

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, October 6. 1691.

Whereas by some Mistake or other a Letter with several Love-Questions intended for the Athenian Society, was super-scrib'd for a Gentleman far enough distant from us; which, finding the Mistake, he has been so Civil to return — on the persual of 'em they appearing worth our Notice, we have here according to the Querists Desire attempted their satisfaction.

Part of his Letter is thought fit to be inserted in the following Words — I am within a short time to wait on a young Lady, who is one of the wonders of the Age for Piety, Wit, Beauty, Birth and Fortune, and therefore wou'd desire of your Society a FORM OF COURTSHIP in Answer to the following Queries:

Quest. 1. After what Manner shou'd a Gentleman at the first Visit accost his Mistress?

Ans. 'Tis pity to rob the Old Academy of Compliments, and we won't pretend to set up a New one in its room. We suppose the Gentleman is not for having a Form of Words for this Occasion, since Extempore Courtship is certainly the best, whatever Extempore Prayers are. Besides, the Lady might chance to read this Mercury, and then he is undone, as bad as the poor Spark who Complains he has lost his Mistress already by some such thing, unless he can persuade her that good Wits jump, and that both He and the Athenians deserve that Name. We suppose therefore he rather desires a Direction for his Behaviour than his Words, which yet is almost as difficult to prescribe as the other, there being a thousand little Circumstances which will extremely alter the Nature of the thing. Mistresses are to be attack'd like Towns, according to their Fortifications, Situation or Garrison, no general Rule being to be given for 'em. Some are weak of one side, some of another, which a cunning Engineer will soon find out: Some are to be Mined, some to be Bomb'd, some won by Storm, others by Composition, others to be Starv'd into a Surrender. The pleasantest way of Courtship we have ever heard of, was that of a very old, very rich, very covetous, very foolish, very ugly Humble Servant, to a fine young Lady — whom having taken abroad in his Coach, after some prefatory Hums and Haws, and gentle Leers, he pulls out from under his Coat — what — but his great Bos'd Bible, with Silver Claps, &c. and turning to the beginning of Genesis, shows her — not that Text, Increase and multiply, which 'tis very likely he held his Thumb upon, but another a little after it, It is not good for Man to be alone, and thereupon made her a very seasonable Holding-forth on the Use and Excellencies of Matrimony. But this Method would go near to displease the Gallants as well as the Ladies, and therefore we shan't much recommend it. For the Question in Hand, and the Gentleman's fine Mistress, if she be verily and indeed such a Non-pareil, as he represents her, in which Case we must tell him he ought to produce his Vouchers; for Lovers are for the most part arrant Lyers, as well of their Mistresses as to 'em; and besides generally a little Purblind in the Matter: But if she be such a Miracle for Piety, Wit, Beauty, Birth and Fortune — and a Miracle she is indeed if she's but half of all this, we'll tell him what in our Judgment wou'd be his most proper Method at his first accosting her. He ought to express the highest Respect possible, but this more by his Actions than his Words; and rather to let her know that he Loves, which if she has Wit she'll soon discover, (or at least that he'd be thought to do so) than to put himself and the Lady to the Trouble and Confusion of a Formal Declaration — which if at all necessary to be made, there's Time enough for doing it afterward on their better Acquaintance.

Quest. 2. What Behaviour and Carriage in the progress of an Amour will be most Winning and Acceptable to a Lady of Ingenuity and Fortune?

Ans. There are different sorts of Ingenuities — You shall have some Termagant Wits, like Sylvia in the Soldiers Fortune, that are only to be won by downright Cater-mauling, that is, Rambling and Fighting, and Scratching, breaking Leggs, and Arms, and Necks, and then to Purring agen. But we'll suppose 'tis a Tame-Wit, whose Power this Gentleman is fallen into, and therefore that she'll pull in her Claws when she Playes with his Heart, and be more merciful to him than to make him break, his own before he softens hers. A Woman of true sense as she hates on one side a Freakish Lover, or a supple Fop, that's eternally Kneeling, and Cringing, and Whining, so she'll ne're endure Stiffness, Pride and Haughtiness, which as ill becomes Love as it does Devotion: And the greater her Birth and Fortune are, something of a proportionable greater Respect ought to be paid her. In a word, a modest Assurance, a manly Behaviour, a Tenderness for all her Inclinations, a diligent Observation of her Temper and Humour, (much easier to be pleas'd than those of less Wit) Faithfulness, Assiduity, Liberality, and good Sense, will at last carry her, if she is not pre-engaged or wholly impregnable.

Quest. 3. What Expression's fittest for a Lover to make use of to declare his Passion?

