

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, September 1. 1691.

Quest. 1. **A**S I was returning the last Year from the Siege of Limerick, I saw in a Ditch the Carcass of a man kill'd, when our Carriages were surpris'd at Gullin; the Carcass was almost devour'd with Lice, which I observ'd to be of an extraordinary bigness. From hence I would desire your Thoughts, Whether the Carcass of a Man be devour'd in the Grave by Vermin, or by Worms, according to the common Notion?

Ans. There's no difference at all betwixt Vermin and Worms, (strictly speaking) for they are both one, Vermin coming from the Word *Vermis*, which signifies a Worm: So that the design of the Question is, Whether Worms or Lice devour People in the Grave? To which we answer, Neither, commonly: Indeed, there is a Disease incident to some Persons, call'd the *Lousie Disease*, Lice breeding in their Bodies whilst they are alive, eating holes under the Skin to the bigness of a Walnut, or more, and the Skin not broke; but this Disease is most commonly in Camps, and was (as we are credibly inform'd) very rife in the late K. James's Camp in Ireland; and 'tis more than barely probable the Person that lay kill'd in the Ditch had that Disease, besides his Wounds that he died of. It has been often observ'd of dead Bodies digg'd out of their Graves, that there has been no Worms near 'em, nor any Maggots, Lice, &c. in their Flesh, but only their own Corruption that wast'd 'em. But we art not without many Instances of strange sorts of monstrous Worms, &c. (not like Earth-worms) bred in some Carcasses in the Grave: I remember one passage in *Camerarius*, (says he) A young Gentleman in Germany (whose Tomb I have often seen) was troubled with a grievous Sicknefs in the Flower of his Age, his Friends could never perswade him to be represented in Sculpture, or Picture, to serve for Posterity; only this through their importunity he agreed unto, That after he shou'd be dead, and some days in the ground, they shou'd open his Grave, and cause him to be represented as they then found him. They kept promise with him, and found that the Worms had half gnaw'd his Face, and that about the Midriff and Back-bone there were many Serpents: Upon this, they caus'd the Spectacle, such as they found it, to be cut in Stone, which is yet at this present to be seen among the armed Statues of the Ancestors of this young Gentleman: which agrees much with the Observation of the Wise-man, Eccles. 10. 12. When a Man dieth, he is the Heritage of Serpents, Beasts, and Worms.

Quest. 2. Whence are the strange Antipathies in Nature, as to swoon at the sight of a Cat, an Egg, Cheese; sweating at the curing of a Limon, &c.

Ans. We have already said something upon this Question, in Vol. 1. N. 15. Q. 2. which, with what we shall here add, we hope may give a satisfactory answer to the ingenious Querist. But first amongst the innumerable Instances we find of this nature, we shall relate one or two perhaps very uncommon: One we read of, That if Pork, or any thing made of Swines Flesh, were brought into the Room, he would fall into a Convulsive Sardonian Laughter, nor could he for his heart leave, as long as such an Object was before him. *Libanius* reports, That a certain Man would be surpris'd with a *Lipthymy* at the sight of his own Son; nay, upon his approaching near unto him, tho' he saw him not; for which some assign'd this Reason, That the Mother, when she was with Child, used to feed upon such Meats as were abominable to the Father; (concealing the rationality of this Conjecture, see Sir K. Digby's Discourse of Bodies, p. 409, 410.) Another would fall into a Syncope, if either a Calf's Head, or a Cabbage, were brought near unto him. We have already shewn the Power of Imagination as to Longing, Marking, &c. as above, which we must again make use of, in the resolving this Question, thus: 'Tis observ'd, that those Meats which the Mother long'd for, the Child when born is very greedy of the same; so on the contrary, when Mothers take an Aversion to any sort of Meat or Creatures (occasioned by Fancy and Indisposition of Body when Breeding) the same is by the Imagination of the Mother (as above) impress'd and fix'd into the very Nature of the Child the

she goes with, as in the last-mention'd Example of the Calf's Head and Cabbage; the Mother had a strange Aversion to that Meat in Breeding, and the Fancy had the same effect as Longing in other Women; for the Child was mark'd on the right-side, in the Form of a Calf's Head, and on the left with the likeness of a Cabbage.

Quest. 3. Whether every Angel makes a Species?

Ans. The Querist shou'd be a Philosopher by this Question, and we are very willing to comply with such; only 'tis a sort of unhappiness to speak unintelligibly to some part of the World, and we have no other plea for such a rudeness but this, That all Subjects must be treated on according to their own Nature, or else we must let 'em alone. We assert, that Angels are not of one and the same Species, and we doubt not but it may seem absurd, till for proof of it we add, That in things which are of the same Species, there cannot be something first, and something last, (lib. 3. Metaph. Text. 11. Tom. 3.) but in Angels of one Order, there are first, middle, and last. Therefore, &c. — Indeed, we own that some Philosophers have assert'd, That all Spiritual Substances are of the same Species; from which some wou'd also infer an equality of Souls, but upon weak grounds, as perhaps may be demonstrated by and by. Others, that all Angels are of the same Species, but not of the same Principles of Thought and Action. Others, that all Angels are only of one Hierarchy, and of one Order; But those things which agree to constitute a Species, and only differ in Number, yet agree in Form, are distinguished materially; but Angels are not compounded of Matter, (as may be easily prov'd) and therefore it follows, that 'tis impossible that two Angels shou'd be of one and the same Species. But if we shou'd grant that Angels are compounded of Matter, it won't follow, that there shou'd be more Angels of one Species; for then the beginning of the distinction of one thing from another shou'd be Matter; not indeed according to the division of Quantity, when Angels are incorporate, but according to the diversity of Powers, by which Action is performed, and diversity of Matter causes not only a difference of the Species, but also of the Genus.

