

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, August 8. 1691.

**Quest. 1.** A Cowkeepers Daughter became very remarkable to a Gentleman, by reason of the strange deformity of her Person, disagreeableness of her Temper, Dress, &c. so that he seem'd to have a peculiar Aversion and Antipathy against her; his Thoughts almost continually being fix'd upon her when absent, and his Eyes when present; till at last by degrees all those displeasing things seem'd to vanish, and he fell most desperately in Love with her; and would have made the most passionate addresses, but that he thought he should be deny'd, which he believes would certainly kill him: Query, What's the Cause of this?

**Ans.** The Story is so odd, that were we not certain of the probity of him who sent it, we should doubt the matter of Fact. But being assured thereof, must endeavour to search into the Reason of the thing: — Tho' at first glance any Lover would be apt to reflect on the folly of such an undertaking; and ask us what we meant to do, to search for a Reason for what's so perfectly unaccountable and unreasonable. The old Poets would say, 'twas that Arch Wagg Cupid was the cause of this strange accident; who seeing how highly the Gentleman scorn'd the poor Wench for her ugliness, which she could not help, took a sallery to give him a touch of his Art; and out of a piece of Justice or Revenge, make him fall in Love with her. The most probable account we can give on't is, that through a strange inconstancy in Nature, and defectibility in Judgment, her Deformities made less and less Impressions upon him; till at last it's probable he discover'd in her some real or fancy'd Beauties or Excellencies, which drowned the memory of the other, and reduced the unhappy Gentleman into so strange a Condition.

**Quest. 2.** How shall a Woman that is plagued with an ill Husband, reclaim or make him better?

**Ans.** Show him this Mercury, and tell him, if he don't amend, his Name shall be printed in't at length, the first Tuesday of the next Month. But to be graver, the best direction that can be given in so general a Case, is to be as patient as possible; unless the Husband's such a Brute, that this manner of behaviour will but make him more insulting.

**Quest. 3.** Whether Fornication may be favourably esteemed a venial Sin?

**Ans.** None but Papists ever thought it so, or such who would fain think all Sins venial, which they themselves are guilty of. 'Tis true, in a sence all Sins are venial, or pardonable, that is, upon Repentance; but all damnable without it, or deserving infinite punishment; because they have a sort of infiniteness in 'em, as being committed against an Infinite Being: Nor does this make all Sins equal as to their degree, or internal turpitude, or malice, tho' it does as to the Object; according to which there will be infinite punishments, as for Duration, for all Sins not repented of and pardoned, tho' differing in degrees or intenseness, proportionable to the Crimes committed.

**Quest. 4.** If Polygamy were allow'd, whether we should not have a more temperate Age than now we have?

**Ans.** Much otherwise, from the very thing it self; for certainly (*ceteris paribus*) he's a more temperate man that can dine upon one dish, than he that gorges himself upon twenty or thirty: But more from the Effect 'twould produce — All Intemperance, the more 'tis indulg'd, the higher it grows. The Drunkard is ever dry, and will be so, tho' he could draw up an Ocean, and the more wealth a Covetous man has, the more still he scrapes for. And this we learn from Experience, as well as Reason — Where are fouler Lusts, than in those Countries where Polygamy is allow'd, particularly, in the Turkish Seraglio's, and all the Eastern Nations. And thus we see even in Sacred History, that those whom perhaps the Laws or Customs of their Countrey indulg'd the liberty of two Wives, would not stop there, but some of 'em would have two hundred and more, as many as they could get.

**Quest. 5.** Whether a Man pretending to love two Mistresses, does really Love either?

**Ans.** Yes, both, — as he does all the Sex beside.

**Quest. 6.** A Young Gentleman, who was lately in Love with a Lady, is now almost in the same Condition with the Monk you told us of; and whenever he sees her, he falls into such a trembling and fear, as tho' he had seen his Enemy: Pray the Reason of it?

**Ans.** He is likely to know that best himself, perhaps it may be the same that made the Monk have such an aversion for his Mistress.

**Quest. 7.** If a single Man who is much in Debt, and can't conveniently live unmarried, has a fair offer with a Woman of a good Fortune, by which he might pay all his Debts, and live comfortably in the World — Whether he is oblig'd to make her acquainted with his Circumstances when he Courts her, and so run the hazard of not obtaining her?

**Ans.** By no means, every Man being to make the best of himself and his Fortunes, that he honestly can; but he first ought in this Case to take a particular care that he ben't cheated, and so in a worse Condition than before, — Nor ought he actually to affirm himself worth more than he really is, nor to marry any Person without a sufficient Fortune to discharge his Obligations, and answer the other Ends of Life; lest he make both her, himself, and perhaps many others miserable.