Ans. That's impossible to prescribe, and as needless as unreasonable to desire. Lovers Language is quite contrary to the Chinese; of which 'tis reported that there are many Words impossible to be understood by speaking 'em, unless they are also written or described on a Wall or the Air, &c. whereas the Language of a Lover can hardly be express'd in Writing; at least it thereby loses a thousand little Beauties which it has when 'tis spoken: It has not that spirit which makes it acceptable, it looks stiff and dead, and there are very few even of our Dramatique Writers whose Love-speeches read well, or appear free or natural: Whereas if a Man Loves in earnest, if he ben't a perfect Fool, nay, almost tho' he is one, were it possible for such a one to be in Love, he speaks with another sort of a Grace, he is more in earnest, he has more spirit, he seldom wants Words to express his Conceptions, unless he's a Dastard and Coward, and so unworthy a Ladies Affections, and he goes very often beyond himself at other times and on other occasions. Besides, this Love has in particular beyond the other Passions, that it softens the Style as well as the Temper (whereas Anger renders it more harsh and rough) and makes even the Voice more tunable and harmonious. But shou'd a Man be Dumb, he cou'd not want wayes to express his Passion; nay, sometimes a well-manag'd Silence is the best Eloquence. He has Hands, and can write — he has Eyes, and can say a thousand Charming things with 'em; nay, express all his Passions, especially Love, Desire, Fear, Despair, Hope, Pleasure, Submission, or almost what he pleases with 'em, and that infinitely more to the Life than by any other way. But since there is Occasion for some louder Language, and a Dumb Mistress of the two wou'd be more acceptable than a Lover in the same Circumstances; if he must speak, his Expressions ought to be of a piece with his Behaviour before described: He ought to consider Time and Place, and as much to avoid being always discoursing his Love as never doing it: His Expressions shou'd be quick, respectful, tender and lively, more understood than spoken, yet easily intelligible. In a word there shou'd be in 'em that — *Je ne scai quoy* — which none but a Lover knows what to make of.

Quest. 4. Whether Tears, Sighs, and earnest Entreaties be of greater force to obtain a Ladies Favour than a moderate Degree of Zeal with a wise and manly Carriage?

Ans. Still as she is — and tho' such a one as is described; yet there are few Ladies but love to have an Absolute Power over their Lovers, and to be at least able to bring 'em to what they please; accordingly for Tears and all that, tho' a Lover ought not to be too free of using 'em yet



yet he ought perhaps to have a *secret Reserve* of 'em, to be at the *Lady's Service*, if she desires it: Tho' we think on her side too 'twou'd be better not to put him to't, and suffer her Heart to be wrought upon by some less tedious Method than such frequent Drops as even wear into Marble — least the Scene shou'd change in a few Months, and it shou'd be her Turn then as 'twas formerly her Lovers.

Quest. 5. *Whether Interrupting Discourse by repeated Kissing be't rude and unmannerly, and more apt to create Aversion than Love?*

Ans. Not so hasty, Good Sir! you have made great Progress indeed in your Amour, if like the Tartars in their March, you are got to Plundering already, before there is any News of your being so much as arrived in the Countrey. If you get within one Step of the last, before you have got well over the first, ten to one but you'll make more haste than good speed. — To those — *Oscula quæ Venus — Quintâ parte sui Nectaris imbuat* — as Friend Horace has it, before you have so much as made your first Addresses. But we'll be so kind to suppose this is only a Prudential Care you take, that you may know how to behave your self hereafter, when the business is thus far advanc'd. Taking it then at that Point, the truth is, Kissing is a luscious Dyet; 'tis too high Feeding for a Militant Lover, and besides extremely apt to surfeit. He must therefore remember to feed cautiously, as if he were eating Mellons. Moderation verily is an excellent Thing, which he must Observe from the Teeth outward as well as inward, and Kiss as well as Talk with Discretion. It may do like a high Cordial, or a Taster of Cold Tea, a little now and then — but he must have a Care how he makes it his Constant Drink, unless he has a mind to burn his Heart out. Then there are certain Times and Seasons to be Observ'd: For Example, If a pair of soft Lips are about to pronounce some hard thing or other — some terrible repulse or denial — if they pout, and look forbidding and angry — then a *Noli Prosequi* may lawfully be issued out, and one that understands the Methods of that Court, will be for stopping the Proceedings as fast as he's able.

Quest. 6. *How far may Singing and Musick be proper in making Love?*

Ans. There's nothing which Charms the Soul more than fine Musick. Osborn says unluckily, after his manner, of a fine Woman who Sings well, that she's a Trap doubly baited; and why is not the same true of a Man? there being indeed something so ravishing in Musick, whether in Man or Woman, that 'tis almost impossible for any thing that's humane to resist it; tho' in Vocal still more than Instrumental: It smooths all the rugged Passions of the Soul, and like Beauty, bewitches into Love, almost before Persons know where they are. But even here, as well as in all other Cases, Extreams are to be avoided, nothing being more ridiculous than an eternal Fa-la-of a Lover; and a Lady of Sense and Worth wou'd as soon make choice of a Singing Master as one who is always tiring her with hard Names and doleful Dittys. He must then Sing very rarely or never, unless the Lady desires him; he must be neither too forward nor averse, and must not be of the Humour of most Songsters, who neither know when to begin, nor make an end. His Performances must be natural and easie, and carry something of a free and genteel Air; and he must never himself appear too well pleas'd with 'em, but Order it so, that he may seem to Oblige the Lady, not himself, by his Melody: At least let it appear to be accidental only, as if by chance, not knowing any bears him, and for his own private Diversion.

