

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 1. **I**N what State shall the Sun, Moon and Stars be after the Last Day, when there shall be no Creature upon the Earth?

Ans. That there shall be no Creature upon Earth, or that the Earth shall be annihilated at the last Day, we are not so sure of from the holy Scriptures;—perhaps the contrary is more probable. For the Heavenly Bodies,—we read indeed,—that the Sun shall be turn'd into Sack-cloth, and the Moon into Blood,—and the Stars shall fall from Heaven;—but as we are sure some of these are only figurative Expressions, so 'tis to be remember'd this was to happen—"Before the great and terrible Day of the Lord, not after it; and that Day of the Lord, in all probability, only the Day of his Coming to judge Jerusalem; which was fore-shewn, as Historians record it, by darkning of the Element, and the most dreadful and horrid Prodigies. Some great Men have thought, that only this Sublunary World, as infected and depraved by Sin, shall be purified or changed by the Fire of the last general Conflagration; but that the Sun and Heavenly Bodies, being many, or most of 'em, in probability, vastly bigger than our little Globe, and no way, that can be conceived, touched or infected by the Sin of Man, shall still remain in the same Condition as they now are: Though, we confess, we can scarce subscribe to this Hypothesis,—because 'tis said expressly,—"That the whole Creation groans and travails for a Restoration; nor can we well see how that Expression of whole Creation can, with any tolerable Sense, be explained by a part, and the smallest part of the Creation only.—However, we think neither Opinion Matter of Faith, but Curiosity rather, and therein leave every Man to his own Judgment.

Quest. 2. What's the Reason why a Man going under Water with his Eyes shut, cannot open 'em? And why he can't shut 'em, when under Water with his Eyes open?

Ans. We might easily invent a probable Account of this Matter, and assign the weight of the Water for both, which, as in Buckets let down to the bottom of the Sea, (concerning which, see the Transactions of the Royal Society,) the Covers whereof are press'd down by the Ponderosity of the Water, presses here so hard upon the Eye-lid, whose Springs are but small and weak, that 'tis impossible for it to raise it self against it.—As for a Person's not being able to shut his Eyes under Water, we might say, 'twas the Water got in between the Lids, which hinder'd the Under-Lid from rising, and joyning the Upper; without which, 'tis impossible to shut the Eye.—And here wou'd be a very fair account of the Business:—But the Mischief is, that all this while there's not one Word of the Matter of Fact true; and so there's an End of a fine Hypothesis:—For,

let any one make the Experiment, as he may easily do, in a Basin of Water, (much more effectually than Sir Nicholas's learning to swim on the Table-Board,) and he'll find that he may either put his Eyes shut under Water, and open 'em there; or shut 'em afterwards, when he puts 'em under open; nay, open and shut 'em as often as he pleases.

Quest. 3. Why the River Save at Belgrade runs much slower at Mid-day and Midnight, than at other Times, the Cause being neither Reflux, nor Stop of Current by Wind or otherwise? And why the said River and the Danube run together, as by Experience they are found to do, and yet their Waters not mix, the Danube running uppermost, and the Save under, seeing 'tis not in the least unctious?

Ans. These wou'd seem two very great Wonders, if the Querist had not been so kind to quote his Author:—He tells us, he had 'em out of Sir H. B's Voyage into the Levant; which being well consider'd, we believe there's very few Readers will expect any farther Answer.—Only, as to the latter of the two, this may be observ'd out of Dr. Burnet's Letters, that the Story of the River passing through the Lake Lemain, in the same manner these two are said to run, without mixing, is a perfect Fable.—By which, if there were any need, we might give a good Guess at the Truth of the other, without going so far to disprove it.

Quest. 4. How Witches can contract their Bodies into so narrow a Compass, as to convey themselves through a Key-hole?

Ans. The Querist might as well have ask'd,—how they can be in two Places together,—since we have Authentick Evidence they have been really wounded at a distance, and given exact Accounts of things which have happen'd many Miles from 'em, at the same Moment. These things are performed by the illusive Arts of a præstigious Demon:—Wounds may be inflicted by him, on the same part of the Witch or Wizard, wherein those Airy Forms, which he has made up in their Shapes, may have been struck at, or seemingly wounded: And such Shapes as those, being nothing but Air, may easily enough pass any where, through Chimneys, Key-holes, or wherever the Devil pleases.

Quest. 5. Why, the Sea being in some places higher than the Earth, all Rivers naturally tend to the Sea?

Ans. The Sea is no more higher than the Earth, than the Earth is higher than the Sea: They indeed both make one Terraqueous Globe, and none will be so foolish to say, one part of a Globe is lower or higher than another,—that is, sensibly or considerably lower or higher, tho' Inequalities there may be, and are in the most exact and polish'd Globe that can be made by the

the *Art of Man*, as we plainly enough perceive by Microscopes, and that such *unevennesses* as are as considerable in such a *Globe*, as any *Cavity*, or *Mountain* on the *Surface of the Earth*. Now supposing the *Earth* but even and equal, the *Water of the Rivers*, as all *Water*, being a *Lubricous Slippery Body*, must be still protruded or thrust forward by that which follows it, and run infinitely, were there not a *Receptacle* made to retain it, — this the *Sea* it self does as far as it can, being shut in by those *Gates* and *Bars* which it cannot pass. But those little *inequalities*, we have granted in the *Earth* will abundantly satisfy this *Scruple*. *Water* generall *Rises* in *Mountainous places*, and in its *Current*, has a *Sensible Fall* before it *Disembogues* its self into the *Ocean*.

