

# The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **W**Hat is the Cause of the Rain-bow? — If it proceeds from a natural Ground, then it was before the Flood: And why cannot Astrologers as well assign the precise time of its appearing, as of Eclipses?

Ans. 'Tis only a Reflection of the Sun from a watery Cloud, conveniently situated for our Horizon: For we don't at all question, but that there may be thousands of Rain-bows undiscernable to us, being only properly placed in such or such a Longitude, according to the Position of the Cloud. There is one thing perhaps newly remarkable, That *The Sun is always diametrically opposite to the Rain-bow*; and the Centre of the Sun, and of the Rain-bow are in an equal height above the Horizon: So that if the Sun be a great height, you see almost a whole Circular Rain-bow; if it be Setting, you see but a little Segment of the Rain-bow's Circumference.— Astrologers know the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon, because they have their Regular Motion; but there's no Regularity in Winds, nor (consequently) in the Position of Clouds, and therefore no certain Knowledge when they will happen.— Upon the Coasts of China, near Pipli, Dehli, &c. are seen Rain-bows from the Reflexion of the Moon.— We believe with the *Querist*, that they were before the Flood, but were not made use of as a Token of the Covenant, that the World should not again be destroyed with Water; as Baptism was made use of amongst the Jews, in proselyting the Gentiles to their Religion; though it was not made a Badge of the Covenant of Grace, until our Saviour's Time. Some have observed, that the two chief Colours in the Rain-bow, to wit, Blue and Red, fitly resemble the double Destruction of the World; to wit, the first by Water, the last by Fire. As to that which some call the Water-gall, or the Mock-Rain-bow, that is only the Reflexion of the Rays of the first Bow upon a neighbouring Cloud; whence the Colours of such secondary Bow are not so lively as those of the first, but are revers'd, the Yellow being the lowest, the Green always middlemost, and the Red uppermost; for so, by the reason of Catoptricks, we see, that the Species reflected have a different Situation from the Body which produces them, (things on the Right Hand appearing on the Left, and contrarily;) and so Images in the Concave of a bright Spoon, or the Shadows of Bodies which pass along the Streets, entering by a small Hole, into a dark Chamber, are revers'd.

Quest. 2. A Friend of mine came from Horsey-down in Southwark, to Fenchurch-street, in his Sleep, at Mid night: He swore to me, that he never awak'd till he came into Fenchurch-street, where a Dray-man ran against him, and

so awak'd him. He had also put on his Cloaths himself, not knowing that also. Pray, Can this be a Truth? And if so, The Reason of it.

Ans. Some Persons have been of Opinion, that this strange sort of Sleep-walking cannot be attributed to any thing but to some Spirit, good or bad; whether such as they call Aerial Hobgoblins, or others, which insinuating into the Body, as into a Ship whose Pilot is asleep, govern and guide it at pleasure, and, as a thing abandon'd to the first Occupant, carry it where they list, and then return it to its former place. To strengthen which Opinion, they bring the Instance of the Man mentioned by *Levinus Lemnius*, who walk'd with his Feet against the Rafter, and his Head downward, in his Sleep; the Cause of which cannot with likelihood be attributed to our Spirits, how light and Aerial soever they be. But this Opinion is a little too strain'd and foreign, since we may, without great searching, find a natural one nearer home, viz. The Imagination receives the Impression of Objects in a very great degree; so that they are constrain'd to move, and go towards the things represented, and wake not altho' they swim over Rivers, (of which, I know one Instance,) by reason of the great quantity of thick and glutinous Vapours that sieze the Brain, obstructing its Out-lets, as the Smoak of Tobacco is sometimes kept in our Bodies for a Day or two: And this may be help'd on by a great quantity of subtile Spirits quickness of Wit, a Habit and Custom of doing some Action: As the Postilion, who saddled, bridled, and rid his Horse asleep; and after some Careers, brought him back again to his Stable. Extraordinary Motions may as well be referr'd to Dreams, as any other Motions which are made in Sleep, considering that they come from the same Cause, are made by the same Organs, and differ not but in degree, the one being made by a bare Representation of the Species, and the other by a strong Impression.— So that to me it appears no more Wonder for a Man to rise out of his Bed, walk, get upon the Ridge of a House, climb a Tree, and do other like things without Waking, than it is to see another Dreamer to speak in his Sleep, laugh, cry, stir his Arms and Legs; both of them being led thereunto by the same Means.

Quest. 3. If a single Man be in debt, and has an Employment that will maintain him in an ordinary way, and have not the Gift of Continency, though free from Actual Commission; Whether is it not his Duty to Marry? And if it be, Why is it not his Duty to use Means, provided it be without palpable Lyes, to obtain a Wife that is able to relieve his Necessities, and not discover his Circumstances till after Marriage, rather than to take one with nothing, to expose both to a Life of Necessities and Dangers; considering also, that



by that means he is not likely to be capable of discharging a good Conscience, as he desires, in paying every Man his own.

