

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, December 1. 1691.

Quest. 1. **I**S there ever a Poet among the Athenian Society, and suppose a Question should be sent in Verse, should it be answer'd in the same?

Ans. 'Twill be time enough to answer this when the Querist has made the Experiment.

Quest. 2. *Who is the best English Satyrift now living?*

Ans. We cou'd easily tell him the worst, but let that alone; and we need not tell him who was the best, but *Strephon is now no more*, and *Oldham* is dead, who came after him. But to give our Judgment impartially as to the present; as long as either *Abfolom* and *Achitophel*, or *Albia* and *Albianns* are left, we must conclude Mr. D--- not only the best Satyrift but the best every thing else except the best Christian, and even for that he's now of the best Religion for a Poet of any in the World.

Quest. 3. *Do the Modern English Dramatique Writers excell most, or those of the last Age?*

Ans. Those who first brought our Stage any thing near the Ancients, as *Shakespear*, *Johnson*, and some few more, had not only most of 'em a great Genius of their own to shape and mould what they found, but a vast stock of Matter to set up with, and therefore no wonder they were such great Traders. For Tragedy, they had then not only all the History, but even all the Fable of the World to work upon, as well as the Works of other Tragicians, both Greek and Latin; and for Comedy, as well all the Fools of former Ages as our own plentiful Crop. But our more Modern Writers are either in History forc'd to graft on what their Forefathers have done before 'em, whom it may sometimes happen, they may mend for the worse, and strike out Beauties instead of Faults; or else patch 'em up with a few mean Scenes in comparison of what they so badly imitate — Or if they tread new paths, be forc'd to invent monstrous and unnatural Stories, which can never do well upon the Stage, where we expect the Image of Life. And then for Comedy (with reverence to all the Quality of Pit and Box be it spoken) our Fools are now almost all exhausted, and the same Fool seldom does well twice; and besides, we require better bred Fools than our Forefathers were contented with, for a Merry Millar or Cobler would make Excellent Sport at the Red-Bull or Globe, whereas nothing will down with us now under Lawyers Clerk, or a Country Gentleman. Now tho' it must be confess'd there have been new Fields open'd for Tragedy, both by the Discovery of a new World, and many great accidents in this: And tho' we have now and then a New fashion'd Folly or Humour starts up to divert the World first, and the Stage afterwards; yet neither are the Instances of the former kind very numerous, nor are all strange or dreadful Stories fit for Tragedy; nor in the latter case, are there enough without a great deal of Art in the Cooking of 'em, to satisfy the sharp Stomachs of such Audiences as will be all Criticks in spite of Nature. For which Reasons we think that one who hits the true Air either of Tragedy or Comedy in this Age, performs a more difficult task than those who did so formerly. Upon the whole, tho' we have few, if any Writers at present, whom Nature has given so great a Genius, or such strong Thoughts as those of former Ages, yet we certainly write more correctly than they did, and our Humours for the most part are better Comedy, tho' their's better Farce than ours.

Quest. 4. *Is there any Deceit in a Brimmer?*

Ans. Yes, the most in the World; --there's first a *Deceptio visus* in the thing it self, for either 'tis not full when you think 'tis, or else 'tis over-full, as it must be if it be full, which it never is unless 'tis more than Brimfull, and yet then it loses the Name, in neither case can be properly called a Brimmer. The Explanation of this Riddle is that, according to the *Carpuscularian Philosophy*, all fluids are only heaps of round par-

ticles, which by their Figure have an easie motion: Thus drops of water are round, when in their natural Figure, endeavouring thereby to hold their Continuity, as being oblig'd to flow as near as possible to their proper Center, we mean the Drops, and therefore into a round Figure, as may be observ'd in water casually spilt on any dusty place, which rolls along in big round Drops as long as it can to preserve its self. And as Drops of water are thus round, so necessarily the surface of 'em is round too when joyn'd together, (tho' it appears plain, if we look on it in small quantities,) as may be seen in the Sea, and if we look narrowly, even in a Glass of Beer, or Water; for as 'tis impossible exactly to fill a hollow Cylinder with a Globe, but that some part of it must be above or below it's edges, where, if you fill the Glass to the Edges, the middle of the Liquor will still be higher, because 'tis round; and if you only fill till the middle is even with the Edges, the sides will not rise so high. That's the first Deceit in a Brimmer, but there are a hundred more in a Moral Sence, as well as a Physical. In a word, that old Saw is far enough from being universally true — *In vino veritas*, unless we'd translate it, *When the Wines in, the Wits out*, or *Children and Fools tell Truth*. 'Tis true, Men generally speak what they think at that Time, but then heres still a great cheat in the business, for they speak what oftentimes they never think either before or after. Well may we call a Man disguised that has got too large a Brimmer in his Head, for it makes a Fool of the wisest man in the World, it turns the Politician inside out, and makes him vomit out all his stinking Secrets, till he looks as silly as an Irish Teague. — O' the other side, it transmogrifies the Cocker into a Statesman, and turns Trinculo into a Lord; nay, a greater miracle than all these, makes the vilest old Grub of an Usurer, grow as free and as generous as his mad young Heir, who what he goes to Hell for, will spend at the Devil: --- And if there is no Deceit in all this, we are strangely mistaken.