**Quest. 8.** A Lady of good Birth and Fortune has granted some private Favours to me, but at the same time so discreetly, as to preserve her Reputation. A Friend of mine Courts her honourably, and desires of me to tell him unfeignedly my Opinion of her Virtue: Query, How I shall behave my self in this case, so as not to transgress the Rules of Honour nor Friendship.

**Ans.** If by that Expression, some private Favours, be meant what every one will suspect that reads the Question, all the Answer we'll give is, Marry her quickly your self; for till that's done, what're fine Names you put upon the matter, You're a ——— and she's a ———

**Quest. 9.** How that Person is to behave himself, who has a Ladies consent; but at present for some private Reasons, or for want of a Fortune is not permitted to marry her?

**Ans.** If he neither has a Fortune, nor a Prospect of any, we think hee'd do generously to release her, had she any advantageous offers; and this some Years after he may perhaps wish he had done, when his kindness cools, or he has fasted so long, till he has quite lost his Stomach. But if no such thing happens, there's but one way for him to take; and that is, to be as patient as he can, since after all, he must be so whether he will or no: In the mean time, not to press her he pretends to Love such a Marriage, as, whatever he flatters himself, will in their circumstances certainly render 'em both very miserable.

**Quest. 10.** Whether are more inconstant in Love, the Men or the Women?

**Ans.** For the most part we believe 'tis a pretty even lay, tho' Interest makes both the one and the other complain loudest of the contrary Sex. But should the Women be most unconstant, the contrary to which we are more inclin'd to believe, they seem at least more excusable than we, because our Sex are generally the Aggressors; and besides, we pretend to more firmness and constancy, than we'll allow in them. Add to this one Observation more, That we have known very few Kings or Princes who have been constant to one Woman: And have Instances of some, who could not be contented with less than several hundreds; whereas we have but comparatively few of the Female Sex in that high Station, who have been false to their Lords; and never heard of any of 'em who kept a Seraglio of Men, or could not be satisfied with less than a hundred Husbands.

**Quest. 11.** Whether in a Dishonourable Amour is most to blame, the Man in tempting, or the Woman in yielding?

**Ans.** We think the Man; not only for a Reason mention'd in the preceding Question, but because he's the very

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very Cause of the Evil. The Woman had been Virtuous, had he not tempted her, tho' had she resisted, ten to one but the Man wou'd have found some other of a more pliable temper.

Quest. 12. *Whether it be really, in se, a Happiness to have a handsom Wife?*

Ans. Few Men but wou'd count it so. If the Goods of Nature, as Wit, Beauty, Wisdom, &c. are really desirable in my self, or Children, they are so in what is as near as one, and nearer to me than the others. An Happiness then we think it is to have a Fine Woman; but as the lewd World goes, we must own a very dangerous Happiness; and if a noted Beauty, the danger is still greater, lest, as Osborn roguishly expresses it, every gawdy Fleeshly thou'd be crowding nearer to her than is fitting. But if there's Virtue too, as well as Beauty, and a Fair Soul to inhabit a lovely Body, there's no fear, but one will be sufficient guard to the other.

Quest. 13. *A Young Man being gone to Sea, and staying there from his Wife eighteen Months, she in the mean time Marries another: Query. At the return of the first Husband whose Wife shall she be?*

Ans. If the first were really and effectually Married to her, she must be his still, if he has a mind to take her again, and thinks her ne're the worse for wearing.

Quest. 14. *Whether a Young Lady ought in Reason or Prudence, to keep by her after she's Married, any Letters or Pictures from any of her former Lovers?*

Ans. It may seem in it self an indifferent thing, unless in some few circumstances, which totally alter the case. One, if the Husband be inclin'd to Jealousie; the other, if the Lady when married lov'd any other Person more than her Husband, whose Letters or Picture might on that account be as dangerous for her to keep about her, as on the other imprudent. There may yet be one case more, wherein it mayn't be convenient for her to keep any thing of a former Lovers, but either to restore or burn it: and that is, when there is a probability such Persons may think or speak unhandsonly of her, if she keep such things; and being enrag'd at her loss, they may easily enough take occasion to do it.

