

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, June 13. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether 'tis more rational to make a Descent on France by Sea, or pierce into it by the way of Savoy, &c.

Ans. The Author of the Project of a Descent on France lately Printed, who we are told is a Person of Quality, is clearly for making the attempt by Sea, on which side they are undoubtedly much weaker than upon any other, unless perhaps that of Savoy. He gives many very probable Reasons for his Opinion, but the chief seems to be that according to his Project, Forts being built at convenient distances along the shoar, and strong Garisons of English in them, who might put the adjacent Country under Contributions, France wou'd be both infinitely distracted and weaken'd, and necessitated either to draw down their Forces to Guard the Country, and leave their Frontiers open to the Confederates, or else expose their Country to the perpetual Ravages of an Enemy almost in its very Bowels. The other Opinion for piercing by Savoy, or that way, seems to be rather approv'd by the Author of *The Historical and Political Mercury*, that ingenious and impartial Writer (if ever there was one) intimating in several places, particularly April, p. 140. as in all other Cases, not without Reason, for while the French Garisons are so strong and numerous, both on the side of Flanders and Germany, and our English Forces are so divided and employ'd in the first of those Places, and in Ireland, it seems not very practicable for us or other of the Confederates to attack 'em any way but by Savoy or Burgundy. And to this at last seems to agree even the Author of the Project, who little less than grants, that the Time to make a Descent by Sea upon France, is now (for the present) over — But let it be either by Sea or Land, if 'twere but once effectually done, we shou'd hardly find fault with the manner on't.

Quest. 2. What is a Spell, and why not lawful, if only hard words, and what are the meaning of these words, Erthin, Dide, Sumina, Sulphin, what Language they are, and what is their Vertue?

Ans. By a Spell or charm has been always understood, a certain form of words endued with a secret unaccountable power of performing strange things by their Repetition, the chief whereof curing Diseases, procuring Love, and destroying Serpents. Thus Theocritus and Virgil from him, — *Frigidus in pratis cantando rumpitur Anguis*, and again, — *Ducite ab urbe Domum, mea carmina, ducite Daphnin*. — The Scripture also refers to the same Practices, when it mentions, — The Serpent and the voice of the Charmer; forbidding also on pain of Death any such thing, which abundantly may satisfy us that any such thing must be unlawful. The Reason is, what is not performed by Nature, nor the immediate Power of God, nor the strength of Fancy, we can't suppose to be done by any other way but by a Compact with Evil Spirits. Hard words in themselves can have no power, and therefore, as such, indifferent; but if such things produce any real effects, as 'tis hard to say they do not, when we have such Clouds of Instances, they both directly tend to take off Mens Minds from a dependance on the Supream Being, and also to make 'em neglect all rational means, and grow weak and superstitious, and are besides justly to be suspected for the former Reason. We deny not, that words joyned with Tunes may have great Vertue, by their motion on the Air, and so on the Spirits, as in the Case of the Tarantule, and perhaps formerly many others which are now lost, — but this is rational, and we can give some tolerable account of it by the Rules of Nature, which we can't say of the other. For the words here produced, Erthin, Dide, Sumina, Sulphin, they seem only some barbarous Terms which the Conjurers, or those who wou'd be thought so, make use of, without any sence in themselves, or dependance on each other, unless they may be made on purpose by the Querist to puzzle the Cause. There is indeed in some of 'em the Tract of Latin and

English words, others only transpos'd, Erthin, seems to be no more than in Earth, Dide may be Latin, Sumina is only Animas turn'd backwards, and the first part of Sulphin when transpos'd is plus; and if any can make more of 'em, they are very welcome, and whether there's any Vertue in 'em, Satan knows, from whom, if they have any such, they must receive it.

Quest. 3. A Gentleman of my Acquaintance having been formerly in Love, and disappointed, has again offer'd his Service to another Lady, who refuses to entertain his Amours, though upon Honourable Terms, till the ATHENIAN SOCIETY resolve this Question, — Whether 'tis possible for a Gentleman that has been in Love before, to love again with the same Ardour and Affection as at first.

