

The Athenian Mercury :

Saturday, September 19. 1691.

Quest. 1. A Woman at Rochester, happening to fall sick, was extremely ill almost to Death; she had two Children at Nurse about ten Miles from the place, and she had a great desire to see her Children, but those that were about her knew very well that she was far incapable of such a Journey; she fell into a very deep sleep, and when she awoke, she said that she had seen her Children: those that did watch her, told her that she had not been out of her Bed: she said that she had seen them, and now was willing to dye, which she did immediately. As soon as she was dead, the Nurse which was ten Miles distant, came running in a great fright, and said she had seen her Mistress, and that she felt her Children, and turned them; (for that was the expression.) I pray your Sentiments how this could be, that the Womans Soul should take wing, and return again to its old Habitation? or, Whether it be consonant to Scripture? and whether the Soul did agrandize Air so as to make a Personal Appearance?

Ans. We meet with parallel Instances in History; Fulgof. (and also Korman. de Mirac. Mort. relates, that there were two Brothers, Knights of Rome, the Elder of 'em was named Corfidius, who being in the repute of all Men dead, the Tables of his last Will and Testament were recited; in which he had made his Brother the Heir of all he had: but in the midst of his Funeral Preparations he rose with great Chearfulness upon his legs, and said that he had been with his Brother, who had recommended the Care of his Daughter unto him, and had also shewed him where he had hid a great quantity of Gold under ground, wherewith he should defray his Funeral Expences. While he was speaking in this manner, to the admiration of all that were present, there came a Messenger with the News of his Brothers Death, and the Gold was also found in the very place as he had said. — But what is yet a stranger Relation, and mention'd by the said last Author, is this — Everardus Ambula a German Knight, fell sick in Germany in the time of Pope Innocent the Third, and when he had lain as one for some time dead, returning to himself, he said, That his Soul was carried by Evil Spirits into the City of Jerusalem, thence into the Camp of Saladin, who then reigned in Egypt, from whence he was conveyed to Lombardy, where in a certain Wood he had spoken with a German Friend of his. Lastly, he was brought to the City of Rome, the Sight, the Form of Places and Buildings of which, together with the Features of divers Princes there, he most exactly described; but what is yet stranger, he with whom he said he did converse in the Wood, affirmed that he had there at the same time and hour discoursed with this Everardus, according as he had declared. Was Plato or Pythagoras alive, we know what use they wou'd make of these Instances toward a Transmigration of Souls. Our Thoughts upon the whole are only these, that these Souls went not to Ramble of themselves, but were convey'd by Spirits that had some particular Commission to guard 'em, and make Organs of Perception for 'em, for the Soul cannot act of it self, but confusedly: 'Tis said, when Lazarus died, he was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom, not fled thither himself. These are particular Instances, perhaps mostly for the convincing of such Persons as believe nothing of Spirits or Witches. Let such as are not satisfied of the possibility of such things, repair to the Rotterdam Coffee-house in Finch-lane, where they may see the Original Letter that relates to the particular Passage mentioned in the Question, and more Arguments for the Credibility of this strange Instance that we have here taken Notice of.

Quest. 2. There was a certain Person in the World, whom I design'd for my Wife, but was outlived by Death; whilst she was alive, our Friendship was to an Excess; and now she is dead, tho' I have endeavour'd all I can to the contrary, my Grief is such, as has reduced me to a great hatred of my Life; besides which, I begin to dege, and am ready to run distracted — I desire to know whether in this Condition I may not voluntarily resign my Life? and whether such an Act may not, by the unhappiness of my circumstances, be accounted pardonable in the sight of God?