Quest. 7. *Whether wou'd it be greater Prudence and Honesty for a Person of a narrow Fortune to conceal his Unhappy Circumstances 'till after Marriage, or to make his Mistress acquainted with the same as soon as he has gained her Affections?*

Ans. This Question has been partly Answer'd already: We have this to add here, that supposing the Lady such as she is described, and not only Religious and Witty, and Well-born, but generous too, which last he may know by narrowly observing her Sentiments in other Cases of this Nature, we shou'd think it the most prudent and most handsome way to reveal it to her before Marriage; for a Woman of Sense will rather be pleas'd than

otherways, that she can make the Fortunes of a Gentleman who wants nothing else, but may resent it very ill if a Cheat shou'd be put upon her, when she once comes to know it; whereas it must needs encrease her Esteem of the Gentleman, especially if she really loves him, for him to deal so ingeniously with her. — And this for a Form of Courtship; and in Answer to the seven Questions sent us on that Subject.

Quest. 8. *You tell us in one of your Mercuries, in your Definition of Love, that 'tis a little pretty soft thing that playes about the Heart — I desire you to explain this Definition, and what you mean by the Word Thing? and how we may know this thing from any other Playing thereabouts?*

Ans. And here, thinks the subtle Querist, have I blown up the Athenian Mercury for ever, for this certainly they can no more Answer than I find out the Philosophers Stone. However let's try, and see who gets first to the Gole. And first, Love is little because 'tis a Boy, and pretty because 'tis little, and soft because 'tis young, or if you please, because 't has Wings, and consequently the Body on't must be downy. But the sage Querist asks further — What do you mean by a Thing? — O the Philosopher! Why by a Thing we mean a Thing, and believe that's all the rest of the World means by't. But if we must be more explicit, have at Metaphysicks — and accordingly we tell him for once that Res and Ens are synonymous Words, and that Ens is — *Quod habet Essentium*; — and now we have wonderfully Edify'd the Ladies, who may be apt to think there's some harm in all this Latin, tho' there's indeed no more than there is Nonsense in the English. — But we had like to have forgotten one main part of the Doubt — Why does this little pretty soft thing play about the Heart? O Sir! because this cunning young Rogue of a god, loves, like Lesbia's Sparrow, to lye in Ladies Bosoms; and besides, whenever he shoots at 'em, he as certainly splits their Hearts in two as ever Adam Bell did the Apple upon his Childs Head; for, little Urchin as he is, he's such a Dab at his Bow and Arrow, that ne're a Finsbury Archer of 'em all can pretend to come near him. But still how shall we know this thing from another thing that playes about the Heart? What other thing is't that this Querist finds so troublesome in his Doubt? If it be a Louse, the rest of the Description shows the difference, for that's not soft, nor pretty, nor perhaps little neither: If it be a Flea, he has had the *Vera Effigies* of it formerly, Numb. . . Quest. 1. and can ne're sure mistake that for Love. We cou'd make a shift yet to find out another Explanation — We call Love little by a familiar and more endearing way of speaking, usual in all Languages in things of that Nature. Thus the Latins use *Corculum* — which may be Translated little Heart, little Rogue, or what the Reader pleases. We call it pretty, because 'tis so pleasant and agreeable a Passion; soft, because its Effects are so, vid. Quest. 4. and describe it playing about the Heart, because that's the Seat of the Passions. After all, we pretended not to give an Exact starcht Definition of it, but a looser Description only; and we are sure a little, pretty, soft thing, comes nearer Love than a great, ugly, rough Thing, which neither is Love, nor so much as like it, any more than a Lover; nor are the Ladies ever likely to entertain it for such, tho' it shou'd talk of Love this hundred Years.

Those very Learned Questions on which the Author says his Religion depends, will be Answer'd next Saturday.

What was mentioned in the Athenian Mercury, Numb. 13. Vol. 3. concerning certain Offers made to our Bookseller by Mr. De la Crose; as it was a great Truth, so 'tis not in the least denyed by him in his Advertisement. The Reasons why he does not deny it, he Conceals, but except he's MODESTER for the future, we shall Publish 'em to the World. — As for his being concern'd either in our Mercury or Supplements, let the World compare the late Extract he gave of the Voyage into the World of Descartes with an Extract of the same Book which they'll find in the Universal Historical Bibliothegue, and then let 'em judge whether we cou'd ever be so senseless as to admit him into our Society. — We shall add more in our Weekly Account of Books, to be Publish'd ev'ry Wednesday.