Ans. If we take in both the Sexes, (those Countries excepted where the Wife customarily survives not her Husband) we shall find above one half of the World unanimously give their Suffrage in the Affirmative; perhaps we might have said a greater part, if we consider how oft some are married, and how many have been disappointed in their Affections, either by Parents, Compulsion, their own falling out, or upon second and more advised thoughts, and yet after all have proved happy Instances of an extraordinary Affection. Nor can we see any Reason to the contrary, since the Affection terminates not so much in the Person loved, as in the Qualifications; 'tis there only that a wise Man's interest or disinterest is secured: This is evident, since almost half our time is spent in darkness, where we can make no distinction of Persons, and yet the Love is the same. I am ready to confess, Sensual Love hates a Rival, and perhaps cannot be twice passionately fix'd; (and 'tis so much the better in many Circumstances; I'm sure 'tis in Christianity, when the breach of the first Command lies at stake:) But the Soul is unconfin'd and free, is ignorant of the Name of Rival, as also of the distinction of Sexes, fixes and removes as Unbias'd and sober Reason dictates: — Where that fixes and is secur'd, the lesser (I mean that of the Person) always submits, at least so far as is necessary for an easie and comfortable Life. An agreeable Conversation, and an Union of Soul, never cloyes or diminishes, but is equally vigorous in Youth and Age, and in all States and Conditions where the Fear of God and Reason are attendant. — Let the Gentleman evince by Matter of Fact the Conditions the Lady expects, and afterwards show her this Answer, and she'll be doubly oblig'd to be of our Opinion.

Quest. 4. What will make People wakeful that are given to Sleep?

Ans. Every one has heard the Story of the Philosopher, who to keep himself waking, used to sit with a Ball in his hand over a Brass Basin, that if he chanced to nod, the noise made by the fall thereof might again waken him. The Nightingal sings with a Thorn at her Breast for the same Reason, if you'll believe some Naturalists, tho' 'tis strange she shou'd sit singing so long till they came nigh enough to make the observation, especially when without any light to do it. The Spaniard burns Paper under his Nose, if you'll credit the Comedian. But those kind of Sleeping Sicknesses are not so common now as formerly in England: Almost all our Chronicles give a strange account of a sort of a Plague of this Nature, which happened here in the Reign of King Henry the VIII. In his seven and thirtieth Year, on Tuesday in Easter-week, William Foxley, Pot-maker for the Mint of the Tower of London, fell asleep, and could not be waked with pinching or burning, till the first day of the next Term, which was full fourteen days; and when he awaked, was found in all points as if he had slept but one night, and lived forty years after. Nor of this have we now, 'tis hoped, any great cause of Fear — The degrees of drowsiness with us are different: As for the highest, a Lethargy, or Coma, they are Diseases for which the Colledge is to be consulted. For a lower degree thereof, it either proceeds from gross feeding;

feeding, or a lazy Humour. To be rid of the first, the Querist must have a care of eating too much Beef: and to cure the latter, there's no need 'tis hoped of application to the Hemp-block, or Whipping-post, since honest business and constant employment are for the most part sufficient to accomplish it. If the Proponent be only troubled with sleeping at Church, let him first fairly examine where the fault lies, in the Preacher, or him. If in the first, we'd advise him to find some *Thunderer* or other, that lays on the *Peoples Ears* to some purpose, and place himself directly against the *Pulpit*, and if he sleeps there too, he's e'en in a *desperate condition*, and we've no more to say to him.

Quest. 5. Is a Monkey capable of learning to speak, or would they not speak were it not for fear of working, as some suppose?

Ans. Yes undoubtedly, just as much as a Man can bark, or fly in the Air. Every Creature has its peculiar Properties, by which its distinguish'd from all others, and one of the nearest of these properties is their voice, as *Hinnibile*, *Latrabile*, *Rugibile*, — neighing to a Horse, barking to a Dog, roaring to a Lion, — So chatt'ring to monkeys, and speaking to Men. Now these and other Properties must proceed from the Essence of the Creature, as well as be expressive of its Nature. The Essence or constitutive difference of Man is his Reason, and from Reason follows Speech, or the next power thereof; therefore 'tis impossible Speech shou'd naturally and properly be in a Subject which has no Reason. And how little therefore of such must have, who are so willing to part with so great a prerogative, nay, to entercommon with the Beasts, and either make themselves *Monkeys*, or *Monkeys men*, 'tis very easie to judge. But all Mankind are not so liberal; and 'tis acknowledg'd by whatever is sober, that Beasts can have no proper Reason, as we have formerly prov'd. Its true, *Ælian*, and if we mistake not, *Pliny* too, give us very formal Stories of Elephants that cou'd both write and speak, nay, speak *Greek* too, and relate the very words of their Orations: But the best is, 'tis only *Pliny* and *Ælian* who tell us so, and there's no great need of refuting their Authority. To speak, is articulately to express the Sence of the Mind; now there can be no such Expression, where there is no such mind, no cogitative power or principle in the Subject. Birds, its true, as they may seem by their flying and proximity to Heaven to exceed Man, so in another, namely, speaking, they may be thought to equal him: — But its notorious, they neither understand the sence of the words we teach 'em, nor yet express the sence of their minds; and whenever any thing comes from 'em which appears pat and apt, that 'tis owing meerly to chance, not Choice, or Reason. As for example, there's one of the greatest Families in England, where having constant Prayers celebrated, a Parrot that hangs in a room adjoining has by hearing it often repeated, learnt that *versicle*, — *Let us pray!* and sometimes happens unluckily to pronounce it when the Chaplain passes by him; but will any from hence, unless they have less sence than the Bird, conclude that it understands what it pronounces? And as for Beasts, they can yet less pretend to it than Birds, because the Birds have imitated both the Notes and Voices of Men, we never cou'd find the most docible of Beasts capable of that Accomplishment.

