

The Athenian Mercury :

Tuesday, August 25. 1691.

Quest. 1. **H**OW many Arts and Sciences may a Man by diligent Study be capable of attaining?

Ans. All Arts and Sciences, Nay, more than all, and yet none at all. The meaning of this seeming Riddle is only thus much — That the Nature of the Soul appears to be capable of infinite Improvements, or still new advances in Knowledge, which sort of infinite Capacity, as we have formerly remarkt, is one part of that Image of God after which Man is made. Accordingly he's not only capable of understanding all the Arts and Sciences already invented, but of more than all; nay, a thousand times more, cou'd any such be. He's capable, we say, or has a power of understanding 'em all, had he time or opportunity for doing so, but he does not actually understand to perfection any one Art or Science; nay, not so much as one individual in Physicks as to all its Properties and Essence. The Power Nature has given to quicken our Industry, the Impotence to increase our Modesty, tho' in the mean time so much Knowledge may be actually attain'd as will serve for the Uses of Life, and even to make us happy beyond it; and the more knowledge we attain to, the greater and larger still our Capacity is for more, as well from a Habit of Thinking thereby acquir'd, as from that Cognation or Relation there is between one thing and another, whence one Art still makes us better disposed for the understanding another.

Quest. 2. Why the French generally love the English, and the English hate the French; the English love the Dutch; and the Dutch hate the English?

Ans. At the first reading the Question, we fancy'd the Querist thought himself at Cross-purposes, or just mistook the matter, and told his Tale the clean contrary way; but upon further consideration we find there may be some ground for great part of the Supposition, as to many Persons at least of those Nations aforementioned, accordingly we shall examine the Question separately. 1. Why the French Love the English? We'll first give an Account why they did Love 'em — and 'twas for the same Reason that the Fox loves the Geese, or the Wolf loves the Lambs, because they were good Prey, they got Money by 'em: We took off all their old Fashions and old Lumber, and sent 'em fine new Guinea's in the room of them. But there's yet a better Reason why they do love some of the English? than why they did formerly: They find all the World against 'em, and none but some of the English and the Turks that are for 'em; all the World curses 'em, and prays for their Destruction or Downfall; but we have those who would be call'd English, that if ever they pray at all, do it for their Prosperity and Success, and that they may still go on to plague the Universe. Nay more, the Swiss-Guards only sell their Carcasses and Lives for the Grand Lewis; but some of the English, those who have sworn to their present Majesties, and yet are in the Interests of France, are both perjurd Wretches and false Traytors, to advance the Glory of the Invincible Monarch, (for he that still runs away, must of Necessity 'till he is overtaken be always Invincible) and certainly the French must be very ungrateful not to love those who sell their Consciences, Honours, very Souls and all to Oblige 'em. This to show why the French Love the English: But 'tis a harder Task to say why the English Hate the French — only there are some of them are a parcel of rusty rugged Fellows that don't much fancy the Death of a Hegg, first to be Tickled, and then to have their Throats cut: They don't care to be Slaves themselves, nor to see any of their Neighbours so, unless they have a mind to continue in their Bondage. They don't much admire either the Faith or Humanity of the French towards the poor Protestants in their own Country, or the Vandois in their Neighbourhood, or their late won-

derful Loving-kindness towards the English Seamen in the East-Indies, all of whom they lovingly knockt on the Head when they had fought 'em bravely, and cry'd for Quarter. So much for the French and English. For the Dutch and We, 'tis hop'd we shall be sooner agreed: We Lov'd them, because they so handsomly repaid our Old Elizabeth kindneses, in lending us such a Fleet and Army, and sending us such a Prince to Knock off our Chains, and save us from Slavery and Damnation, and that's so unanswerable an Argument that the Dutch hate us, that we need say no more on't.

Quest. 3. Whether Set-Forms of Prayer be lawful?

Ans. Yes, unless it's unlawful to use the Lord's Prayer, which those who affirm must take heed of Blasphemy.

Quest. 4. Who was the first Founder of Atheism?

Ans. Who, but the Devil, the beginner of all Mischief, especially that which will so much promote his Kingdom of Darknes? Some may perhaps object, That we slander him, since it's said, He believes and trembles, therefore he can't be the Founder of Atheism, and the Atheist must by necessary consequence be even worse than his Father. But neither are many of those who dignifie themselves with that Title really such, tho' they wou'd fain be so; nor does it follow, that one who believes not Atheism himself, for that Reason might not be the Founder of it; for he has been a Lyar from the beginning, and so it serves but to promote his Interest, wou'd freely enough endeavour to perswade others what he does not himself believe, as he did in the case of our First Parents.

Quest. 5. How is it to be understood, that the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; according to that of Gen. cap. 1. v. 2.

