

The Athenian Mercury :

Saturday, August 29. 1691.

Quest. 1. **VV** Hether the publishing of the Pamphlet in Nature of a Sermon, reflecting on Mr. B. — as the Author, be consistent with the Principles of Christianity, and what are your Thoughts upon such a Transaction?

Ans. We have received several Questions of this Nature, some of 'em intimating that the Design was done purely to Abuse him; some alledge that there's a farther end in it, viz. To renew the Feuds and Discontents of the bot-brain'd of both Parties. But we have so much Charity (and we hope not without reason) to believe that neither was design'd, tho' the last seems unhappily concern'd in't, by accident. But our Opinion is, that either Party that concern themselves in't, are as much to blame as the Author himself; for he only gave it Life for a time, and the other take the most effectual Methods to continue it, by making it the Subject of Discourse and Contention. The Author and Printer, whoever they were, have done ill, tho' 'tis believ'd they only design'd their Interest, by publishing what they thought wou'd take with the generality of People, that is, Fools and unthinking prejudic'd Persons. 'Tis to be fear'd Mr. B. — (tho' otherwise a Man of great Learning and Parts) has exceeded the just Rules of Prudence, by some uncommon Expressions and Comparisons; and 'tis hoped such a publick Reflection as this, will make him more cautious for the future. No good Man can ridicule such an Accident, nor the Occasions of it, but be troubled at both, remembering that common Rule laid down for all Christians — Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ — There was another Question sent us, to wit, What do such People deserve who resort to Mr. — B's Meeting, on purpose for Matter to laugh at? To which we Answer, They deserve to be disappointed in their expectation; and we hope they will be so for the future. We might add, that if no further, yet in foro Conscientiae they come under the Penalty of the Statute against Prophane-ners of the Sabbath.

Quest. 2. This Account is what I have heard so credibly attested, that I cannot doubt the Truth of it. A Child of Ten Weeks old, being taken with Convulsions, the last fit it had, cry'd out distinctly, three times, O God, and immediately dy'd; there was six People in the Room, two of them I know, some of them were so frighted, that they fell into Swoonds. I desire your Thoughts of it.

Ans. We have many Instances of Infants, that as they were dying, have lift up their Hands and Eyes, and have said, although their Age incapacitated 'em to know the Use of either Hands or Eyes, or to be affected with any External Object that cou'd raise a smile; which Instances must necessarily have their rise from some internal Agent: Perhaps their Intellect might have a supernatural Illumination, to see their Innocence, and the happiness of the Condition they were entering into; and this might be the Case of the present Instance. Or else we shall offer this Physical Reason: When the Soul was forced to leave the Body, it exerted all its Powers at once, to the highest Degree it cou'd, even beyond it's common acting by proper Organs, and in the strife forced that unusual Instance. Just so an extinguishing Candle, when 'tis going out, rallies all its Powers together, and emits one greater Flame than it did all the time it had Nutriment enough to sustain it.

Quest. 3. A certain Bully o' the Town, has by his cunning Instigations, drawn in a young Lady of a considerable Fortune into a solemn Contract and Vow of Marriage, his way of living being only by Fraud and ill Courses, and that Obligation has happened without Consent of the Lady's Parents. — Query, Whether it is in the Power of her Parents (the Lady also consenting) to make void this Contract, without incurring the Penalties of the Law of God?

Ans. In our Saturday's Mercury, Numb. 6. Q. 8. we gave our Opinion, how far a solemn Contract, made between two Persons, was Obligatory, supposing Per-

sons at their own dispose; but the case is very different here, and receives a quite contrary Answer. So long as Parents are living, they have a greater Propriety over their Children than the Age is generally aware of. We don't say, that Parents have that right over their Children, as to marry 'em against their own Consent, the many sad Consequences of such Marriages shows it impracticable; but yet we affirm that Children cannot dispose of themselves without the Consent of their Parents. 'Tis a sacrilegious Impiety, and the worst of Thefts. 'Tis very remarkable, that when God permitted the Devil to exercise his Power over the Goods of Job, he slew his Children; whence 'tis evident that Children are the right and goods of their Parents; but Goods cannot dispose of themselves without the Owners leave. Our Law has upon this Consideration very well provided against taking away Children from Parents without their Consent, making it Felony, tho' 'tis seldom lookt after, but where an Estate lies in Question, though the Right is the same to Beggars — If we read Numbers 30th. the Case is yet plainer, and fully Answers the Question, viz. That the Parent can dispense with the Vow of the Daughter, if he so think fitting. This Institution to the Jews was founded upon the Rights of Nature, and therefore never to be abolish'd, but holds firm, and not to be Cancel'd; nay, perhaps where Parents themselves are not so fit Judges as their Children. I knew a very Learned, Pious Divine, whose Benefice was above a hundred Miles from his Parents, so that 'twas impossible to have any frequent or great Converse with them further than by Letters; but although this Gentleman knew that his Parents wou'd be satisfied in what choice he himself should judge proper, yet he wou'd not Marry till he had first intreated their Consent, being satisfied of their Right and Propriety in him: So that our Answer is this, That it lies in the Parents Power to Vacate the above-mentioned Contract, but more especially they are obliged to it, if the young Lady her self desires it; but if they do it not, she cannot do it her self, and if they do it, she cannot hinder it.