Quest. 6. If an Infant were kept from its Birth to twelve Years of Age without hearing any humane voice, what Language wou'd it then speak?

Ans. 'Twou'd be fair enough to put the Querist off till the Experiment cou'd be try'd; but least he should be weary with waiting so long, we'll e'en make an End on't presently, and answer one Supposition with another. We suppose then, and perhaps somewhat more, that such an Infant wou'd speak no Language at all, only express the Conceptions of his Mind by natural Signs, or some *inarticulate Noises*: For we see all Children speak that Language their Parents or Nurses learn 'em, and no other; whence it seems a fair consequence, that if they had not been taught that, they must have spoken none at all. Mr. *Heylin* tells us an odd Story of an Experiment of this Nature long since made, and that some Children educated in a Cave, at their being taken thence pronounced the Word *Beck*, which in the *Phrygian* Language signifies Bread, on which 'twas concluded that was the most ancient Language, till on a narrower Observation 'twas discover'd the sound they made was only in imitation of

the Wild-Goats which graz'd on the neighbouring Mountains.

Quest. 7. What's the meaning of the Word *Puncilio* in your Mercury, Nu. 18 V. 1 and in what Dictionary is't to be found, since the Querist can discover it in none that he ever yet consulted?

Ans. The Verse from whence the Word intended by it was taken, is almost as common as any in *Qui mihi* or *Propria que maribus*; 'tis quoted by Mr. Cowley, if we mistake not, in his Essay upon Greatness, and by almost a hundred others. The Word as 'tis Printed in the Mercury, is to be found in no Dictionary but an Errata, nor any where else but in the Brain of that Block-head of a Printer who inserted it by a mistake instead of *Pumilio*, which signifies, as all know, any little, short, dwarfish sort of a Creature — and may be render'd — Go-by-ground, or almost what the Reader pleases, who we hope will be so just and candid as not to impute such literal Faults to the Composers of the Papers.

Quest. 8. Having taken Notice that in your Answer to that Question about the Monstruous Calf with its Commode, you ascribe the formation to the Sensitive Imagination, — Query, Since Brutes are concern'd, may we ever expect such Instances in Fishes?

Ans. We cannot deny a possibility of what we have so many Instances already. — *Rondeletius* gives us an account in his time of a Monster that was taken in Norway in a Tempestuous Sea, exactly resembling a Monk, and gives us the Figure of it, to which is assign'd the same Cause of Monstrosity that we have already given for the Calf: See *Rondeletius de piscibus*. There are several other Naturalists that reckon up several Marine Monsters, such as they cannot conclude were contemporary with the Creation, but that were primarily produced by Ideas in the Act of Generation.

Quest. 9. Doth the Earth or the Sun move?

Ans. Those Philosophers that are for Terremotion, yet will have the Sun to move about its Center, and those that are for a fixation of the Earth will have the Sun move according to the common Acceptation: Thus much at present to the Importunate Querist, who may hear further from us in our New System of Philosophy.

Advertisements.

ALL young Gentlemen or Ladies that desire to Learn the most Exact and Shortest Short-hand ever before invented, may be faithfully Taught by the Author, WILLIAM MASON, at his Writing-School, the Hand and Pen in Bell yard, Grace-church-street, on reasonable Terms: And such as please may (at convenient Hours, when School is over) be attended at their own Habitations.

* * We Advise all our Querists to read the Contents and 12 Numbers lately Publisht all together by Mr. Baldwin, (and which they'll find almost in every coffee-house) that they may know what Questions we have already Answer'd. We mention this, for that we have receiv'd several Questions this Week that are Answer'd in those 12 Numbers before recited; particularly that about Self-murther which the Querist will find in Numb. 22. Q. 19. and in Numb. 25. Q. 6.

||| We have receiv'd near 20 Curious Questions concerning the Soul of Man, which we design to Answer all together in one Paper — But pray send in no more Questions till further Orders.

† We have receiv'd a very Nice Question concerning the Rain-bow, &c. which shall be Answered either in our Weekly Papers, or at the End of our Second Volume.