*Answ.* Our Opinion is, that he ought not to hide any thing from her that she enquires after in that nature. The World looks upon it to be a Cheat, to expose any thing to sale, and conceal the Faults; and this Case is not very different. Nay, though she is not inquisitive at all, he ought to declare it, to avoid future Plagues and Uneasinesses; for if she be a good Woman, she cannot like him worse for such a Freedom, but look upon 't as an Argument of his Kindness. But he must chuse his time, and take the softest Minute for such a Task: Sincerity and Truth are pleasing to God and Man, and never fail of Esteem; when little Tricks and Circumventions are unmask'd in a little time, to the disgrace and infamy of their Authors. The wise Men of the World read you a contrary Lecture, but perhaps their Scholars may be found more unhappy in practice than you.

*Quest. 4.* A Minister that I know, as often as he reads the Collect for all Conditions of Men, &c. coming to these Words, Especially those for whom our Prayers are desired, he alters with this Addition, For whom our Prayers are or have been desired:— Query whether in so doing he is not a Jesuit, and prays for the Dead? Or whether he thinks the Litany defective?

*Answ.* 'Tis to be hoped 'tis neither, though the best that can be made on't is, an inconsiderate Zeal: 'Tis an Infringement upon the Obligations of his Ordination, not to follow the very Words, without any Alteration, tho' it could be supposed to be for the better; his Zeal is not bounded in the Words of the Common Prayer, which is certainly the most decent, full, uniform Method that can be laid down by Men. I knew one that receiv'd a severe Reprimand for acting beyond his Limits, and the Orders of the Canon, by such another Alteration, viz. in the Deprecation against Plague, Famine and Pestilence, he continually added Plague, Famine, Fire and Pestilence; which is much more rational than this Passage of the Proponent's; for that is really an Inconsiderateness, even to Jesuitism, and will be found a praying for the Dead, as also for Recovery, &c. to Persons that are well, and have more need to return Praises; besides the Scandal it may bring upon our Communion among the Dissenters.

*Quest. 5.* What is the reason of the Antipathy betwixt a Spider and a Toad? And whether those Relations are true about the Fighting of a Spider and a Toad, and the Toad having the worst on't, till relieved by biting of a Plantane-leaf?

*Answ.* I have met with two verbal Relations from Persons that had no Interest in telling Lyes, and by what I knew of them, were honest and credible; to wit, That they saw a Spider descend down a Wall, to a place where a Toad lay, and perceiv'd the Spider touch the Toad, and retire; whereupon the Toad immediately swell'd very big, and leap'd to a Plantane, biting a bit of it, and her Swelling abated again; whereupon she

return'd to the place where she was before, and was again assaulted by the Spider, with the same Effect and Remedy, till upon the third time the Relator pluck'd up the Plantane-leaf, which the Toad wanting, burst, and died immediately; the other made not the Removal, but the Spider went her way. But this could not be a common sort of Spider, from the Experiment that the ingenious Dr. Brown made, viz. He put a Toad into a Glass with several Spiders, which run over his Head, and all his Body; and he taking his Advantage as they run by his Mouth, did swallow seven of them in a little time, without any hurt at all. See pag. 201. of Brown's Vulgar Errours.

*Quest. 6.* I knew a young Man that often found Money, but it was observed that always some ill Accident followed it immediately; as the Breaking of a Leg, an Arm, or something else that was afflicting. Query your Opinion of it?

*Answ.* Perhaps the Money enabled him to take ill Courses, which were liable to such Dangers, as Drunkenness, &c. If not, we see no reason at all for a finding of Money to be the Cause of any such Misfortunes; but rather that those Misfortunes would have happen'd, whether the Money had been found or no.

*Quest. 7.* Why are Eunuchs never afflicted with the Gout?

*Answ.* There is not one Eunuch in a Million of Men, and if one Eunuch of a Thousand be Gouty, (as 'tis reasonably supposed such an Instance may be found amongst those Luxurious Ones in Turkey,) 'tis near proportionable, and perhaps as much as falls to their Share. So that the Paucity of their Number seems rather to answer the Question, than any Reason that can be brought to prove why it never happens.

*Quest. 8.* I hanged a Cat lately in my Garden, full of Kittens; and when she was dying, the Kittens cryed within her: I demand where they had Air to make the Sound?

*Answ.* Within the Cat's Bowels; for nothing has less Air in it for being dead, only the Lungs are idle, and keep it not in motion.

*Quest. 9.* I have been sure to one three Years, and now am sure to another: Pray tell me which of these I have most Right to?

*Answ.* —You mean, Who has most Right to me? And then your Answer had been, —He whose you were first, for afterwards you were out of your own disposing; and all subsequent Grants are like second Deeds of Gift, which signifie nothing at all.

*Quest. 10.* Whether it be a Sin to deceive the Deceiver?

*Answ.* Yes: For although Circumstances may make an Action more or less sinful, yet they change not the nature of Sin; for Deceit is Deceit, though used to a Deceiver. The Command is positive, Let no Man defraud or circumvent his Brother, &c. There is no Limitation or Exception made, Unless he be a Deceiver.