Quest. 4. What's the Reason of the Polarity of the Load-stone, and that a Needle touch'd with it turns towards the North; and what is the reason of the Variation of the Compass in some places?

Ans. We have, according to our Promise, consult'd all the learned Pens that have treated on this Subject, both in Theorick and Experimental Philosophy, as the French Vertuos and our own, Gilbert, Ward, Cabeus, Kepler, Kercherus, Johnston, Brown, Mr. Boyle, &c. and from all together we see reason to believe this, That the Earth it self is the great Magnet. Mr. Seller's Observation bids fair for this Opinion, When a Barr of Iron has stood long in the Window, that end of it which is next the Earth, will have the same Virtue which the Load-stone it self has. Mr. Boyle, in his Book of the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy, observ'd, that an Oblong Load-stone heated red-hot, lost its attractive Virtue, and by cooling it again, he gave its extremes a Polarity, and by refrigerating the same end sometimes North, and sometimes South, changed the Poles at pleasure; and this Change was wrought not only by cooling it directly North or South, but perpendicularly, that end of it which was towards the ground turning towards the North, which shows the Magnetick Nature of the Earth, its Effluvia being able to impart a Magnetick Faculty to the Load-stone it self. Now if this terraqueous Globe be mostly Earth under the North-Pole, the Mystery is plainly resolv'd; or if it be the most perfect Earth there, as not Dust or Sand by the burning of the Sun, or be not overcome with restraining Ice and Cold, the Case is yet the same. Hence the Solution of the Variation of the Needle also is plain. We are assur'd, that between the Shore of Ireland, France, Spain, Guiney, and the Azores, the North-Point varies towards the East; at some part of the Azores, it deflecteth not; on the other side of the Azores, and this side of the Equator, the North-Point of the Needle wheeleth to the West, so that in the Latitude 36. near the Shore, the variation is about 11 Gr. but



on the other side of the *Aequator*, it is quite otherwise; for in *Brasilia*, the South-Point varies 12 Gr. unto the West, but *Elongating* from the Coast of *Brasilia* toward the Shore of *Affrica*, it varies Eastward, and arriving at the *Cape de las Aquilas*, it rests in the Meridian, and looketh neither way, the cause of which Variations, is the inequality of the Earth variously disposed, and indifferently mix'd with the Sea, the Needle driveth that way where the greater and most powerful part of the Earth is placed; for whereas on this side the *Azores* the Needle varies Eastward, it is occasion'd by that vast Tract of part of *Europe* and *Asia* seated Eastward. At *Rome* there's a less Variation (*viz.* 5. Degrees) than at *London*; for on the West-side of *Rome* are seated the great Continents of *France*, *Spain*, and *Germany*, but unto *England* there is almost no Earth Westward.

Quest. 5. *Whether Brutus, and the rest of the Conspirators, did well, under pretence of their Country's Liberty, to murder Julius Caesar in the Senate-House?*

Ans. Not, if we may be allow'd to judge of the Action by the Event: Besides, *Sueton.* in *Julio* c. 89. p. 52. says, that scarce any of the Murderers of *Julius Caesar* out-liv'd him three Years, but died a violent Death; being all of them condemned, they all perished by one accident or other, some by *Shipwreck*, others in *Battel*, and some of them flew themselves by the same *Ponyards* wherewith they had before stabbed *Caesar*.

Quest. 6. *Cimon the Athenian sent Ambassadors from the Isle of Cyprus to the far parts of Lybia towards Egypt, to Jupiter Hammon, to demand of the Oracle the Resolution of some secret Affairs; the Oracle bad them return again, Because (said he) Cimon is now with me: Which they hearing, went back again, and being come to the Camp of the Irenians, found that Cimon was dead, the same day that the Oracle had told them he was no longer living: Query, How those Oracles could give a Resolution of what was done at so great a distance in so little a time, and whether the word With me, did only import the death of Cimon?*

Ans. The Intelligence that the black Fraternity of Devils keep for the Interest of Hell, and the quick dispatches of Spirits, who are not clogg'd with *Flesh and Blood*, nor need refreshments or rest, does easily solve the first part of the Question. It was the Devil's Interest then to tell truth, that he might be the better believed, and have more Followers; tho' had his Interest lain otherwise, no doubt but he had treated the Ambassadors with as unhappy a Lye, as he once did before to *Alexander*; for 'twas this Oracle that saluted him by the Name of *Son*, and debauch'd that generous Prince into a persuasion that *Jupiter* was his Father. As to the words *With me*, the Oracle meant no more by it than death, as is apparent from the very same words used by that Devil, which the Witch of *Endor* rais'd, *viz.* *To-morrow thou and thy Sons shall be with me*, directing his Speech to *Saul*, for *Saul* and his Sons died the next day in *Battel* upon *Mount Gilboa*.