Quest. 5. *Whether Songs on Moral, Religious or Divine Subjects, composed by Persons of Wit and Virtue, and set to both grave and pleasant Tunes, would not by the Charms of Poetry, and sweetness of Musick, make good Impressions of Modesty and Sobriety on the Young and Noble, make them really in Love with Virtue and Goodness, and prepare their minds for the design'd Reformation? and what are your Thoughts on the late Pastoral Poem, &c.*

Ans. Nothing but a Stock is proof against the Charms of Musick, nay even that will feel, tho' it can't hear it. We are not apt to believe so ill of Mankind as many do, but think before ill habits are induc'd, those common Principles of goodness left in their Natures, especially assist'd with Christianity, would rather incline 'em to Virtue than Vice, were one but dress'd as lovely as generally we see the other: Now Musick being an Intellectual as well as a sensible pleasure, (for it depends indeed chiefly upon Number and Harmony, which nothing is a proper Judge of but what has Reason) and of all Musick Vocal is the most moving, especially when good Sence, good Poetry, good Tunes, and a good Voice meet together; we see not how Virtue, which is even of it self so amiable, can choose but be much more so, when thus adorn'd and attended. But still the Question is, who shall be her Tyre-woman? For she may tarry a long time before our Poets will trouble themselves about it. And here naturally enough would come in a Discourse of Divine Poetry and Poets, but we have too much Business already to Digress, or discourse on that Subject, unless our Question call'd us more immediately unto it. However, seeing this Querist seems not only to be Poetically inclin'd, but to desire our Thoughts on the late Pastoral Poem, we shall here add 2 or 3 lines to the Author of it.

To the Author of the late Famous Pastoral Poem.

YEs, -- by each Fountain, River, Stream and Grove,
By all the pleasant haunts the Muses love.
By them themselves, and great Apollo too,
I'll swear I hardly love them more than you.
Say, Dear unknown! what is't that charms me so?
What secret Nectar through thy Lines does flow?
What Deathless Beauties in thy Garden grow?
Immortal wit in Nature's easiest dress,
A Paradise rais'd in a Wilderness.
Tho' harsh thy Subject, haggard and unkind,
And rough, as bitter blasts of Northern Wind;
Thy Divyne Spirit corrects each ruder Sound
And breaths delicious Zephyrs all around.
Thus can our Kindred, Art, and Painters Care
Make even Storms look Beautiful and Fair.
But whilst I praise, I must accuse thee too,
When thou hadst done so much, no more to do.
When to the brink of Boyne thy Hero came
There to break off the chase of him and Fame.
Where had bin Albion now, had he thus stood,
But floating in another Sea of Blood?
To leave him when the Floods crept soft along,
And Silver Boyne listned to hear thy Song,
To hear the Naiads Sing what thou dost write,
As when she rose to see thy Hero fight:
See him all o're with springing Laurels spread,
And all his Angel Guard around his Head.
This wields his flaming Sword -- the Rebels fly,
And that the fatal Ball puts gently by.
Which Britains MIGHTY GENIUS shook to see,
And trembled at the Danger more than He.
This! sweetest Bard, hadst thou proceeding Sung,
How had the Woods, how had the Valleys rung,
And Pollio's learned Muse, who sits above,
The Shepherds Admiration, and their Love,
Had deign'd thee Smiles, as all the World esteems,
Which dares not sure dislike what pleases him.

Quest. 6. In Discourse with a Person disaffected to the Government, concerning a famous Book not long since written in the Defence thereof, wherein the example of Constantine the Great is alledged, who made War on Licinius for his persecuting the Christians, 'twas alledg'd, that the Example did not reach the Case, and that Constantine did not fight with Licinius because he persecuted the Christians, but because he broke the Contract made between 'em at their Entrance on the Empire: Your Judgment on the Case?