Ans. We can offer the same Remedy as has been al-

ready effectual under the same Circumstances. Natural Philosophy teaches, that to trouble our selves for what is out of our Power, is as great a Madness as striving to make three Nineteen, or to hinder the Revolution of the Heavens. Christianity (which is yet a more refin'd sort of Philosophy) teaches us, that 'tis impossible to escape Uneasiness where we give that to the Creatures which is peculiar to the Creator; for the Mind being Eternal, no Temporal thing can be a fit Object for it, no more than Sounds are proper Objects for the Eye, or Sights for the Pallate, as we have formerly urg'd: Besides, if the loss of a Creature, who was only an Emanation of the great Divine Original, is so afflicting and grievous, how intollerable wou'd the loss of the Original it self be? or if we are unhappy in the deprivation of one single imperfect Good for a little time, in what a Case shou'd we be in, if we shou'd be depriv'd of all Good for ever? We are Creatures, and as such owe a dependance to the Author of our Being, therefore it wou'd be an unpardonable Theft to dispose of our selves without his License. A Commander will punish a private Centinel that leaves his Post without his Consent, and can God who has a far greater Right over his Creatures take it well to see us slight his Appointments, or take upon us to Censure his Actions? for 'tis in Effect an Arraigning his Wisdom, when we think we can provide better for our selves than he does. A little time and converse will wear of these blacker Thoughts; (for what can be blacker than Self-murder?) when that is committed, there's no Remedy, but a more inexpressible plunge into Misery. Hell is only remediless, but nothing else. Secure your Duty to God, and rest satisfied, you will soon be Master of a quiet, easie Breast.

Quest. 3. If a Man has a Brother, by Nature or Affinity, that owes 2 or 300 l. and is not worth half so much, but goes off with all, with an Intention to pay none, or not half he's able — he deposits this with a Brother, confiding in him, and won't be persuaded to pay as far as it goes: Whether or no the Brother be oblig'd in point of honesty to do Justice to the Creditors in revealing this Money?

Ans. The very Question is its own Answer. Every one is obliged to do Justice, if even himself is concern'd, and no Brother can be nearer. He may as well be accessory to a Robbery as a Cheat; for this is no better, and he is no other; nay, 'tis in some sort worse than a Robbery on the High-way — that I may guard my self from, but breach of Faith I cannot; and indeed it seems a Hardship in our Laws, that a poor Shoplift shou'd be hang'd for breaking in and pilfering a few Goods, not perhaps 5 l. nay, not perhaps twenty shillings value. and yet one that takes one hundred, two hundred, or a thousand pounds worth, after having rioted away one part of it, shou'd with impunity carry off the other into the Mint or Fryers, and send it going after the same rate, or else deposit it in a second or third Hand, who if he keeps it from the Creditors, is just as honest as the Pick-pockets receiver, who hands away the Prey which his Brother Rogue has angled for.

Quest. 4. Gentlemen, You advertize in several of your Mercuries that Mr. Mason can teach the most exact and shortest Shorthand yet Extant. Query, Whether any Person can by that Shorthand take a Sermon or Speech verbatim? and how long it will be (if he allows himself three hours a day to learn it) before he attains to that Perfection? and whether he can learn by the last Book Mr. Mason hath published, without any further Instruction or Direction from him? Pray give a Speedy Answer to this Question, because I would lose no time in Learning.

Ans. Your three Questions in one we shall Answer severally.

1. Whether any Person can by Mr. Mason's Shorthand take a Sermon or Speech verbatim?

Ans. Yes, divers to our knowledge do frequently do it, and some under fourteen years of Age will do the like.

2. How long will it be (allowing three hours a day to learn) before one attain to that Perfection?

Ans. The said Author can teach the whole Art, fairly to write, and distinctly to read any thing writ thereby in English,

English, in the space of a Month or six Weeks: But it may reasonably be supposed a longer time will be required for practice, before such a swiftness can be attain'd as is requisite for the taking of a Sermon or Speech verbatim.

3. *Whether one can learn by the last Book* Mr. Mason hath published, without any further Instructions or Directions from him?

Ans. That Book is generally owned to be the best Short-hand in Print; but it being one Sheet of Paper, printed by a Copper Plate on one side only, it could not contain sufficient Directions, and therefore it was never designed to Teach any without the Authors Assistance; (although several Ingenious Persons have attain'd to a good Degree of Perfection by the Book alone) yet his Directions, and that large Additional Treasure of New and Extraordinary brief Rules, which never yet saw the Light, being lately stored up by him, and reserved for all such Lovers of that Art as shall apply to him for Instructions, will not only facilitate the Work, by making it twice as short when learned, but also create much pleasure and delight to the Ingenious in learning them.