Ans. The Original is Metaphorical and signifies the act of the Hen upon her Eggs, viz. a hovering or hatching, as much as to say, as the Providence of God Almighty does now immediately superintend over all things that are created: So the Spirit of God did at first immediately hover, hatch, produce and give a Being to all things out of the heap of first matter, represented to us under the Idea of a dark Terraqueous Confusion.

Quest. 6. When the English, Dutch, and French Fleets fought last Year, many of my Acquaintance who saw the Battel, cou'd discern the Flashing of Fire, but heard no Guns, the Spectators stood upon a high Hill by the Sea, and others who were thirty or forty miles behind 'em within Land did hear the Guns very perfectly: Query, Why those within sight at ten Leagues distance cou'd not hear, but those who were so much farther off cou'd.

Ans. There was another Question sent by the same hand, which the Querist may find formerly answer'd: — But to give an answer to this, a sound cannot proceed farther than the first Body it meets with, all other are mock Sounds or Echoes by a reverberation, or repercussion of the Air; therefore the Sound meeting with that Hill whereon your Acquaintance stood, was made the first repercussion which wou'd answer in the next Valley to it, within Land, and as many Valleys as it met with, so many Echoes it made: So that when the Sound came to those persons so far within Land, it might very well be heard half a quarter of an hour before it reach'd 'em. It was impossible to hear it upon the first Hill, for want of a proper Echo betwixt that and the Sea. If your Acquaintance had turn'd their backs, and hearkned from the Echoes within Land, they might have heard a faint repetition of it that way. We shall in a little time answer the Question about an Echo, which will plainly solve all Objections that seem to obviate this Subject.

Quest. 7. At what time, and after what manner, do our Souls enter into our Bodies.

Ans. For Questions and their Answers about the Soul, see Vol. 1, Numb. 1. Quest. 2. and in several other Papers

Papers, but particularly Vol. 2. Numb. 7. the whole Paper, and Numb. 1. Quest. 22. about *Traduction*: Pray consult the Indexes of the Volumes, to see if your Questions be not answer'd already to your satisfaction.

Quest. 8. *What's the reason why a Man going under water with his Eyes shut, can open them, and why he cannot shut 'em when he goes with 'em open under the water?*

Ans. I have experienced it a vulgar Error.

Quest. 9. *How a piece of Iron laid upon a Cask prevents Thunder, or the Noise-Drum from marring the Liquor contain'd?*

Ans. The Virtuosi of France had a Question much of this Nature discuss'd in one of their Conferences; but 'twas confin'd only to Thunder, and a Cask of Wine. We shall give you a short Specimen of their Thoughts upon it, to which we shall add our own. The first of 'em had recourse to the heavenly Influences, and said that Mars (by which Planet Iron is design'd) had it's House in Aries, and the Sun entering that House, causes the moisture of the Vine to ascend, and so concludes that there is a Correspondence betwixt Wine and Iron, and that one preserves the other by a Natural Sympathy. The second affirm'd, the Effect was wrought by an attractive and retentive Vertue: to prove which he offer'd, that there's but one humid matter which that Central Fire forces from the deepest part of the Earth, out of which matter not only Metals and Minerals are produc'd, but Thunder and Meteors. Now (says he) the Air being impregnate with noisome Terrestrial Vapours, which are of the same Nature as Iron, when they meet with a piece of it laid upon a Vessel, they make a stop, and the Iron by a Sympathetick attractive Vertue receives 'em, and by it's retentive retains 'em. Some of the rest were of this Opinion, and others attributed it to some hidden Occult Quality, they know not what.

Our Opinion is, that they are all in an Error about the Cause, for 'tis not the Noisome Nature of Thunder, but the Noise that sours Wine. This appears by an Alteration of the Cause acting, the Medium whereby it acts, and the Subject upon what it acts; as for the Cause, Shooting, Drums, or any other great noise, has the same Effect: So Steel, Brass, Silver, Lead, Coal, or any other heavy matter laid upon the Cask, prevents the Effect; also not only Wine, but Mead, Syder, Beer and Ale, and other Liquors, will be spoil'd by a great Noise; from which it appears, That 'tis no Celestial Influence, no Sympathy, nor other occult Cause, that produces the above-mentioned Effect. But the Question is not yet resolv'd, but recurs, viz. How can Noise have such effect upon Liquors? We answer, 'tis not Noise, (speaking strictly,) but the effect of Noise, to wit, a violent Concussion and Agitation of the Air; for the Air by Agitation is rarified, and made so fine and Spirituous, that it easily penetrates all Bodies by a new sort of Operation, which I cannot resemble to any thing to make so intelligible, as by this easie Trial; take a Glass of Water, wet your Fingers end, and run it round the edge of the Glass, and it will make a sort of roaring Noise, which sets all the Water in the Glass into a buisie sort of fermentation, beginning in shaking trembling Circles from every side of the Glass; but if you tye a Thred about the Glass, or hold your hand, or your fingers end upon't, it quite alters the Nature of it's Operation. Thus a strong Horse-hair ty'd cross the palm of your hand, breaks a Ferula, and takes away the force: and thus a Rope ty'd round a Cask has the same effects as another Body put upon't. The reason is, One power or act meeting with two Bodies at one time, divides it self, and acts imperfectly upon both. To give a further demonstration of this, which may also be serviceable to the Publick: a wet Sheet ty'd round a Cask, hinders the Liquor from freezing, which if it had been commonly known in the great Frost about seven years since, had preserv'd some thousand pounds worth of Liquors in this City of London that were spoil'd, and good for nothing. Improvements upon this Subject wou'd be very useful against the spoiling of Liquors, Fruits, Roots, &c. in all sorts of Weather; but the Practice of these things is not so much our business, as the Theory and Reason how such and such Causes produce such and such Effects.