Quest. 6. Seeing there is daily such a prodigious quantity of *Water* from all the *Rivers* running into the *Sea*, how comes it not to be filled, and so overflow the *World*?

Ans. There is indeed an *Inconceivable* quantity of *Water*, every hour discharged into the *Sea*, from those vast *Rivers* which empty themselves into it. As the *Nile*, the *Volga*, the *Danube*, the *Rhine*, the *Severn*, and others in our *World*, not to mention those vastly larger in *America*, all which, if exactly Computed, would puzzle a good *Naturalist* to conceive, or give any *Tolerable Account* how the whole *Body of the Earth* should be sufficient for its perpetual *Secretion*, and draining it through its secret *Ducts* and *Channels*. Indeed, were all those *Waters* to run in, and have no *Vent* or *Circulation*, 'twere impossible, unless there were a proper *Abyss* to contain it; but that it must almost immediately overflow the *World*: As were all the *Blood* which passes thro' the *Veins*, to stay in the *Heart*, a *Man* could not live a *Minute*. But besides the huge *Cavities* or *Cisterns* that *Nature* has made to contain these *Waters* on the *Surface of our Globe*, the *Sea* being rather larger than the *Land*, and some *Seas* to us unfathomable; and those yet much more vast *Receptacles* in the *Bowels* of this *Globe*, whose *Diameter* being near seven thousand *Miles*, supposing we allow'd it 500 *Miles* thick, would have yet above 6000 *Miles* Capacity; I say, besides all this, there is undoubtedly a *Circulation of Water* through the *Globe*, the *Salt Water* by secret passages, being forc'd down through the *Veins of the Earth*, and by this *Percolation*, casting off its *Salt*, and flowing *Fresh* again in *Springs* and *Rivers* — all which *Reasons* are together, a *Satisfactory Account*, why the *Sea* does not overflow the *Earth*.

Quest. 7. How a *Silk-Worm* lives when it has left eating, and is enclosed in its *Webb*?

Ans. It lives on that *Stock* which was before laid in, and which suffices it's little imperfect *Life*, much more easily by its being enclosed in the *Web*, then if to live without eating, when exposed naked to the *Air*. — There are several things which make new *Aliment* continually necessary to *Living Creatures*, when in their *Natural State*, among which *Transpiration* by the *Pores* from within, and the

preying of the *Air* on the *Body* from without; by the first of these, as *Philosophers* tell us, a vast quantity of *matter* is every day thrown off, which must be supplied; by the latter we see even *Stones*, *Iron* and other the most *Solid Bodies* are worn away — neither of which accidents the *Silk-Worm* seems obnoxious unto, or at least is so in a much less degree, than such *Creatures* as are openly exposed to the *Air*, and therefore can live longer and better without *Nourishment*, than others can.

Quest. 8. What's the *Reason* that the greatest *Wits* are generally the greatest *Sots*?

Ans. Because there's no great *Wit*, as the *Proverb* has it, without a mixture of *madness*, that is, — those people who in this *Age* have resolved to be called *Wits*, are such as have vast *Fancies*, which perhaps even without their so much indulging and giving them the *Reins*, would be too strong for their *Reason*, but that being done, whereas they ought rather to take the *Council of Phabus* to his young *Hot-Brains*. —

Parce puer Stimulis, & fortius utere loris. they grow entirely *Masters*, run away with the poor *wits*, as these *Fiery-Mouth'd Fades* did with *Phaeton*, and throw 'em headlong into the greatest *Extravagances* — and when they have spent their *Spirits* in whatever wild *Actions* they can think on, when all the *briskness of Life* is run out in *Froth*, what remains, must of necessity grow *vapid* or *aiger*, while *Reflection* on their *Folly* stupifies and stuns them, and they can find no ease or quiet to their *Minds*, but by keeping them still as much as possible in the same *Humour*.

Quest. 9. Whether 'tis better for a *Man* to be born *Poor* and *Fortunate*, or to be born with a *Considerable Estate*?

Ans. We confess 'tis not very rational to talk of any such thing as *Fortunate* or *Unfortunate*, abstracted from *Industry* and *Reason*, and are sure that those things are very often in our own power; and we see, every day, *Men* style themselves *unfortunate*, when they are indeed either *imprudent*, or *criminal*, or both together: But after all, it must be acknowledged there is such a thing as a *Lucky Hit*, which some *Men* have more than others, and there seems some *Foundation in Reason* for that odd *Proverb* — Give a *Man Luck*, and throw him into the *Sea*. Now what this *Luck* or *Good Fortune* is, twill be very convenient to enquire, and even a certain modern *Philosopher*, who was none of the best *Divines*, tells us — 'tis nothing but the *Favour of God Almighty*. (*Si sic -- omnia dixisset: --*) And if so, he for such ends as he thinks fit oftentimes raising one, and depressing another unaccountably to the common order of causes and appearance of *Reason*, it's a case will quickly be decided. That 'tis much better to be Born in this Sence *Fortunate*, tho' never so poor, than to be born *Heir* to the greatest *Estate* in the *World*.

Quest. 10. If any thing *Temporal*, may be made sure?

Ans. Yes, what we give away for the *Relief* of the *Brave* and *Miserable*?