

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, June 23. 1691.

Quest. 1. **N**ear Corbridge, not far from Hexam in Northumberland, the late Rains having wash'd away the Earth in a place where a Torrent was made by the Winter-rains, there was discover'd the Skeleton of a prodigious Monster; the Skull capable of holding three Gallons, the Hollow of the Back-bone was so large that a Boy of eleven Tears old thrust his hand up it to the Elbow, the Thigh-bone is two Yards long lacking two Inches, his whole height computed to just 21 Foot, or 7 Yards; the Skeleton being found by Boys, they broke it in making parts, which my Lord Darwentwater, who hath a great part of it whole, would have given some hundreds of Pounds he had it entire; the Skull hath 24 Teeth in it, I my self have seen one of 'em in Newcastle; which is one Inch and six tenths of an Inch broad, and three Inches deep, and is now four Ounces, although dried: There is also another Tooth of the same to be seen at Widow Ingram's Coffee-house in Prescot-street in Goodmans-fields — Quere, Your Thoughts of this, and how long it has lain there?

Ans. Because we wou'd neither be impos'd upon our selves, nor impose upon others, we have been very Curious in our searching into this Relation, and find it a very real Truth, and are assur'd that the Skeleton must be humane — We have no History or Tradition that gives us an Account of what stature and bulk those Giants were which were mentioned in Sacred Writ to be before the Flood; and since the Flood we can find but very little difference in all Ages as to humane Stature. One great Instance we meet with in History, that there are Tombs amongst the Egyptian Pyramids of several thousand Years standing, which are but about two Yards in length; and 'tis well known that they never used Burning, but Embalm'd and Buried their Dead at the length: So that we may conclude all Ages have produced something monstrous, rather than that Mankind were larger formerly than now, and have by degrees degenerated into a little dwarfish Race; as also that in all Ages there have been some Dwarfs, or very little Men. — In 1584. there was found a Skeleton at Lucerne 19 Foot, which is 6 Yards and a Foot long — Maximinus the Emperor was 8 Foot and an half high — In 1575. the Tartarians made an Inroad upon the Polonians, at which time a prodigious Tartar was slain by a Polander, whose Brow (according to Leonardus Corvetius) was 24 Fingers broad, the rest of his Body of that Magnitude that when it lay upon the Ground was so thick, that it reach'd to the Navel of an ordinary Person — But the most prodigious Monster we ever met with in History, was that which was found in the Cretan War, (See Solin, cap. 5. p. 182. and Kornman, lib. de Mir.) the Rivers and Waters rose to an unusual height, which made great Breaches in the Earth, when the Floods were gone in a great Cleft or Fall of the Earth, there was found the Skeleton of a Man thirty and three Cubits long; which if reckon'd according to the common Cubit is 16 Yards and an half: Lucius Flaccus was then Legate, and Metellus himself allured with the Novelty of the Report went on purpose to the Place to take a View of it, and there they saw with their Eyes that which upon hearsay they had refuted as a Fable.

Quest. 2. Reading in the Present State of England, written by one of the Royal Society, he is of Opinion, that if a Young Gentleman of a very good Family becomes an Apprentice, he loses his Gentility: — Query, Whether you think so?

Ans. The World is abus'd by Custom and Opinion in this Case as much as in others. If we reckon our Gentility from long Pedegrees or Empire, then the common Father of us all, who was more a Lord of the whole World than ever Alexander was, got his Bread by the Sweat of his Brows, if we reckon it from Learning, or Greatness of Soul, we are not without the greatest Instances from mean Origines. Socrates was no Patrician, Cleanthes was but an Under Gardiner, and Plato dignified Philosophy by his Goodness, not his Birth. A long Series of Revolutions has made a topsie-turvy of things and Estimations too, tho' in some

Nations we find it otherwise. The Grand Turk and his Nobles in the Retirements from Publick Affairs, exercise themselves in Mechanicks, whilst other Nations in pursuit of Titles, spend their time for a Noisie Epitaph. The more busie and active we are, the liker we are to God, who is a pure act, and the less we have to do with the Devil, who fixes at least 3 quarters of his Temptations on Idleness.

Quest. 3. In Mr. Philip Ayre's Lyrick Poems, p. 99. I find a Sonnet thus Entitled, — A Sonnet translated out of Italian, written by Signior Fra. Gorgia, who was born as they were carrying his Mother to her Grave. Now I wou'd fain know whether this were so in the Person of the said Signior Fra. Gorgia, as above, or ever was known of any other, or is impossible to be?

