and a Stone; nay I have known a Man to strike Fire on his Teeth with a Knife, though some things are better prepared than others: The Reason for all is, All Bodies are Porous, and therefore have Air in them; now Two Bodies struck together, compressing the outward Pores, the Airy Particles contained in the Pores, are by the violence of the motion emitted and vari- fied into Fire: For there is no such thing as actual Fire either in Flint or Steel: But more fully of this in our Ensuing System.

Quest. 13. Why do Scotch-men hate Swines Flesh?

Ans. Nations eat by Custom, and for Natural and Civil Causes; Tartars eat Horse Flesh, the Arabians Camels; in some parts of America they eat Serpents: But as to the Scotch not eating Swines Flesh, 'tis supposed for this reason, Scotland as History informs us, has had as many Jews in it, as any place in Europe, and therefore the Scotch might probably borrow that Custom of them, who under the Law were forbidden eating Swines Flesh, as unclean.

Quest. 14. Why Spring-Water, is Hot in Winter, and Cold in Summer?

Ans. 'Tis a vulgar error, grounded upon a want of consideration of the Change of our Bodies, according to the Season; a Hot Hand put into Cold Water, is more sensibly affected, than a Cold Hand put into Cold Water: But that Springs are hotter in Winter than other Waters, is evident, and the Reason is, other Waters are exposed to the Cold and open Air; but Springs running through the Bowels of the Earth, (oftentimes very deep,) are preserved from the power of Cold. Hence it is, that in the Winter, Fish betake themselves to the Deepest Waters, where they are farthest, and consequently freest from the extremity of Cold.

Quest. 15. Why is Sound, being no substance, but only a palpable Quality, conveyed by the Wind?

Ans. A Sound may be heard under Water, but much more dull and weak than in the Air; now Water must be the Vehicle of Conveyance here, and not Wind, for there is not Wind in Water, but what is imprison'd in round Bubbles, and is by some other intervening Body denied its Mounting up. But if Water which is a heavy thick Body, can Convey a Sound, and Air can do the same in a more brisk and lively manner; no doubt but the Element of Fire cannot want that Quality in a manner, yet far more active than either of them. But the manner of Conveyance is the Question. Thus then, a Sound is produced by a Collision or striking together of two Bodies, which stroke at the same time makes a Compression and Agitation of the Air; now the Air being the Receptacle and Vehicle of a Sound, unless the Air moves, the Sound cannot; but the Air being compressed (as before) by the violence of the Stroke, it takes the Sound along with it, which is not equally Audible Circularly; but as the Air is driven one way more than another, the Sound is also heard farther one way than another.

Quest. 16. Whether the least particle of matter is infinitely divisible?

Ans. Yes, if you can find Eyes strong enough always to discern the last Subdivision, and Instruments fine enough for such Sub-divisions; also if both this strong Eye and fine Instrument will last for ever, for infinite Divisions, and infinite time, (or Eternity if you please to call it so) are inseparable. 16 Prop. 3. Eucl. Each will tell you something more of this nature, if you are Mathematically inclin'd.

Quest. 17. Who was Cain's Wife?

Ans. His first Wife must be his own Sister, unless we allow Preadamitism; which we cannot subscribe to, since Eve is called the Mother of all Living, Gen. 3. 20. and Adam the first Man, 1 Cor. 15. 45. See Quest. 1. Numb. 9.

Quest. 18. Which is the best Fortified Castle in Europe?

Ans. Edenborough perhaps, and naturally stronger than any in the whole World. But to give a positive Answer, the Querist, must tarry a long time, a Mans whole life being too little to spend in the search, and possibly that which is best Fortified when a Man begins to travail, may be laid in Ruins when he returns to give his Answer.

Quest. 19. What is the reason that a straight Stick being put into the Water, it appears Crooked?

Ans. The reason of the Deceit, is a looking through Two Elements or Bodies, upon one Object; 'tis so in a Looking-glass, whose superficies admits an unevenness near the Edges, as in great Glass where your Face, Nose, &c. appear double. After this manner the Ear is also deceived, where the Sound comes through Two Bodies, I mean the Air its proper Vehicle, and some intervening Buildings, which meeting with the Sound coming toward us in a right Line, diverts its Course, and makes it come another way; whereby the Steeple (if we are in a strange Place,) is judged by us to be in some other place than really it is. Just so are all the rest of the Senses deceived, where the Object represented is not immediate, and by a single Conveyance: 'Tis so plain, it would be needless to give an Instance in all of them.