

The Athenian Mercury :

Saturday, August 1. 1691.

Quest. 1. **W**Hat are the true Bounds of Honour, as to Firsts and Seconds in Duelling? — and how far may a Person of Honour refuse a Challenge, and how far comply? — Your Thoughts upon the whole.

Ans. The World is confounded with Opinion, Customs and false Notions of Honour: — That man is certainly the most Honourable that is most Rational, and he is the most Rational that is the best Christian; such Persons as pretend not to that Title, I have nothing to say to 'em; but to every one that owns that Character, let 'em think themselves concern'd in the following Measures. The Christian Religion is the most perfect Scheme of Morality and Greatness, that ever was drawn; and teaches every man to be greater than Alexander himself, who knew not the Nobleness of Self Conquest, and the bravery of forgiving Enemies. If I am challeng'd, either I have, or I have not injur'd the Challenger. If I have injur'd him, 'tis a greater Injury, and a base Obstinacy, to proceed farther: If I have not injur'd him, I ought to take such measures as to make him sensible of his mistake; and amongst other things, to let him know I am a Subject; and that Their Majesties have espous'd the Right of my Quarrel: so that the Affront (however the World may take it) is levell'd at the Sovereign Power, who are invested with the measures of Distribution and Revenge; but when that is extorted out of the Magistrates hands into private mens, presuming to give Laws unto themselves, it hazards the Peace of the Kingdom, by a possibility of growing from Quarrels to Banding, so to Trooping, thence into Tumults and Com-motions, and so into National Divisions and Inflammations, especially where Young Men of great Families are first concern'd. We have almost lost the true Notion of Valour and Fortitude, without distinguishing the Occasions and Grounds of Quarrels; whether they be just, and worthy a Man's Life, which ought only to be sacrific'd to good Causes, and honourable Services. It was about Anno 1614. when Men began in England to fight in Duels, upon slight occasions; which induc'd His present Majesty, then King James the First, to publish a severe Edict against private Combatants, and their Seconds. There's but two Objections I meet with amongst the Duellists of our Age against the Defectiveness of the Law: The first is, that it makes no distinction between a base Murder, and killing upon fair terms; the second is, that it provides not a sufficient Punishment against such as give the Lie, or use contumelious Language. These have been both learnedly Answer'd by Sir Francis Bacon, then Attorney-General, to this Effect. As to the first, "The Law of God makes no such distinction, for Murder is Murder, and that our Law distinguishes between Manslaughter in heat, and Murder upon Malice, being the Effects of the Will inflam'd, or the Will advis'd. To the second, The Magistrate has the power of censuring Injuries, Re-proaches, &c. And upon very good Reasons our Civilians have concluded to prosecute in these Cases, (1.) Such as shall appoint the Field, though the Fight be not acted: (2.) Or shall send Challenges in Writing, or Message. (3.) Or shall deliver either of them: (4.) Or shall accept or return the Challenges: (5.) To be a Second: (6.) To depart beyond Seas to Combate: (7.) To revive a Quarrel by scandalous Bruits, Pasquils, &c. Greece and Rome had not this practice of Duels. It is said, *Fas est & ab hoste doceri*. There was a Duel between two Eminent Turks, the one was slain, the other ask'd by the Council of *Bashaws*, How durst you undertake to fight one with another, are there not Christians enough to kill? (a pertinent application may be made here) Did not you know, that whether of you were slain, the loss wou'd be the Grand Seignour's? Judicious Trials by the Sword anciently in Spain, the Goths, and the Northern Nations, and the French, before the late rigorous Laws were practis'd: But yet a Wise Man said very well, *Taliter pugnantes, videntur tentare, &c.* Those that fight so, seem to tempt God, because they are wil-

ling that God shou'd work a Miracle, to wit, that the Conquerour shou'd always be in the right, which has often fail'd. 'Tis a remarkable thing, that amongst Solon's Laws, there was not one against Affronts; and being ask'd the reason why he ordain'd no Punishments against 'em, he answer'd, He cou'd not believe the World so fantastical as to take 'em. No Challenge is to be accepted, or given, we may defend our selves, and kill the Aggressor too, when there's no other way to escape with our own Lives. Seconds come under the same Circumstances (very near) with Firsts; and he cannot be my Friend, that wou'd engage me in Duelling, contrary to my Reason, Law, and Religion. — 'Tis a base, little Spirit, that loves Revenge and Error; but he that begs Pardon for his Mistakes, is Generous; because it is a Debt, and what is due ought not to be withheld: — Read Seneca.

Quest. 2. The Querist dream't he saw a Comet, and was extremely frighted at it; about a Month after which the great Comet appeared, the last that was seen in England: He desires to know whether there were any thing extraordinary in that Dream?

