

The Athenian Mercury:

June 3. 1691.

We having promised the Reader the first Tuesday in every Month to answer all the Reasonable Questions sent us by the fair Sex, as also any others relating to Love and Marriage, we have in this Paper made good that Promise, and shall continue to do so from time to time, the former Papers of this Nature having been favourably receiv'd, as appears by many Letters lately sent us on that subject.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether the Authors of this Athenian Mercury are not Batchelors, they speak so Obligingly of the fair Sex?

Ans. If they are not Batchelors, they are (or wou'd be thought) Gentlemen, and all who pretend to that Name, as well as all civiliz'd Mankind, have ever treated Women with that respect and tenderness which their Beauty or at least their Sex deserve. Nay, we may go get further, and not only affirm that the fiercest Nations and most barbarous of Cannibals have acknowledg'd and practis'd this piece of good Breeding, but even the Beasts themselves teach it us, were there any fear of forgetting it, as well as many other very good Lessons: And indeed there seems to be Reason as well as Inclination and Custom to authorize such a Practice. We owe the Happiness of Society, the Defence of Nations, the best Riches of Kingdoms, which consists in the multitude of Inhabitants; nay, even the continuance of the World, which without them cou'd live at furthest no longer than the next Age, to that Sex whom we are so willing to oblige; not only for these Reasons, but for one perhaps stronger than all of 'em, which may be seen in the Advertisement at the end of Numb. 18. Nor are we much concern'd at the Censures we may possibly meet with for this piece of Justice, from some Men whose acquaintance among that Sex have perhaps been of such a Character, that they think they may be allow'd to rail at all the Sex, because some of 'em have given 'em so much Reason for't.

Quest. 2. How a Husband ought to behave himself towards his Wife, who notoriously violates the Honour of the Marriage-Bed; and whether he may not lawfully demand an Honourable Satisfaction of the Adulterer, considering the small Amends the Law gives him, and the almost Impossibility of that Proof it requires?

Ans. The ancient Roman Law commands in the Case of Adultery to Kill both, when taken in the Fact; and the Italians at this day, tho' without any such Law, are very rarely more merciful. We confess this is an Enquiry of such a Nature, as there needs the very height of Christianity or depth of Stoicism to forgive, especially when neither the Civil, Common, nor Statute Law have taken much Care of it. But still the more difficulty there is in so high an Act of Mortification, the more still is the Glory. And indeed if we shou'd examine the Case by the Principles only of Gallantry and Reason, it seems absurd for a Gentleman to hazard his Life for so lost a

thing as one who has parted with her Honour; if 'twere to preserve it, we confess there might be some excuse, but who can recal what's past? Private Men have no Tribunal to fly to, if the Publick rights 'em not, but that of Heaven. The noblest Revenge therefore wou'd be in our Judgments, to slight and scorn a Person who had been guilty of such an Action, to let 'em know we thought 'em not worth our Concern, and to trust their Punishment to t'other World. Nor, holds this only in Women, but in Men as well as they, since after we have abstracted from Custom and Opinion, (both very ill Judges) the Crime is much the same in one as the other.

Quest. 3. A Person having lov'd a Lady for some time, and made publick Profession of it, till he found himself lov'd again, after which finding his Passion decay, and his Esteem wholly vanish, whether is he not Oblig'd by the Laws of Generosity and Justice rather to make known his Change as handsomly as he can, than to marry, and run the hazard of making both miserable?

Ans. The very Supposition argues great Weakness, if not Falshood. If the Gentleman has not seen another Lady whom he loves better, and therefore forsakes his former Mistress, yet 'tis certain, if he has, as the Question supposes, for some time made a Profession of Love, he might in that time, before he had engag'd the Lady's Affections, have discover'd whether there were any thing in her Person or Behaviour cou'd make him cease to Love her: However, be it real Imperfections in her, or be it only Fickleness in him, when things are once reduced to that pass, that he can Love no longer, of two evils he ought to choose the less, and rather make her only Unhappy for a little while, till she forgets or wears it out, than make 'em both for one of their Life-times so miserable, as in such a Condition they would certainly be. And if he has not a handsomer way to discover such his Change to the Lady, let him but shew her this third Question in our Athenian Mercury, and if she be't extremely dull, 'twill effectually do it.

Quest. 4. Why Women, if meer Machines, might not answer all other ends, except that principal one of serving God immediately?