Quest. 4. Whether Adam shou'd have multiplied Children if he had lived in the State of Innocency?

Ans. We meet with very plausible Objections against the Affirmative, which we shall endeavour to prove, after we have answer'd what is brought against our Opinion. One Argument is alledg'd out of Lib. 5. Phis. Text. 51. where 'tis said that Corruption is contrary to Generation, but Contraries are in all Acts. Now in the State of Innocence there was no Corruption; and therefore cou'd be no Generation; the Minor we deny not; and the Major wou'd be demonstrative if the Body begat the Soul, or if the Body of Man in its own Nature was incorruptible, when 'tis generally concluded that it was not so according to its first matter. The second Argument us'd against it, is, that if Man had multiplied, and been immortal, the World wou'd have been too populous: To which we Answer, This Position is against the received Notion of all Politicks, for every one almost (if they will give themselves the liberty to Converse) will find that the poorest Commonwealths are the least Peopled; and if all Adam's Heirs had been alive at this day, there is room enough for 'em, at least wou'd be; for if they found themselves straitned, there's no doubt of more new Discoveries to be made; of those that have been lately found, how poorly inhabited are they, and their Continents scarce known; and how many Places that have been inhabited, are now buried in Ruins. — We hope there's no need of offering any more Argument to prove our Opinion, than what follows, — Increase and Multiply, it was spoken before Corruption; and when Adam and Eve were yet in the State of Innocency.

Quest.

Quest. 8. Whether that Tradition be true amongst some Country People, that those Circles in Meadows and Commons, are places where Fairies dance in the Night-time, and if a house be built upon such ground, whoever shall inhabit therein does wonderfully prosper; and also what is the Cause of such Circles: ——— To which we shall add one from another Hand, Whether any Credit may be given to those various reports of our Ancestors concerning Fairies and Goblins, which frequented and haunted many places in this Kingdom in the Ages last past, and within the memory of some now living, of whom People would usually borrow Money, Household-stuff, &c. as they had occasion, observing that just Principle of repaying it, why so frequent then, and so rare now, or not at all observ'd: what should the drift of those obsequious Demons be, and whether you meet with any notable Instances concerning them in History, and your Opinion of them in general?

Ans. To reduce all this into a method, we shall first prove that there have been, and yet are Fairies; History is very full of Examples, take the following. We read in *Georgius Agricola*, that great Searcher of Subterranean Mines, that they appear frequently in those places whence precious Metals are dug, and from their manners are called *Cobali*, or Imitators of Men; these seem to laugh, to be clothed like the Workmen, to dig the Earth, and to do many things; that really they do not; mocking sometimes the Workmen, but seldom or never hurting them. The *Latins* have called them *Lares* and *Larvæ*, frequenting, as they say, Houses, delighting in neatness, pinching the Slut, and rewarding the good Housewife with Money in her Shoe.