Ans. There's no Reason to believe there was, his Dream appearing purely accidental, and form'd from the Idea of such Comets as he had before seen, or heard described. There's another Person, who comes in with his Dream too; That he saw a great Man lying dead upon his back in a River, with marvellous large Teeth in his Head. To which, all the Answer we think he deserves, is, That 'tis great pity the Roguy-Dreamer shou'd not be Whipt till he confess'd he dreamt all this waking. Another, of a Gentleman who dreamt he himself was Hang'd, and looking over the Sessions-Paper, found one of the same, both Christian and Surname, tho' both unusual, really Executed; seems to be of the same Nature with the first, which we have already judg'd only accidental.

Quest. 3. Whether a Person who has been guilty of grievous Sins, but has not been only truly sorrowful for 'em, but abstained from 'em, ask'd pardon of God Almighty, and hopes he has obtain'd it: Whether he ought not publicly to confess his Wickedness, and deliver himself up to the Magistrate, to be punish'd according to the Law? And whether his Repentance may be judg'd true and sincere, without he does so?

Ans. Some of those Crimes in which the Querist instances, are not punishable by the Laws of England. As for the rest, That, *Nemo tenetur accusare seipsum*, No man is oblig'd to accuse himself, has been ever thought an unquestionable Truth in the Law of Nature; where any considerable damage will certainly, or in the highest probability befall him for the same. Where the Crime is not Capital, as in some sorts of Theft, the Case is somewhat alter'd: The party injur'd may be sound'd by a third Person, as has sometimes been done; and if it may be without hazard, acknowledgment of the Injury, as well as Restitution, where tis possible to be made him.

Quest. 4. Whether such a Person may be judg'd a rightly prepar'd Communicant, unless he openly confess those Crimes, even to his Fellow-Christians?

Ans. This seems a Nicer Point than the former. However, we are mistaken, if the Resolution thereof does not chiefly depend on the Sincerity of the Repentance. Now we are sure, the same, and greater Sins than these, have by God's Grace been pardoned. Thus in the case of Manasseh, who was an open Conjuror and Murderer, and even in theirs who Crucified our Saviour, who yet obtain'd Mercy. Nor can we see any Reason, why those who have a right to the pardon of the Gospel, shou'd not have it as well to the Priviledges thereof, and to the Seal of that Pardon in the Blessed Sacrament; and this independent on any, but God who gives it. Nor seems there any Reason to strain that Precept, — Confess your faults one to another, to such a height, as thereby to expose a Penitent to those ill Consequences, which might thence very probably happen.

Quest. 5. Suppose a Person who hates me, endeavours to kill



kill me, with the hazard of his Life; another that loves me interposes to save me, to the Danger of his: In this case which is the stronger, the Hatred or Love?

Ans. They seem to be equal, since their Effects are so, and the hazard just as much in one as the other: Unless from a Theological Reason we should suppose the Hatred to be the stronger, because it makes the Enemy hazard his Soul as well as his Body in killing me; whereas the Friend only ventures his Body, nay, does a generous and good action to save my Life.

Quest. 6. Why some Fogs sink more than others?

Ans. We shou'd be apt to guess the reason of it might be from the difference of the ground whence they exhaled: But that observation is scarce solid, because sometimes this happens in Fogs, which are drawn from the same ground. What looks more likely is, That the thickness of the Fog generally encreases its unpleasant savour. Add to this, that at some times the Earth is fuller of poisonous and noisom steams than other, either by the various operation of the Suns Rays, or the inward Changes, Fermentations, Falls, which happen in the Bowels thereof, and we may have found some tolerable account of this matter.

Quest. 7. Were there any such Creatures as the Amazons, or are we to think all that Story no better than a Fable?

Ans. We are ready to grant many fabulous things may be reported of these Amazons, as there have also bin of the Wars of Troy, where they are said to have been present; but 'twou'd be as hard to conclude from hence that there was never any such People as the Amazons, as that there were never any such place as Troy, or (with us) never such a Person as King Arthur. But for positive Arguments for their real Being, since 'tis only a matter of Fact, we'll refer the Reader to such Authorities as we have on this Subject. Plutarch has an ingenious Discourse thereon, but the mischief is, he only sums up the Evidence, not very strong on either side, and leaves the Reader to be Judge, without himself passing any Sentence. The History of Alexander mentions Thalestris the Amazonian Queen, who desired to be acquainted with that vigorous Young Conquerour; but Alexander's own Letter to Antipater of all that befell him in those parts, have not one word on't, which may seem to be as strong as a negative Argument can be imagin'd, unless some shou'd say for him, That he was a Man of Honour, and had too much Gallantry to boast of such Favours: Solinus and Pomponius Mela are positive for 'em, (but for the credibility of their Assertions we won't pretend to vouch) the latter whereof finds two regions of 'em, one on the River Thermodon, (those we suppose which came to Troy) the other on the Caspian Sea. We won't bring either Pliny or Claudian, or Homer, or Herodotus, all whom we esteem much of equal Credit, to confirm their Existence: Only think it worth the while to take notice, that that Judicious and Learned Gentleman Sir Walter Rawleigh did really believe there was such a People, and seems a little displeas'd that he was not credited in his Relations concerning 'em, tho' this in the West Indies. Of more modern Authors Sir John Chardin mentions them near Colchis, Mengrelia, and those parts which seem to be the same describ'd thereabouts by the Roman Historians, particularly Am. Marcel. and the Life of Pompey, who came to help the Albanians.