Quest. 5. *Whether there's any such thing as the Perfection of a Language, and wherein it consists, and whether our Language is now in its height, or when it was so?*

Ans. This may be a more difficult Question than at first it appears. All Languages are in a continual flux, one Age making still Additions to the past, or at least altering or taking away many Words from it; that comparison of the Poets being extremely apt—that Words are like Leaves the old still wearing off, and new springing up in their rooms. The Grammarians, whose unenvied Business 'tis to Beat Languages, as Oldham calls it, have almost demonstrated that the Phœnician is only a Corruption or Dialect of the Hebrew, the Greek, and perhaps many other Languages of the Phœnician, the old Roman of the Greek, the very Characters being the same, as may be seen in old Inscriptions and Monuments. On the other side, the Modern Greek and Russian from the ancient Classick Greek; the Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese from the Corruption of the Latin, and its adulterous mixtures with several barbarous Languages, every one of which daily alter, and are still like to do so as long as the World lasts; and when they are so much alter'd, that the greatest part of the Words come to be chang'd, it's probable enough that these will still be call'd New Languages. Thus 'twas here in England; the old Saxon is undoubtedly the proper English Tongue, our very Country taking it's last and most famous Name from those Angli; and yet our present English is as absolutely a different Language from it as the old Greek is from the Roman. But still, which is more to our present purpose, old Chaucer, Gower, and their Contemporaries were call'd great Refiners of our English Language, and undoubtedly were thought to have brought it to as great a Perfection by their Contemporaries, as we say a Waller, a Dryden, a S—t, or B—t have in our Age brought it. And 'twas just the same Case with Ennius and Lucilius in their times, who were thought as well of by others, and spoke as ill of their Language who went before 'em, as Horace or any of the Criticks of Augustus his Court, who came after 'em. But the mentioning his Court recalls to mind the Notion of some Men, and we think the most common of any other, concerning the Perfection of any Language: That the Court is the Standard of a Language, all own, that then the Language is in Perfection when the Empire is in Perfection, and the Court at the greatest height, is generally held, and an Instance given thereof in that of Augustus Cæsar. But still the difficulty seems to recur—Is not this a begging the Question! and how know I that the Language of the Romans was in greater or more proper Perfection at that time than 'twas in the Reign of Augustus, or in the greatest height of what is call'd Barbarism? or is there any reason that he who Conquers most, his Language must be best, which seems the Case of Augustus—If so, the barbarous Goths and Huns had afterwards as good a Title to Purity of Language as the Romans before, the Romans being at first only as Colluvies of Robbers got together, and hardly of so honourable an Original as those who afterwards turn'd 'em out, or became their Masters. Accordingly if it be said that then a Language degenerates when it comes to be mingled with any barbarous, that is, Foreign Words; it

must at this rate be said, it always degenerates, because all Languages daily Enfranchise such Foreign Words as they find necessary or convenient. But all this is only Negative, 'twill be still said we are never the nearer. Where shall we fix the Perfection? or is there any or No? We think there is, and in these two things it must be fix'd, or no where—in the pleasingness and tunableness of the Accent, and Expressiveness and Fulness of the Language—and if this may be the Standard, we are sure our Language is now at or near the Achme, and has not been so in former Ages.

Quest. 6. *What's the Reason of hating Cheese and other Antipathies?*

Ans. Very often, we believe, nothing in the World but an inveterate Custom. Sometimes it has, we own a deeper root, and may probably spring from some desire or aversion in the pregnant Mother. At other 'tis an Occult Quality, that is, in plain English, No Body knows what, but a thing as purely unaccountable as the Complexions, Features, or common Inclinations of different Men, one whereof loves one sort of Fruit or Meat better than another, tho' all the World can tell no reason why.

✂ The Querist troubled in Body, Mind, Memory, &c. has his Answer, Numb. 24. of the 2d Volume, Qu. 2.

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