Quest. 7. *Whether all living Creatures apprehend one and the same Object after the same manner?*

Ans. Yes, in respect of the Senses, but when the Object comes thither, the rational Creature out-does the Animal by drawing more noble Consequences from such and such premises, by comparing, ratiocinating, numbering, &c. There are several Questions more sent by the same hand, which he will find already answered.

Quest. 8. *Why one hours Sermon seems longer than two hours Conversation?*

Ans. For several very unlucky Reasons. Sometimes because the Sermon may be duller than the Conversation; at others, because the Hearer is dull himself, and han't the wit to like it; sometimes because those in the Pulpit talk all, and talk sence, when in Conversation those who love it, may hear their own dear selves talk as much, and as impertinently as they please; and besides, have the liberty of Contradiction, the very Life and Soul of some People—But the most general Reason for this sad Truth, is a very sad one, and that is the almost universal decay of Piety, added to the natural averfness which the best Men find in their Minds towards Acts of Devotion, till conquer'd by Industry and Pains, which by the assistance of God's Grace in time produce contrary Habits. And where those are to be found, where Men are truly pious and religious, they think no Entertainment in the World comparable to that wherein they may be taught the way to Happiness; nor will they easily be

tired with what affords 'em at the same time' so much of Profit and Pleasure.

Quest. 9. *Are not the Highlanders of Scotland sawcy Rebels to make Terms with their lawful Sovereign?*

Ans. Read the Annals of the Reign of King Charles the First, particularly p. 898, 899, &c.

Quest. 10. *Whether Parthenissa were ever finished?*

Ans. Never that we know of, at least not so as to be made publick—The noble Author of that fine Piece, as it should seem not being willing to bring so mournful a Subject upon the Stage, as the Ruine of *Mithridates* his Family, left by so tragical a Story he should make all the poor Ladies that read it break their Hearts, or cry their Eyes out. As for the other part of the History, he might have wound 'em up as soon as he pleas'd, having brought his Hero's and Heroines just in sight of each other, and of the end of all their Troubles within a few Leaves before the Conclusion—But his own immature Fate robb'd us at once both of that and him, and forc'd him to leave greater Enterprizes unfinished than that of *Parthenissa*.

The Ladies Questions concerning Love and Marriage, that should have been answered this Tuesday, are to serv'd till next Tuesday.

We have now received part of Mr. *Jonas Ellis* his Discoveries, when we receive the rest of it, we shall observe his Order about it.

The Letter with the Cross will not be Answer'd, for the Reasons hinted in the Preface to our Second Volume.

## Advertisements.

**F**lores Intellektuales: Or, Select Notions, Sentences and Observations, collected out of several Authors, and made publick, especially for the use of Young Scholars entering into the Ministry. By *Matthew Barker* Minister of the Gospel in *London*. Price bound 1 s. Printed for *John Dunton* at the *Raven* in the *Poultry*.

**N**ext Friday morning will be publish'd, by *F. Baldwin*, The Supplement to the Second Volume of the *Athenian Gazette*; containing an Account of the Design and Scope of most of the considerable Books Printed in all Languages, and of the Quality of the Author, if known; as also the Ingenious Conferences of the *Foreign Virtuosi* upon many Nice and Curious Questions. The whole being a Translation of what is most rare and valuable in the last *Universal Historical Bibliothek*, the *Paris Journal de Seavans*, the *Acta Eruditorum Lipsia*, and in the New Book entituled *Entretiens Serieses & Galantes*, &c. Published for the improving of Natural, Moral and Divine Knowledge, as is specified in the Preface to this Book, which said Preface gives the Reader a fuller Account of the Design and Use of this Undertaking than the former did. To these Papers are added the Contents both of this and the former Supplement. Price 1 s. Sold at the *Raven* in the *Poultry*.

We have Printed each Supplement on the same Paper with our *Weekly Mercuries*, that so they may bind up with 'em, and design to add the Contents of 'em all 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.

Many of the Questions sent us this Week are Answer'd in this Second Supplement now recited, and some of 'em are also Answer'd in those twelve Numbers (lately Publish'd altogether) that compleated the first eighteen Numbers of our Second Volume. And therefore we desire all our Querists to read the Contents and Preface to our Second Volume, (and the Supplement to it) before they send to us again, that so by their constantly Observing the Rules there laid down; they may ne'er be disappointed in their Expectations from us—Read also our Advertisement in *Mercury* Vol. 2. for your further Information.—And remember that no Letters will be taken in, whose Postage is not paid for.