Ans. Shou'd this be granted, (as we are far from doing it) what wou'd be gain'd by it? Better the principal end attain'd, and all the rest neglected, than on the contrary. But shou'd we cross the Cudgels, and a Woman ask the same Question concerning Men, how wou'd the Querist answer it? To come still closer, 'tis plain that God made nothing in vain, much less so Noble a being as a Soul; now there being the self-same Arguments that Women have a Principle of Action in 'em distinct from Body, which we can produce for Man, it follows that they could not answer the Ends of their Creation without it, because they are made with it; and what those Ends are 'twill be requisite to enquire, the chief whereof, as Sacred Writ and common Experience tell us, is Society, since even in Paradise it self—It was not good for Man that he should be alone: Now if even as things are, even while Women are indu'd with rational Souls as well as we, the great Objection which some who wou'd be thought Masters of very much Sense have against 'em is—that their Conversation is generally mean and trivial, that they are not worthy a Thought, and that they can't entertain their Reason; how much more might this Argument be used, had they only been created meer Machines, as the Querist would fain have 'em? But here's still a further unavoidable inconvenience and absurdity arising from such a Supposition: Even Man, that Noble Creature Man, who sits and looks so big upon himself and all about him, must degenerate into at least half a Machine in the next Generation—for the Birth takes after the Mother at least as much as the Father, and if the Parent were only a Machine, a Soul-less piece of Clock-work, its impossible but the Child must strike after her, and accordingly, which is very Pleasant and Philosophical, one Clock produce another to the end of the Chapter.

Quest. 5. Whether from the present Carriage of the Female

male Sex, we may not judge we are banter'd into a Belief of their being such Angels as they are represented by their Admirers?

Ans. We can't much approve either of the Prudence, Good Nature, or Truth of those Persons who are eternally commending the Days of our Great Grandfathers, and declaiming against our own. 'Tis certain, we had Vices common here in Henry the 8th's. days, which now make an English-man tremble but to hear 'em mentioned. To come to the Question, we think the present carriage of the Female Sex much what the same, or at least not worse than their former behaviour. — Many then were proud, foolish, and vain, and so they are now; and Men as well as they, and so 'tis like to continue when the Athenian Mercury is forgotten. After all, most of their vanity they owe to us; and if we our selves first tell 'em they are Angels, and are afterwards angry when we find 'em mortal, whom can we blame for the mistake? To be short, their Admirers think 'em Angels, because they place their Heaven only in 'em; their Despisers and Enemies call 'em Devils, because perhaps some of 'em have tormented 'em; but those who know 'em better, and are more intimately acquainted with 'em, tell us poor innocent Bachelors, that they are neither one nor 'other, but as very errand Flesh and Blood as we our selves are.

Quest. 6. Whether Women are not wiser in making Men their Servants, than Men in making themselves so?

Ans. 'Tis neither one nor the 'other, but Nature has done it for both: And if Men are their Servants before Marriage, the Womans happiness is so short, that we have little Reason to envy 'em, since the Case is soon alter'd, and we are generally pretty even with 'em afterwards.

Quest. 7. Whether Men do not generally marry in vain, since what they chiefly propose, viz. the avoiding the baseness of a mixt posterity, is usually so little regarded by them on whom that Trust depends?

Ans. If that Evil is hardly avoidable after all the restraints which God commands, and the wisdom of all Nations can lay upon the wild humour of some Men, how much less were it so, if all were left to the most lawless Liberty? unless they'll fairly confess they are wicked merely from a principle of Contradiction. In the mean time, we neither believe the World so good or so bad as some suppose it, in all Places and Ages there were some who prostituted their own and their Husband's honour, but Charity obliges us to hope many more who would even unto Death, inviolably preserve it. But supposing not, how silly is't for Men to complain of themselves; wou'd they but let the Women alone, we should have 'em all Saints, and their Husband's Honours much more safe than if they were in their own keeping.

Quest. 8. Whether there were any such thing as the Ceremony of Marriage before Moses?

Ans. If not the Ceremony, there was the Substance, namely, making enclosures out of the common. This appears, not only from the decision of the former Question, but also from the Story of Judah, who was for punishing his Daughter-in-Law Thamar with Death, for playing the Harlot, which he would not have done if all had been common: Nay, even the Intention of violating the Marriage-Bed, was punished with grievous Plagues, as in the Instances of Pharaoh and Abimelech. But besides this, there was a formal asking Consent of Parents, as Abraham's Servant did of Bethuel, and great feasting and solemnity at the time of Marriage, as we read at Jacob's Wedding.