Ans. The History of the Netherlands makes mention of a Woman shot in two by a Chain-shot, which took one half of her into the Water, where it was seen to stir for some time after; she was big with Child, and the Child made its way into the World out of that part of the Body which was taken up, and the General Commander had it carefully look'd after, and educated to Man's Estate. Some have been buried in Firs, having been dead to all appearance, and have afterwards been found (when the Vaults were opened) brought to Bed with a Child in their Arms, and dead. Many Instances of this Nature are in Authors.

Quest. 4. Whether there is any Crisis of time wherein Persons have extraordinary Accidents as to Fortune or Misfortune; and if so, what are we to think of it?

Ans. The Sacred Writ censures the Observers of Days, Times and Seasons, the noted Superstition which at that time was very common, and at this day is not quite defaced, many People without either Reason or Wit fancying things, which by the Devil's assistance often comes to pass, who if permitted improves such ungrounded Faith to his Interest. That upon certain revolutions of Time some things extraordinary have happened, and to such Persons as were not at all superstitious in that point, is very certain. We read (Heyl. Geog. p. 734.) that on a Wednesday Pope Sixtus the Fifth was born, on the same day made a Monk, created General of his Order, made Cardinal, chosen Pope, and finally on the same day inaugurated. Also 'tis observ'd, (in Stow's Annals, p. 812.) Thursday was observ'd to be a day fatal to King Henry the VIII. and to all his Posterity, for he himself died on Thursday the 28th. of January, K. Edward the 6th. on Thursday the 6th. of July, Queen Mary on Thursday the 17th. of November, and Queen Elizabeth on Thursday the 24th. of March: but these Observations are warrantable, being made after time was expir'd, and reputed rather as accidental than necessary, as by chance a Man may throw Ambrosia three or four times together, without being compell'd by fate or destiny, for if a Man throws he must throw something, and there's as much reason that he shou'd throw Ambrosia four times together, as any other four Numbers that shall be nam'd successively, he that acts without reason, and believes things for which he can give no account at all, deserves to be excluded from the Society of rational Creatures.

Quest. 5. Whether is Death such an Indisposition of the Organs, as hinders the Soul from performing its usual acts, or the Separation of the Soul from the Body as a consequence of such an Indisposition?

Ans. Things are known best by their opposites; Life 'tis granted is the Union of the Soul and Body, and consequently Death must be nothing but their separation, or the Dissolution of such an Union. Life results from the right and true Disposition of the Organs, but is not that very Disposition, — Death therefore must be something consequent to their Indisposition, and not that it self. Indeed this Indisposition can no more call'd Death, than a Sword run into the Heart, or a Disease in the Body; — these cause that Indisposition, and that Indisposition causes the separation; and there's nothing

plainer, than that the *Effect* and the *Cause* must be different from one another.

Quest. 6. *How to make 20 out of any five of these Figures, taking them which way you please?*

999
777
555
333
111

Ans. The Fallacy lies in a *Supposition* of taking 'em all as *Units*, and then 'tis impossible; but if one be reckon'd as *Ten*, it may be done several ways, viz.

3	11	13
3	5	3
3	3	3
11	1	1
—	—	—
20	20	20

and several more; but we desire to be excus'd for the future in such Trifles, our Design being not to unfold Riddles in Words, but in *Nature* or *Reason*, and such as the *thinking part of the World* may reap some benefit by: There are many things necessary for a wise Man's Accomplishment, therefore that for which we are neither better or worse, whether we know it or know it not, ought to be laid aside to make room for greater Matters.

Quest. 7. *You have given Reasons in a former Mercury why the strange things wrought by the Magicians of Pharaoh were not true Miracles, and affirm, that the Serpents produced by them were real Serpents, but you give us no satisfaction as to the Nature of a Miracle, how we shall know a true from a false, or what you call a Miracle from what you stile a lying Wonder; in this we desire to be resolv'd?*

