

The Athenian Mercury.

Quest 1. **I** Had the Fortune to be joined in Matrimony to a Man who had another Wife and Children by her, which I discovering brought an Indictment against him, and cast him at the Old Bailey for his Life, after which I begg'd he might be Transported, which was granted, some time after I had an account of his death, and was Married some years after his supposed death to another, and lived comfortably with him for above two years when I received a Letter from my first Husband Courting me for my Company, and that I may go over Seas and live with him, &c. Query, Which of the two (if both alive) is my Real Husband? Which of them ought I to follow, or ought I to shun both?

Ans. The first was not your Husband before God, he being another Womans at the same time; for God can't be the Author of Adultery, nor could he be so in the Eye of the Law; being dead in Law before his Transportation, as also for that the Law had join'd him to another before that, this consider'd, the last Husband is not at all concern'd in this Question no more than any other Womans Husband; so that the Querist can't be a less, but must suppose it both Ingratitude and Injustice to leave her last Husband.

Quest. 2. There is a Friend of mine that hath kept a House upwards of Twenty years, and never had any of those sort of Creatures called Crickets till within these few Weeks, they breeding in their House, which is not near any Bake-house, they being dissatisfied in the matter are desirous to have your Opinion herein, whether the Consequence thereof be good or evil?

Ans. There's nothing at all in't but what's Natural, read our former Papers, and you will find this subject particularly treated on.

Quest. 3. Gentlemen, I am afflicted in Body, and have used many Medicines from Doctors, but in vain, I would now with a Godly Sorrow for sins past, and a Resolution of strict Obedience to God for time to come, humble my self before him with Fasting and Prayer to have my affliction removed: All this I know is necessary for the obtaining such a Mercy from him; but I would know your Opinion, whether this, with, or without Sackcloth and Ashes, would be most acceptable to God.

Ans. God Almighty delights in our Innocence not our Afflictions. — You have his own word for it, viz. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the Children of Men. Our Advice is this, That if your former Crimes be such as are more especially against your Neighbour, 'tis suppos'd the Injuries have been either against their Estates or their Persons, if the first, actual Satisfaction must be made, if possible, if not pos-

sible, it must be design'd, and done as soon as able; if it be against their Persons, 'tis either against their Reputations or Bodies; if the first, a reparation must be made the same way that the Injury was done; if against their Bodies, 'tis either by Death, Wounds, &c. or Unchastity: In the first, satisfaction must also be made as far as possible, (tho' we don't believe a Man oblig'd to give himself up to the Law) if the last, such as are injur'd ought to be su'd unto for their pardon, and such methods taken, if possible, as may bring them also to Repentance — If the Sin be more immediately against God, there's no other way but Humiliation, and seeking an Interest in Christ, who only is our Reconciliation to God. — We don't believe Sackcloth and Ashes absolutely necessary; they are only outward Testimonies of Repentance, and not always real neither, God wants none of this, he looks at the Heart. — Be frequent in Prayer, and get the Prayers of the Church for you; God can take off the trouble when he pleases, if he delays, the readiest way to effect it is resignation to his Will.

Quest. 4. About a quarter of a year since I troubled you with three Queries, which I then told you were the first I ever sent, one of them was about Mount Etna, I have carefully enquired into the Mercuries and the Supplements, but cannot find what I sent to you, but abundance of pretty Love Questions Answered in a Weeks time, and several other shadows below your Opinion, but perhaps I might over-look them. I send you here another, and desire the favour of your Solution. A Fellow of a Colledge in Oxon about Twelve years ago made Love to a Vertuous Young Woman, they agreed upon the Match with the Consent of Parents on both sides, whereupon he made a Solemn Contract with her by a Sacred Protestation to God sign'd with his own Hand and Seal never to Marry any before her, but having no Benefice at that time, gave her a Bond of 500 l. to Marry her at the end of three years, which time she waited and refused very good Matches, but the Man immediately after broke his Vow to God, and Contract to her, by Marrying another with less Fortune, and leaving the former to the Contempt of the World, I humbly beg your Opinion whether 'tis more prudent for the Clergy-man to make an Agreement with the injured Woman, or to abide a Tryal in an Open Court of Equity.

Ans. We hope the Relation is not truth, if it be matter of Fact, and can also be prov'd, a Court of Equity (in our Opinion) will give her the Money, if the business be not otherwise compounded.