Siarra hath left us this notable Relation: That there lived in his time in *Spain*, a Fair and beautiful Virgin, but far more famous for her excellency at her Needle; insomuch that happy did that Courtier think himself, that could wear the smallest piece of her Work, though at a price almost invaluable. It hapned one day, as this admirable Semstress sat working in her Garden, that casting aside her Eye on some fair Flower or Tree, she saw as she thought a little Gentleman, yet one that shewed great Nobility by his cloathing, come riding towards her from behind a Bed of Flowers; thus surprized how any Body should come into her Garden, but much more at the stature of the Person, who as he was on Horseback, exceeded not a foots length in height; she had reason to suspect that her Eyes deceived her. But the Gallant spurring his Horse up the Garden, made it not long, though his Horse was little, before he came to her; then greeting the Lady in most decent manner, after some Complements past, he acquaints her with the cause of his bold Arrival; that forasmuch as he was a Prince amongst the Fairies, and did intend to celebrate his Marriage on such a day, he desired she would work him Points for him and his Princess against the time he appointed. The Lady consented to his demand, and he took his leave; but whether multitude of business caused the Lady to forget her Promise, or the strangeness of the thing made her neglect the work, thinking her sight to have been deceived, I know not; yet so it fell out, that when the appointed time came, the work was not ready. The hour wherein she had promised the Fairy Prince some Fruits of her Needle, hapned to be one day as she was at dinner, with many Noble Persons, having quite forgot her Promise, when on a sudden casting her Eye to the Door, she saw an infinite train of Fairies come in: so that fixing her Eyes on them, and remembring how she neglected her promise, she sat as one amazed, and astonished the whole Company. But at last the Train had mounted upon the Table, and as they were prancing on their Horses round the brims of a large Dish of White-broth, an Officer that seemed too busie in making way before them, fell into the Dish, which caused the Lady to burst into a sudden fit of laughter, and thereby to recover her Senses. When the whole Fairy company was come upon the Table, that the brims of every Dish seem'd fill'd with little Horsemen, she saw the Prince coming towards her, and hearing she had not done what she promised, seem'd to go away displeased. The Lady presently fell into a fit of Melancholly, and being asked by her Friends the cause of these alterations and astonishments, related the whole matter; but notwithstanding all their consolations, pined away, and died not long after.

Now upon a supposition that such things have been, there's a possibility that they yet may be: in the North of England, they have been very frequent, and if we may believe a late Relation I met with, there yet are such things; for the dancing upon such Circles in the night-time, (as are to be seen in Meadows, Commons, &c.) we have Instances enough, but not more common than in other places. The Cause of those Circles are not the Fairies dancing there, but more probably from Lightning, as has been observ'd in the Transactions of the Royal Society, and 'tis very reasonable that that Bituminous Sulphurous heat (which always darts circularly from Lightning) should hasten the vegetation of Grass where it falls, as forced Pears, Apples, &c. are ripened by a greater heat, sooner than those of the same Tree where they grew. If it be demanded, that Lightning can scarce fall in the same place the next year again, and yet the same Circles appear again: we answer, that every thing produces it's like, and the Seeds or Roots of a stronger sort of Grass must the next year produce a stronger Grass than the other which is weaker, but in two or three years you will find the forced power to abate, and that Grass to return by little and little to it's old likeness again. That Houses built upon Fairy Ground or Circles, are more than ordinary prosperous, is fabulous, there being just contrary Instances. In short, we meet with no reason to believe (as some would have it) that these Fairies generate, and are mortal, but that they are Devils assuming such little Airy Bodies; for 'tis observable, that they were never found but where People were superstitious and credulous: And as for the power they have had over some People, as to blow out an Eye, strike 'em lame, lend Moneys to be paid again, to be kind to cleanly Housewives, and pinch the Slutish, all which Instances we are very well satisfied of, and it amounts to no more than this, that by distrusts of Providence, vain fears, superstitious credulity, and a false faith, such Persons have put themselves under the Devils power; as we meet with parallel Instances of Charms for the Tooth-ach, &c. we believing such things, the Devil effects 'em, by some natural means we know not of, he being willing to have as many Servants as he can upon any Terms whatsoever. That such things appear less than formerly, is because the Christian Religion is better understood, and People are not so ignorant and superstitious as they have been: and that this Argument is good, is verified by the frequent Apparitions and Delusions of Devils in the Indies, where the poor, ignorant, superstitious, credulous Inhabitants are kept in a miserable awe and slavery by 'em.

The Questions concerning the Wheels, &c. are already answer'd; and that Great Question (mentioned in the Preface to the Second Volume) about the Polarity of the Load-stone, and the Variation of the Compass, is now finish'd, and will be published speedily.

Advertisement.

IN *Plow-yard* in *Grays-Inn-lane*, lives Dr. Thomas *Ridley*, a Collegiate Physician, and Sworn Physician to *Charles II.* until his death; who with a Drink and Pills (hindering no Business) undertakes to Cure any Ulcers, Sores, Swellings in the Nose, Face, or other parts; Scabs, Itch, Scurfs, Leprosies, and Venereal Disease, expecting nothing until the Cure be finished: Of the last, he hath Cured many hundreds in this City; many of them after Fluxing, which carries the Evil from the lower Parts to the Head, and so destroys many. The Drink is 3 to the Quart, the Pill 1 s. a Box, with Directions, a better Purger than which was never given, for they cleanse the Body of all Impurities, which are the Causes of Dropsies, Gouts, Scurvies, Stone or Gravel, Pains in the Head and other parts; with another Drink at 1 s. 6 d. a Quart: He Cures all Fevers, and hot Disorders without Bleeding, except in few Bodies. He gives his Opinion to all that writes or comes for his thing.