Ans^r. We think there are many more Instances in which that History hits our late Circumstances, than that Reverend Person is pleas'd to observe, all which are given by the Historians as the Causes of the War between the two Emperors, as may appear to any who will take the pains to consult Eusebius his Ecclesiastical History, Lib. 10. Where he tells us, 'Licinius banish'd all Christians from his Courts, and depriv'd the Soldiers of their Dignity and Honour, unless they'd sacrifice to Devils: He abolished the wise and ancient Laws of the Romans, murder'd their Nobility, &c. and grew so much worse and worse, that his latter doings still exceeded his former, proceeding at last to assault the Bishops, and because they were the true Worshippers of Almighty God, accounted 'em Enemies to his Government and Empire: --- And when all this went on well with him, he intended at last to have made a general persecution of the Christians, had not God, who fights for his Servants, speedily prevented his wicked Designs --- By raising up his Servant Constantine with a mighty Army in Defence of his Quarrel, and of all good men, whom God granted the Victory: --- And agen, When he was fall'n into the extreams of Madness, that pious Emperor and Defender of the Christian Faith, perceiving he was no longer to be suffer'd, thought fit voluntarily to attempt the Deliverance of those who were so injuriously oppress'd by the Tyrant, and that he might save many, resolv'd to destroy a few bad men. Hence we see, tho' perhaps Licinius might have some secret design against Constantine; and tho' there might be a Con-

tract between 'em, yet tho' this Contract did not, as appears to us, reach the Christians in Licinius's Dominions, 'twas the oppression and Persecution of those Christians which is alledg'd as the Cause of the War, as is yet plainer from the account which Socrates gives of the same matter, Lib. 1st. 'Licinius, says he, oppress'd and silenc'd the Bishops, and persecuted the Christians, both with Corporal punishments, and loss of their Estates, -- whereby he incens'd the Emperor Constantine against him, and thereupon the League was broken --- 'Licinius once conquer'd was used courteously, and permitted to go away and lead a private Life; but not content with this, he gather'd an Army of Barbarians, and assaulted the Empire, -- the End of which War is so well known, that it need not here be inserted.

It having been observ'd, that more Persons have dy'd suddenly within these few Months than for many years together heretofore, 'tis therefore desir'd of all persons that know any Instances of this Nature, that they would send 'em to John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry, with the most remarkable Circumstances relating to their Deaths, there being now preparing for the Press a History of those that have dyed suddenly, &c.

The Proposals for the Young Students Library, are to be had at the Raven in the Poultry.

THE VISIONS OF THE SOUL, before it comes into the Body, in several Dialogues: Wherein the Nature, Conceptions, Doctrines and Correspondencies of Unbodied Spirits are distinctly treated of, and many things wholly New are advanc'd: Together with a Brief Account of the ATHENIAN SOCIETY, and of the different Tempers of the QUERISTS. Written by a Member of the Athenian Society. Price Bound One Shilling Six Penn. Sold at the Raven in the Poultry.

The Ladies Questions will be answered next Tuesday.

The Supplement to the Fourth Volume of the Athenian Mercury will be publish't next Fryday, containing Extracts of the most Considerable Books NEWLY PRINTED IN ENGLAND, and in the Foreign Journals, &c. and the 12 Numbers that Compleat the first 18 Numbers of the 4th. Volume; will be publish't Dec. 14th, where will be Answered many of those Questions so much expected.

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THe Extract of Liquoras, being a Composition of the best Medicines for the undermentioned Diseases, and altogether different from the common Extract of that Name, is far beyond any Medicament ever known, or at least published, to cure all sorts of Coughs, Chin-Coughs, Hoarsness, Shortness of Breath, and any Disease of the Lungs that is Curable. It is exceeding good against the Consumption and spitting of Blood: It may be taken at any time, and the oftner the better; being so safe and pleasant, that it may freely be given to a Child of any Age. This Extract is for the Convenience of carrying it in the pocket made up in Rolls, and sold for one shilling the Roll.

To be sold by Mr. Dorman Newman, Bookseller at the Kings Arms in the Poultry, the corner Shop of Green Alley, and at the Rainbow Coffee-house within Temple Bar.

* * There is now publish'd a Draught of the Arch that stood in Cheapside on the fourth of this Instant November, (being his Majesties Birth-day) and the first (being the day of his Majesties happy Landing in England) done upon a Copper-plate in Mezzo Tinto Work, and may be had at Mr. Bowles in St. Pauls Church-yard, Mr. Lence near Fleet-Ditch, Mr. Bourns at the Square on London-Bridge, and at most Picture Shops.