Quest. 5. I desire your Thoughts upon that Scripture, — 1 Cor. 11. 14. Doth not even Nature it self teach you that if a Man have long

long Hair it is a shame to him.] Whether those that wear long Hair (as abundance now do) not only meer nominal Christians, but such as are Members of particular Churches, and pretend to greater strictness in Religion than others; whether (I say) these Persons do not Sin against the Law of Nature and Apostolical Censure; or whether the Commonness of the Custom of wearing long Hair by Men can make it the less sinful, and whether the pretence that it doth no body harm unless the Parties themselves, hath any weight in it. For I conceive, besides that it is a sin against Nature, (which I suppose doth therefore reach all Persons, Times and Places.) It occasions an unnecessary Expence, and gratifies that corrupt Inclination to Pride of Apparel that is naturally in most Men, but sure by Christians ought to be mortified; besides if it be a sinful Custom, or at least if there be ground to fear or suspect it to be so, the practice is so much the more inexcusable, because there is less Temptation to this Sin than to most others, for there is (as I conceive) neither profit nor pleasure in it, as is usually said also of vain Swearing; or if this Scripture be not to be understood according to the plain litteral sense of it, what other tolerable sense can in reason be made of it?

Ans. 'Tis an Error not only of the Querrists, but of many more, to take Shame for Sin; there's nothing can be a Sin that does not oppose some Law, but this opposes none, ergo, 'tis no Sin; it opposes not the Law of God, being no where mention'd in it, nor the Law of Nature — For Men are Men, tho' diversify'd by Languages; and we find that History makes mention of some Nations that wear their Hair extraordinary long, especially in some parts of the Indies, where the Inhabitants have their Hair above a yard long very commonly, which they Oyl, and bind it round their Head in Wreaths; again the word long is indefinite as to measure, there is no set limit to Mankind, and that which appears long to some Ages is short in comparison to others; our Opinion is — That Custom is the Rule, and he that by a singularity affects the wearing of his Hair either long or shorter than what is worn by his Neighbours, thereby becomes Ridiculous, and a Ridiculous Action is the proper Object of Shame, which shocks our Nature, and this we take to be the meaning of St. Paul's words, and not any thing that is sinful.

Quest. 5. Another Question I desire your Solution of, is this, — Whether or no (as to those Creatures which God hath allowed us to take away their Lives for our Food and Nourishment) it be not sinful and wicked in Christians willingly to put any of them to more pain than is absolutely needful to take away their Lives, and if so, whether Cock-fighting, Bull-baiting, &c. be not unlawful for Christians.

Ans. As in the aforesaid Case, there's no Law broken, so that all that this amounts to, is, a certain sign of an ill-natur'd not a sinful Person.

Quest. 6. Why do you seem to ridicule your

own Notions by contradicting your selves as to Males and Females in Trees.

Ans. We beg this Gentlemans pardon if our last Merry Answer has any way conduc'd to his uneasiness; since we design'd nothing of that Nature. 'Tis true we offer'd what the Learned have already said upon the Subject, to wit, That there is a difference of Sexes in Trees, but with submission we can't chuse but believe it a Merry Conceit, and no more; all the Arguments that have been offer'd prove it not no more than that Motion is the Male of all Matter, which by Action produces Heat: But to give the reason of our own Negative Conclusions; there is no need of Male and Female without Communication, and if Trees Communicate, it must be by the Fibres, or some other near way; but we are experimentally assur'd that very great distances have not hindred productions, besides we shall have most Trees to be all Male, or all Female, since we can Name several Species that no Effects can shew any difference at all betwixt 'em.

Quest. 7. Your design of exposing Atheism is worthy and commendable; I shall give you two Instances to be inserted, if you please in the next Paper. My Mother's Eldest Brother dy'd at my Father's House at Tacklestone in Norfolk. He dreamt a little before his Death, that his Father was dead, and bury'd five Foot deep in Water. That which he dreamt of his Father besel himself, for the Grave-maker had no sooner taken up a Brick in the Chancel, but the Water appear'd, and although my Father set many hands to work to empty the Grave, yet it could not be done, but they were forc'd to lay the Corps into the Water; and to add to the strangeness of the thing, there was never any Water before or since found either in the Church or Church-yard Graves; my Father was Minister of that place eleven years, and in the wettest Seasons he never knew any appear. I think the second more worthy your notice. The Minister of Hendon near London, told my Father of a little Child in his Parish, who when it was playing with his Companions, said, I shall die to Morrow and be put into the Pit-hole. The Child continued well till the next day, and then fell sick and dy'd.

Ans. — We have already given our Opinion of Instances of this Nature. See our former Volumes.

Quest. 7. I have to maintain my wicked Extravagances wrong'd a certain Person who is now dead both of Money and other things, for which I being very sensible of the heinousness of my Offence against Almighty God, am resolv'd to the utmost of my power to make a full and speedy restitution to the Widow of the Deceased, but the shame of owning my self guilty of such a Fact makes me unwilling to put my Name to a Letter I shall send with the Money. Pray Gentlemen your Opinion whether the satisfaction woud be sufficient without discovering who I am.

Ans. We have in our former Volumes an Instance almost of the same Nature to which we refer you, only telling you in short, that Restitution is always absolutely necessary where possible, but the Criminal is not obliged to expose his fault personally, since Custom and the prejudices of the Age will meet the greatest sincerity with an uncharitable Treatment.