Quest. 9. What are we to think of that Virtuoso, who wou'd there were another way of multiplying Mankind, like that which Nature has given Trees and Flowers to continue their own Species?

Ans. What shou'd we think of that Person who shou'd come to the most Ingenious Artificer, Watch-maker, Mathematician, &c. and tell him, this Wheel whereby the Watch was kept in motion, was not well made or placed, but he might easily have invented a better; or this Line is not well drawn, you may demonstrate the Proposition without it; shou'd we not think him at least very rash and overweening to correct an Artist in his own Art, whereof he himself might have but some little smattering? This is a faint Similitude of the hardness, we had almost said blasphemy of some Men, who like the proud King of Arragon, wou'd teach God to make the World better.

And 'twas this wise Artificer, who after he had crea-

ted Man male and female, and given 'em that Command, increase and multiply, added more to this days work than to all the rest, — Behold it was very good. If then we have all things necessary to render us perfect and compleat in the Station and Order of created Beings wherein we are fix'd, and if this days work be pronounc'd by him that made it to be all very good, we may with at least as much Civility find fault with this Gentleman's work as he does with his Makers: — Tho' after all, such a Complaint might very probably be but a Copy of his Countenance, and he thus rail at the Grapes either because then out of his reach, or else he had taken some surfeit, or been soundly griped with 'em formerly. And so much for Trees.

Quest. 10. Whether Marriage be of Divine Right, or only Political Institution?

Ans. Both, tho' the latter seems to depend upon the former: The Law of Nations is the Law of Nature, and the Laws of Nature are the Laws of God. How come the Political Institutions of all Nations where there's any such thing as Law, (as where is there not?) to make Matrimony honourable, and promiscuous mixtures both criminal and odious, were there not something in Nature it self which taught 'em this great Truth? So far is it from being any prejudice against the Divine Ordination of Marriage, that 'tis inforc'd and guarded by Politick Institution, that we see 'tis much rather an Argument for the Affirmative; for were there indeed any weight in the Objection, we might as well argue that Blasphemy was no breach of God's Law, because the Magistrate orders those who are guilty of it to undergo the most infamous of Punishments. That Marriage is not only of Divine Original, but even instituted in Paradise, and as old as the World; all both Christians and Jews have ever believed, and Moses, and a greater than he, even our Saviour himself assure us, In the beginning, says he, God made 'em Male and Female: — For this cause shall a Man leave his Father and his Mother, and cleave to his Wife; — And they two shall be one flesh, for they are no more twain, but one flesh. Nor is it possible to give a more graphical description of Marriage than those words present us.

Quest. 11. Whether a Person by the bare Light of Nature would be disposed to think Women have Souls?

Ans. If by that Light we can prove Men have Souls, undoubtedly Women must have 'em too, since the Male and Female in all Species are like. As for the Person who puts this Question, we only wish him the veriest Virago in Christendom to his Yokefellow, would quickly satisfy him whether her Sex had Souls or no.

Advertisements.

A Gentleman last Week sent us a very Nice Question concerning an Illegitimate lately laid to his Charge (under very improbable Circumstances of being his) which Question we had never answered, but that he assures us (for weighty Reasons which we must conceal) that his Reputation in a great measure depends upon our determination: We shall therefore as modestly as may be give our Opinion in this dubious Matter, but must crave his Patience till next Monday, it being most proper to answer his Query at the end of our first Volume, which will then be publisht.

BT the 8th. of June will be finish'd all the 12 Numbers that compleat our first Volume, which shall then be publish'd all together, with a Preface and Index to it, which said Preface, Index, and 12 Numbers, shall be but 12 d. price, that so all those Gentlemen that took in the single Sheets from time to time, may have their Volume entire for 2 s. 6 d. And also that those Coffee-houses that did the like may then have the whole First Volume stich'd up by them, for the constant entertainment of their Customers, single Sheets being apt to be lost, except pasted in a Book.

||| The Question sent this Week, concerning a Cannon-Bullet, &c. (upon our Solution of which a great Wager depends) will be answered at the End of our first Volume.

* * * The several Questions concerning Jephtha's Daughter, the 36th Verse of the 17th. Chap. of the 2d. to the Corinth. Individuation, Eunuchs, Spirits, Echoes, the various Colours that are in the Eye, &c. shall be speedily answered.