

The Athenian Mercury :

Saturday, September 12. 1691.

Quest. 1. **VV** *Hich of our Senses can we best spare?*

Ans. None of 'em very well— for God and Nature have made nothing in Vain: However we may make a Comparison between 'em, for there are Degrees in all Goods, except the highest. Seeing is the pleasantest Sense—'tis a pleasant thing to behold the Sun, and a sad thing to be Blind, as those poor Creatures tell us, who are so unhappy to be so. 'Tis besides, the finest, the purest, and most spiritual of all the Senses, performing its Operations rather by the Image of Matter, than Matter it self. 'Tis the Learned Sense, though herein Hearing puts in for its Rival, and 'tis the most certain of all the rest, giving occasion to that Proverb, *Seeing's Believing*; tho' this admits of limitation; Reason being required to assist and regulate this as well as the other Senses. Hearing has the most delicate of any sensible Pleasures for its Entertainment, namely, the Noble Art of Musick, and is the most spiritual of any Sense next to the Sight; its Object being Sound, and that only Air moved. This may in a great measure supply the loss of the Sight, we having a multitude of Instances of those who have been excellent Scholars without their Sight; tho' of very few, if any, who were born Deaf, who therefore must be Dumb, and generally are very weak and foolish, it being a difficult Matter to convey any of our Notions to 'em, and indeed almost unintelligible how it should be done, Natural Signs being so few, and insufficient to ground any thing like a Language on. Though yet even here there are Exceptions, but those that are so, are a sort of Prodigies in Nature. Nor can we tell what to say to the Mutes in the Seraglio, until we know whether they were born so. Tasting seems very convenient even for Life as well as the Comforts of it. The Touch is the most necessary of all the rest, for when that's gone, Life's gone; and indeed the other four seem little else than this diversified according to different Objects and Organs. For the Smelling, it's a Sense that appears to be given us on purpose for the Brain, to regale and refresh it with agreeable Odours. However, the inconvenience is but inconsiderable on the loss of it, especially compared to that of any of the others: We therefore conclude, that this we might better spare than any of the rest.

Quest. 2. *What's the Definition of a Drunken Man, and what degree of Drunkenness will render a Man obnoxious to the Penalties of the Law?*

Ans. The Definition of a drunken Man is a Drunken Man, to call him by any other Name would be an Abuse; for the Devil is not so great a Fool, and a Beast is a much more regular sort of Creature, and answers the Ends of its Being. As to the latter part of the Question (to wit, *What degree of Drunkenness will render a Man obnoxious to the Penalties of the Law?*) We answer, The Law is by so much the more perfect and pure, by so much as it has a nearer relation to the Law of God, but there all Intemperance and Excess is forbidden; 'tis not the quantity, for then some Persons would never be drunk with double the stint of others. A Man is truly and properly said to be drunk, when he hath exceeded so far as to impair his Health, or prejudice his Reason; both which Cases are a little too nice for our Law to lay hold on, for some Persons are always mad, and some are continually sick, and pretexts of the Cause of either may be falsely suggested; but a Drunken Man comes evidently under the Penalties of the Law, when he Roars, Swears, Vomits, Quarrels, Reels against the Walls, tumbles into the Channels, &c. purely upon the Account of Drink, and nothing else; 'twould be well if the Penalties of the Laws were executed more, and talk'd of less.

Quest. 3. *Whether the Irish Fugitives that received relief here by way of Alms (during their retreat) will be oblig'd to make Restitution when restored to their Possessions; and if so, how, and to whom?*

Ans. Alms is a Gift, and Gift is free, and obliges no farther than Gratitude and Retribution, if ever the Case should be revers'd, and Persons change Circumstances.

Hence 'tis hoped the Irish will be always in our Debt, and that we shall never be so miserable as to have occasion of Retribution, tho' in the mean time we ought not to think uncharitably of 'em, as that they would not have done the same to us, *Charity more rejoices a true giver, than an indigent receiver.*

Quest. 4. *Why some People love Oil and hate Olives, and why some love Olives, and hate Oil?*

Ans. As to the difference of some Peoples Aversion to such or such things, as Cats, Eggs, &c. see Vol. 3. N. 10.

Quest. 5. *What's the Reason that waking in the dead of Night, I can perceive a sort of a Light, which vanishes in a Moment?*

Ans. 'Tis only Fancy, for when you begin to make use of your Reason, you see no such thing in earnest. The Occasion of it is this, *The medium of Objects to the Eye is Light*: Now the Eye opening and going to act, your Fancy goes along with it; and (you having not time to consider) do suppose the Medium ready to find an Object by, which suppos'd Medium, the Light, vanishes so soon as you find your Error.