Quest. 10. *What became of the Ark when the Flood was over?*

Ans. It rested upon the Mountains of Ararat — This we are sure of, and no more; since for the Stories of some Fragments thereof remaining a thousand years, or more after, we esteem it perfectly fabulous. — In all probability it there lay still where it rested, for a Monument of what happen'd in it, for some succeeding Generations; being besides of that Bulk, it could not easily be remov'd, unless taken asunder, where 'tis likely it remain'd, till Time, which consumes all things, had moulder'd it to Dust. And that many a fair Year and Century before those who pretend any part of it remaining in their Time, were in being.

Quest. 11. *What's the Reason of applying the empty Shells of some Shell-fishes to your Ear, you may therein perceive a noise like the roaring of the Sea?*

Ans. Those Shells have a Gyral Conformation, not altogether unlike that of the Ear it self: Now the Air being imprisoned in the turnings and windings within, has that particular rushing sound, either in forcing it self out, or passing from one part thereof to another, being forc'd in by the motion of the exterior Air, and wandering about in those Meatus's, or odd Labyrinths wherein 'tis receiv'd.

Quest. 12. *By what means a Rudder guides a Ship?*

Ans. By making a small sort of a Stream or Current, which takes the Ship or Boat either on one side or t'other, and turns it accordingly which way soever the Steers-man please.

We desire all our Querists to read the Preface to our Second Volume, before they send to us again, that so by their constantly observing the Rules there laid down, they ne're be disappointed in their expectations from us.

Advertisements.

THIS is to give notice, that we having now receiv'd the last *Universal Historical Bibliotheca*, &c. publish'd in Holland, and all those forreign Papers printed elsewhere, that are to compose the Supplement to the Second Volume of our *Athenian Mercury*, that the said Supplement is now in the Press, and will (together with the Supplements to be hereafter publish'd) not only contain the design and scope of the most remarkable Books printed in England, but also a Translation of what is most rare and valuable in the *Universal Historical Bibliotheca*, the *Paris Journal les Scavans*, the *Acta Eruditorum Lipsia*, the *Giornali de Letterati*, the *Physical Journal*, the *Histoire des ouvrages des Scavans*, &c. as also a Translation of other ingenious Pieces transmitted to us from forreign Parts, (all which are enter'd in the Hall-Book;) so that having promis'd all this to the World, we hope our Readers will not measure the Design by our first Essay, which is less compleat than we intended it at first; because being taken up on a sudden, it was not possible to get in what help was desired, and some Papers that were necessary to the Perfection of it. But we have now the Assistance of several Learned Persons, well vers'd in all Forreign Languages, to carry on the Work, and shall have all new Pieces as soon as ever publish'd: So that nothing shall pass in Europe worthy the consideration of the Learned World, that shall not be met with in our Translations; and what is at any time wanting in one Supplement, shall be added in the next. — We design to add the Contents of each Supplement to that Alphabetical Table we have promis'd at the end of every Year, that so by the help of this General Table our Querists may presently find any Question or Subject they have a mind to consult, either in our Weekly Mercuries, or Supplemental Volumes: And therefore to render our Undertaking thus serviceable to the Reader, we shall (at the request of several Gentlemen, who tell us they'll buy these Translations in no other Volume but what will bind up with our Weekly Mercuries) Print the Supplement to each Volume of our *Athenian Gazette* on the same Paper with our Weekly Mercuries, that so they may bind up with them. — When this second Supplement is finish'd, publick notice will be given thereof.

AT the Vaults under *Skinner's-Hall* in *Elbow-lane* is a good quantity of *Nottingham* and *Darby-Aie* to be Sold at reasonable Rates.