Quest. 8. Whether Astronomers can truly know the bigness of the Sun, Moon and Stars, each of which they make so many times bigger than the Earth?

Ans. The most modest of 'em will not pretend to any exactness in these matters, which depend chiefly on Conjectures and probable Suppositions. That there can be no great certainty in things of this Nature, we may rationally infer from the vast and irreconcilable difference betwixt the Computations of the most Learned and Industrious in these Sciences. They all reckon both the distance and bigness of the Stars by comparison with the Earth, in whose Diameter they don't very much differ, but in comparing it with others infinitely disagree. The Moon, as being nearest to us of all the Heavenly Bodies, one wou'd think they might be best acquainted with and guess best at, yet here they come no nearer one another than four or five times the bigness of the Earth, which Ptolomy's Followers account thirty nine times bigger than the Moon, Tycho forty two, Copernicus forty

three, Landsbergius, who resign'd on Tycho, forty five and a half. Mercury is esteem'd by Ptolomy nineteen thousand times less than the Earth, by Tycho but nineteen, (a very great fall,) by Landsbergius only twice less. Tycho thinks the Sun but a hundred thirty nine times bigger than the Earth, Copernicus a hundred sixty two, the Ptolomæans a hundred sixty seven, Landsbergius is liberal enough, and makes it four hundred thirty four times bigger, and so of the rest. From whose so vastly different Computations we may well conclude the uncertainty and fallibility of any such Guesses.

Quest. 9. Whether Ninias the Son of Ninus and Semiramis, the fifth Emperour of the Assyrians, were the same with Amraphel King of Shinar, of whom we read Gen. 14.

Ans. The affirmative seems not improbable, from several reasons: First, The general stream of Writers have thought him the same, one person, having, as 'tis notorious, different Names both in Sacred and Profane Writers. — Agen, 'tis generally agreed Ninias the Son of Semiramis, King or Monarch of Babylon, the same with Shinar, reigned in Abraham's time, and that the overthrow of the four Kings by Abraham happened during his reign: For Ninias reigned, as Chronologers generally have agreed, 38 years, and Abraham came into Canaan, according to their Computation some 23 years after Semiramis dy'd, which was the 75th. year of his age, so that he and his Fellow Kings might have receiv'd this overthrow in the 85th year of Abraham, and the 33d. of his own reign. It's true here's a great Objection against this Hypothesis, and 'tis — That Chederlaomer another of the Kings, whose Countrey was Elam or Persia, commanded in chief in this Expedition, the Kings of Sodom, &c. being his Vassals, not the others. — And this not well agreeing with the account profane Histories give us of the greatness of the Babylonian Empire at that time. Tho' to this Sir Walter Rawleigh very judiciously replies, — That by the softness and luxury of Ninias, the vast Conquests of Ninus and Semiramis being lost, the Empire he possess'd might be agen restrain'd to Babylon, the Plain of Shinaar, or a much smaller Tract of Ground than it formerly possess'd, and from hence Chederlaomer might date the Grandeur of his Empire.

The Gentleman mentioned in our last Mercury has sent the Account he promis'd us of his six Nights Rambles, with the Confessions he has got from several lewd Women; (some of 'em of no mean Rank) about their first Engagements, their struggles with Conscience, and the methods of their stifling it by their Habits in Leanness; all which, according to the Gentlemen's request, shall be publish'd as a warning to Vicious Persons, and added in our Answer to the Question about Night Walkers, which will be publish'd next Tuesday. — True, we should then have answered the Questions sent us concerning Love and Marriage: But being much importun'd for a speedy Answer to this, we shall (for once) defer the answering of the Love Questions till next Saturday. — The Question about the Election of the new Pope, will be answer'd at the end of our Second Volume, if not before.

* * The strange Relation concerning the Cow-herper's Daughter, shall be Printed next Saturday, with our Remarks upon it.

||| Many of the Questions sent this Week, are already answer'd in the Supplement to our First Volume, and in our Weekly Mercuries already publish'd, and the rest shall be answer'd at the end of our Second Volume.

Advertisement.

Next Monday Morning will be publish'd, The Life and Death of the Renown'd Mr. John Eliot, the first Preacher of the Gospel to the Heathens in America: Written by Mr. Cotton Mather, Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry.

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