Quest. 6. *There is a sort of a furious little Blood-sucker call'd a Bugg; pray what is the Reason that they should fall so furiously upon a Stranger of the Fair Sex in one Night as to make her Blind, and yet at the same time be partial to her tender-skin'd Bed-fellow; who is of the same Sex, better in Health, and a Constant Customer?*

Ans. Purely for Variety's sake, and not out of any spite to their New Pasture. Nor is it an uncommon thing in any Creatures to love Change in Feeding, Fleas will do the same, and leave their old Commons at any time for a new Supper, although their Diet be much courser and more unwholsom.

Quest. 7. *Whether it be a fault in a wise Man to be affected, and have a Complacency in himself for having made a fine Harangue?*

Ans. 'Tis suppos'd that a wise Man thinks, and therefore 'tis impossible but he should be affected with what he speaks; but to ask whether a wise Man (for that looks like the latter part of the Question) can be guilty of a Folly, is incongruous, and is as much as to say, *Whether a wise Man can be a wise Man and a Fool at one time?* But perhaps the Quercists Sense was thus, Whether a Man may act prudently, if he has a Complacency in himself for making a fine Harangue? To which we answer, That all things are good or bad; if his Harangue was good and moral, he had reason to rejoice at it, but he ought not to praise himself for it, but think of St. Paul's Question, *What have we that we have not received?* If the Harangue was Wicked and Immoral, (for Wit changes not its Nature, but rather makes it worse) then the Case is quite alter'd, and there's occasion enough for Self-regret and Displeasure.

Quest. 8. *Having heard that there is a part of the Hebrew Josephus still extant in the Vatican at Rome, but the Reverend Dr. Burnet doubting of it: I desire to know whether that is a real part of it or not?*

Ans. That Ingenious Great Man having doubted of the Report, we shan't pretend to give our Opinion after him, unless in the same Words; for every one knows the great Learning he has, the Inquisitiveness of his Nature, and the Opportunities he had to be satisfied of the reasonableness or unreasonableness of the Relation, render'd him as capable a Judge of it as any Person living.

Quest. 9. *Since you have given me the Encouragement of a further Answer, upon a particular Relation of the Nature and Occasions of my Despair, I shall here add, that 'tis the unkindness of Parents, nor allowing me Necessaries; but chiefly my Discontent arises from the hiding of God's Face from me, and being destitute of all Sense of his Mercy in my Applications to him.*

Ans. In further Answer to your Question, we add, That a supposition of unkindness from Parents in not allowing Necessaries, may be as well an Error of your Judgment as of theirs; and 'tis much the likelier of the two;

For nothing is absolutely necessary in this World, but a moderate Competency of Cloth and Bread; as for Expences, they are not very necessary amongst Virtuous Companions, who may either Converse privately, or (which most adds to the Happiness of Converse) walking together, if the disposition of the Body will bear it, and if Nature would want Refreshment in those Intervals, it may be prevented before hand. Take this for an Infallible Maxim, *He that cannot be Content in a mean Condition, cannot be satisfied in a great one*; for 'tis not the Condition which in its self affords satisfaction, but a quiet, peaceful, resigning Breast; if that be disordered, all Enjoyments elicit are only Nominal, and carry but a bare appearance of good — But suppose an unreasonableness of the Parent in the above mentioned Case, you ought not be disturbed, since 'tis the Performance of your own Duty that is the Test of your Happiness or Unhappiness. Epictetus (that great Man, I had like to have said more) divides all things into two Classes, viz. Such as are in our own Power, or such as are out of our Dispose. Of the first he reckons up the Goods of the Mind, as Learning, Meekness, Temperance, Courage, &c. Of the last the Goods of Fortune, (with Christians, of Providence) as Preferments, Honours, Friends, Relations, &c. If we are irregular in the first, we have reason to be disturb'd, but only so far as to take a greater Care for the future, and keep a nearer Watch over our selves. If we are disturb'd in the last, by Losses or Disappointments of 'em, the Fault deserves I know not whether more Pity or Ridicule; who crys for the Snow in Winter, or the Heat in Summer? or who's so distracted as to promise himself to escape Death, the common Lot of all Mankind. If your Parents Unreasonableness is out of your Power to alter, all that you have to do, is to carry your self like a wise Honest Man, that is, *Secure your own Duty, and not vex at Impossibilities*. As for the other branch of your Discontent, viz. *Despair of God's Mercy, and the hiding his Face from you*, this indeed is more afflicting to rational Beings than a Complicated heap of all the Miseries, Losses, Confinements, Disappointments, and every thing else that we can give the Title of Horror; for an Enjoyment of the Supreme Good being our End, our All, (for whatever little Interests we grasp at here, are but faint resemblances of the great Original) if we miss this, we miss all, and all that we do is in vain; nor is there any thing else that can make us happy, because there must be a proportion betwixt every Power and its Object; we distinguish not Sounds by the Eyes, nor Smells by the Ear, but remit every thing to its proper Sense. Now the Mind of Man, strictly speaking, being the Man, (for the Body differs only in its shape from Brutes, being sensual, weak, &c.) it must have its adequate and proper Object too, which is God, if we should lay the Scripture by, this may be proved by Reason; for the dissatisfaction that all other Objects afford, shows that there's not a due proportion betwixt them and the Soul; for if so, it would fix there, and seek no further; as the Needle touched with the Loadstone, is never at rest till it meets with the Northern-Pole, but then it fixes from farther Rambling; now the Despair of meeting this great and only adequate Object, as in the present Case, may well meet with the Utmost Horror and Discontent; but in order to the regulation of the Querists, and other Persons distractions, that may lie under the same inquietude, we lay down the following Rules.