Ans. We have Questions more than enough already, and therefore only answered what was proposed, having no need to seek out new Difficulties, tho' now this is sent us we shall endeavour to give it satisfaction. If the Question were put, How we shall know a true Miracle from a false, it might be according to the common Action, that *Miracles are eas'd*, be easily answer'd, since we are told in the Holy Scriptures those Gifts were to cease; and Reason further tells us, that the *Divine Power* will not interpose where there is no need on't; whence we may conclude, that whatever we now see in *Physical Agents*, evidently surpassing the regular Power of Nature, must be at least suspected, which we may with the more assurance pronounce, because we learn in the *Sacred Oracles*, that false Prophets should arise, and show great signs and wonders. But the Question seeming to relate to that time wherein true Miracles are suppos'd to be performed by the Power of God, as false ones by that of the Devil, we shall accordingly consider it in that sense, and examine how this difference shou'd be then discover'd, or what is the necessary and essential Criterion of a true Miracle. And this we think we may safely place in these two points, — The Confirmation of Truth, and Superiority of Power: Thus, — whatever strange thing was done by the Magicians of Pharaoh, cou'd not be true proper Miracles; that is, cou'd not answer that Idea which we have of a Miracle, since they were done in Confirmation of *Falshood* and *Idolatry*, and were all vastly exceeded by those of Moses, which were done in honour of the true God, and for the deliverance of his People. But we foresee an Objection immediately rais'd against this Hypothesis, — If Miracles are to confirm a Truth, how can Truth confirm Miracles: Is not this, say some, a Circle, like that of the Church and Scripture, and Scripture and Church, which we object against the Romanists? In answer, supposing this should fall, the latter mark, namely, *Superiority of Power* wou'd still hold; for Miracles being the immediate attestation of the *Divine Power*, on an appeal made thereunto, that Power which is the *Superiour* must be *Divine*, as we see the Signs which Moses wrought had an Air of Greatness, Divinity, and Majesty, infinitely above those of the Magicians, they were but pitiful mimicks of what he performed, and cou'd not in some cases do any thing like what he did, nor in others preserve their own Bodies from the Plagues, by him inflict'd on the rest of their Countrymen, nay Prince, King and all. This we say wou'd be sufficient without the other Branch, but that we must not lose, for the Objection brought against it: We say

then, that if we can find any place to fix the Argument, or any *Superiour Principle* whereon to ground it, there's no fear of this eternal Circle: But this we can do, and that in some general Truth, which may by an easie Reflection be attained to by any reasonable Creature. Now a Truth of this nature might be easily known to the Egyptians, we instance in that of one God, or *Supreme Being*, in opposition to the multiplicity of the *Heathen Deities*, this being a Truth known by Nature, might be fairly enough a Touchstone for such wonders as shou'd be perform'd by those who own'd this one God, and those who disown'd him when in Competition with each other. This general Truth we say might confirm those Miracles, and then those Miracles another particular Truth, namely, the Divinity of the Revelation made to Moses, and the Authority of his Message, which includes no manner of absurdity. The sum is, By a Miracle, we mean any strange thing wrought by the Power of God, either mediate or immediate, for the Confirmation of his Truth, or setting forth his Glory. And the way to discern such Miracles from the Illusions of wicked Demons, or Men, is by their Confirmation of Truth, or Superiority of Power.

Quest. 8. *Why Dogs, &c. are linkt together, rather than any other Creatures?*

Ans. The *Physical Cause* is from the peculiar Configuration of the Organs: We'll give an Example which will sufficiently illustrate it. When a Leg is in the Stocks, it can't be got out again without pulling off the Shoe, or taking the Stocks asunder — For those who would have more particular satisfaction, let 'em consult the Anatomists, or the Natural History of that Animal.

— But further, there may be a pretty moral Cause assign'd for the foremention'd Observation. Nature it self seems by that unpleasing sight which is so frequent in every Street, to design the giving us mean Thoughts of that Pleasure, at leastwise where 'tis promiscuous, and by shewing us the Ugliness and Deformity of some Acts, teach us to hate Impudence, (which he who is guilty of is colled Dogs-face in the Grecian Idiom) and on the contrary, be in love with Temperance, Chastity and Modesty.

Quest. 9. *Why a Dog always turns round before it lyes down?*

Ans. Considering the Cleanliness of that Creature in some Instances which the Querist may perhaps have observ'd, it might seem a plausible Answer shou'd we affirm it turns round to look out for a convenient place to lie down in, and see if there be nothing under which may disturb its Rest: Or, as some have Observ'd, to find the highest place to rest their Backs upon. If that won't be admitted as a sufficient Reason, we'll produce a second — that a Dog turns round before he lies down, on purpose to bring his Body into that Circular Posture wherein he sleeps, his Head and Tail lying together, and his Body thereby the less exposed to those many Enemies which he has about him: In which contracted Form many other Creatures throw themselves in the same Circumstances, as the Hedge-hog, the Snake, all sort of Hairy-worms, &c.

Quest. 10. *Whether the greatest Astrologer by Calculating a Nativity to the Minute can make any certain Judgment of a Man's future Fortune to command Credit; particularly in these common Questions, viz. Whether Life long or short? Violent or Natural? Marriage happy or unfortunate, or not at all or, How often, and whether a Profession will be succesful or not?*

Ans. We have receiv'd several more Questions to the same Effect, for the Answer of all which, as well as what may be hereafter Propos'd, we refer you to Vol. 1. Num. 6. Q. 3. and to Num. 14. Q. 5.

Advertisements.

Our Querists may expect in next Saturday's Mercury that exact and full Account of our whole ATHENIAN PROJECT, which was to have been added here, (according to our Promise) had there been room enough.

* * Those several Weighty Questions which our Querist tells us are Unanswerable, will be Printed next Saturday.