Quest. 15. *There's a Young Lady who is courted by several Gentlemen, but her Affections are chiefly on a Person who makes no outward pretension, lest thereby it may frustrate both their Designs. Whether she ought to entertain the said Pretenders, since she does it only to amuse some about her, without any intentions of having 'em? Or what other honourable Course may she take therein?*

Ans. The entertaining such Pretenders were, we own, a sure, tho' scarce a handsom way of keeping the real Amour private. But the entertaining any Gentleman, engaging his Affections, and giving him hopes without any Intention to make him happy, we look upon to be both so unjust, cruel, and ungenerous an action, that no custom can excuse it, no necessity defend it, no good end sanctifie so base a means. As for that Question, *What other honourable Course she may take therein?* If those about her whom she mentions, are her Parents, she ought to do nothing against their Consents. If only Friends, but such as she'd yet keep her Amours private from, either for quiet sake, or other Reasons; she can't want ways to do it more honourable, than that she has here propos'd. It being in her power to entertain the favour'd Lover as privately as she thinks fit, and at the same time find Excuses enough to put off the rest.

Quest. 16. *What must a Gentleman do that hath lost his Mistress, in order to forget her, and to prevent the danger of Love-Melancholy?*

Ans. Love and Melancholy, if they don't proceed from Idleness, yet are often fed and nourished by it; and the contrary must therefore be in all probability a Cure for both. Accordingly, we'd advise the Gentleman to go to the Wars, since a desperate Disease must have a desperate Cure; where, in the Fatigues of Sieges, Campaigns, Marches, and Countermarches, he's as likely to lose both his Melancholy and Love, as any where in the World.

Quest. 17. *If in a Dream a deceas'd Parent appears to me, and tells me, I'm to marry such a Person; am I thereupon Oblig'd to do it?*

Ans. The Question shou'd rather be (in things of this Nature,) *If I Dream a Deceas'd Parent appears, &c.*

than if a Deceas'd Parent appears in a Dream. In answer, as we have said formerly, we dare not deny, but their Advices not being to be commonly expected, we are to take our Measures according to the best Direction our own and our Friends Reason can give us. We confess, any such seeming Warnings wou'd make one somewhat cautious, either in our doing what they forbid, or neglecting what they enjoin'd; but, as has been said, ought not to hurry us on any unadvised Action, or hinder us from what we know to be our indispensable Duty. To the Question, if the Person the Lady dreamt of deserv'd her Love, and she not pre-ingag'd, that Dream might be an Argument for her entertaining him rather than another; otherwise, we think she ought not to give it the least regard.

Quest. 18. *In your Mercury, Vol. 2. Numb. 12. Quest. 7. A Mother and a Mistress being at the same time in great and equal danger, which is a man oblig'd to save, supposing one must perish? your Answer is, A Mistress: I desire to know your Reason for it, (setting by the Bonds of Inclination,) since we are in Duty rather bound to preserve our Parents.*

Ans. In that Answer, we question'd, whether any such thing might really fall out; and therefore the Resolution seems not of so very great moment. It's true, on the supposition, we seem'd to carry it rather for the Mistress than the Mother; but this, not only in point of Inclination but Duty, supposing a Contract had interven'd. Otherwise we were of Opinion, and still are, That the Mother ought first to be taken care of; tho' we still believe the Mistress wou'd be most regarded, Inclination being so much stronger than Duty, in cases of that nature.

Quest. 19. *Whether Fondness, or a more disdainful Coyness be more desirable in a Mistress?*

Ans. They are both extreams, and consequently one can't be much more disagreeable than the other: But as in all extreams one is often a little nearer the middle than the other; as Prodigality nearer Liberality than Covetousness, &c. so here we are apt to think Coyness is more prudent in the Women, so more desirable to the Men; if they wou'd have their fancy'd Happiness lasting; since fondness quickly makes 'em nauseate and surfeit on what they before so passionately admired.

Quest. 20. *When we are in Love, and the Men won't can't understand our Signs and Motions; what in Modesty can we do more to open their Eyes?*

Ans. Alas, poor Lady! your case is very hard; — why, pull 'em by the Nose, write to 'em; or if neither of these will do, (as you have been formerly advis'd) show 'em this Question and Answer in the Athenian Mercury.

Quest. 21. *What's the best Cure of Jealousy, &c.*

Ans. 'Tis such a perverse Passion, we question whether any will do't. Kindness does but increase it, and makes the Person ten times yellower than before, and if that fails, 'tis n't very likely unkindness shou'd be more effectual. To be in earnest, we see no Remedy but Patience, Prudence giving no occasion, either in appearance or reality, and then slighting, or taking no notice on't; which, if any thing, will make it dye of it self.

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