1. That the Troubles for want of such a Happiness are the first step to the attainment of it. No Person will pursue any thing, if the want of it would not make him miserable.

2. The sense of this Unhappiness must either be from the Spirit of God, or the Suggestions of the Devil; if the first, 'tis an Argument of Sonship and Adoption, and ought to be so received, with this Effect upon you, a greater Care and Encouragement in your Duty. If the last, 'tis an Argument your Case is yet the better, for the Devil disturbs no Body that he is secure of, but to those that he's afraid of losing, he makes good his old Character, *That he is a Lyar from the beginning*.

3. That a Sense of the Displeasure of God, and the hiding of his Face, is the Case of many of his People; see the Example of the whole Church in Solomon's Song, as also in the Lamentations; and for particular Persons, see David, a Man after God's own Heart, and our Saviour himself upon the Cross.

We might enlarge, but our general Design, and the smallness of our Paper denies it, therefore we refer you to those Places where the Remedies against Despair are fully treated on, in *The Practice of Piety, The Whole Duty of Man* and *The Supplement to the Morning Exercise*, in *Sermon 24*.

Mr. Travesty.

IF at any time *Our Answers* are not so satisfactory as you could wish, if you will, as directed by our *Advertisement*, mention in what particular, you shall have a fuller Satisfaction in the next *Mercury*. If this won't suffice, we further assure you, that whatever *Questions* you dislike those very *Questions* shall be all answer'd a-new by us (common Equity to our Querists obliging us to it) and in our *New Answers* to the said *Questions*, our Readers shall meet with all the *Objections* you send us, the best of your *Thoughts* and our own *Improvements* thereon, that so meeting with us together in one Paper, we may save 'em what Charges we can — When our *Project* was first set on Foot, there were not half the Persons concerned in't as now are; (and therefore a few slips then were the more excusable) but now our *Society* is fixt, nothing shall pass without due Examination and the general consent of all concerned in't; but if after all any *Errors* should scape our View, (for we never pretended to be Infallible) if convinc'd thereof in a line or two, we'll rectify 'em our selves in our next *Mercury* — For your further Information, read our *Advertisement* in *Merc. 7. Vol. 2.*

That Gentleman that sent to us this Week concerning a Copy he has by him, if he brings it to the Rotterdam Coffee-house in Finch-lane next Monday-Morning at nine of the Clock, he shall have his Answer.

Advertisements.

WE resolving (as we told you in our first Supplement) to give an Account of the Design and Scope of the most considerable Books that shall be printed in England from time to time, (as well as in Foreign Parts) we desire all the Gentlemen who publish any Book that deserves general perusal that they would send it to the Raven in the Poultry as soon as printed, or an Abstract thereof ready drawn up, and it shall be inserted in our next Supplement: The same Promise we make to those who send us any remarkable Observations or ingenious Papers, fit to be published. In our treating of English Books we shall not content our selves with giving the bare Titles, as is the part of Bibliographers hitherto done, but shall briefly declare what they contain, and what they may be useful for, which will be of no small service to those that buy or peruse Books, since they may be inform'd what may be most worthy their reading — Our Supplements will also be advantageous to those who shall undertake any considerable Works, since they may have occasion to publish their Design, and invite all Persons to communicate their Manuscripts to them, which will contribute much to the Works they undertake, and make 'em the more known. We shall Print all our Supplements on the same Paper with our Weekly *Mercuries*, so they may bind up with them, and shall add the Contents of all to that Alphabetical Table we have promis'd at the end of every Year. What valuable English Books, &c. are at any time wanting in one Supplement, shall be added in the next.

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