

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, January 9. 1691.

Quest. 1. **L**ooking over Sir William Temple's Memoirs, I met with a Story in it concerning an old Parrot belonging to the late Prince Maurice, that readily answer'd to several Questions promiscuously put to him, which you may more particularly inform your selves of, by referring to the aforesaid Book, Page 58, 59. I am very doubtful as to the matter of Fact, tho' Sir William says 'twas told him as a real Truth by the Prince himself; but supposing it to be so, I should be glad to know by what means this Creature attained to the knowledge of doing that which to humane reason seems so very improbable?

Ans. Scaliger tells us, that he saw a Crow in the French King's Court that was taught to fly at Patridges or any other Fowl from the Faulconers fist. In Hist. Man. Art. c. 11. p. 173. Cardinal Assanio had a Parrot that was taught to repeat the Apostles Creed verbatim in Latin, and in the Court of Spain, there was one that could sing the Gamut perfectly; if at any time he was out he would say, Nova Bueno, that is not well; but when he was right he would say, Bueno va, now it is well, John Barnes in lib. de Equivocatione. In the time of War betwixt Augustus Caesar and M. Antonius, there was a poor Man at Rome, who purposing to provide for himself against all Events, had this Contrivance, he bred up two Crows with his utmost Diligence, and brought it to pass that in their prating Language, one would salute Caesar, and the other Antoninus: This Man when Augustus return'd Conqueror met him upon the way with his Crow upon his fist, which ever and anon came out with his *Salve Caesar Victor Imperator*, Hail Caesar, the Conqueror and Emperour; Augustus delighted herewith, purchased the Bird of him at the price of 20000 Deniers of Rome. 'Twou'd be too long to mention the tractability of the Dragon Seneca speaks of, *Moris Itiner.* p. Hist. Man. Art. c. 11. p. 169. or what strange things have been perform'd by Emanuel King of Portugal his Elephant, the quickness of some Dogs at Rome, and Constantinople. Our Thoughts upon the whole are these, that the Novelty of things makes 'em wonderful, whenas there's not the least reason for wonder, if we consider the Nature of such things. We'll grant it possible for a Parrot to answer distinctly to such and such Questions; but this action needs no reason to the performance of it, since it may be effected without it, viz. by an *habituated Idea* of things; not only Man, but the inferiour Ranks of Animals receive their *Idea's* by the Senses. Suppose the Ear, for that comes nearest the Question, such and such Sounds oft repeated, and such and such Actions immediately preceding or immediately following such Sounds, must necessarily form a *Complex Idea* both of the Sound and Action: So that when either such Action or such Sound is repeated, an Idea of the other must necessarily attend it. Thus Dogs are taught to fetch and carry, and thus Parrots talk when they speak more words than one together, as for Instance, Poor Poll, these vvords being often repeated together, if one of 'em be mention'd and the other left, there must necessarily be an Idea of the other Sound, because Custom and habit chain 'em together; and if two words, why not three? and if three, why not many together? there needs but a little more diligence, care and frequent instruction. Some would wonder to see an Elephant dance, and would suspect a possession by the Devil, or at least Witchcraft, when all is nothing but the pure Effect of Custom upon repetition of *Complex Idea's*. The manner of teaching an Elephant to dance has been thus practic'd. They bring a Young Elephant upon a Floor heated underneath, and play upon the Musick whilst he lifts up his Legs, and shifts his Feet about by reason of the torture of the heat, this often practic'd he does so upon the bare Sound of Musick: So that in Shows, when he dances after Musick, 'tis not from any

principles of Reason, but from the Concatenation of the 2 Idea's of Heat and Musick, which Custom has habituated him to, and thus it is with Dogs, Birds, dancing Horses, Parrots, Magpies, &c.

Quest. 2. Our Furors, (particularly at Justice-Hall in the Old-baily) that try in Cases of Life and Death, are oblig'd to be (or at least to tell the Court that they are) all of one Mind, before they can give, or the Court receive their Verdict: And it being but reasonable to suppose that it may so happen, that one or more of the twelve may dissent from the major part, as being of a deeper Judgment, &c. or by building upon false Notions, which yet he believes, and cannot be perswaded otherwise but that they are the Truth, &c. In short, we'll suppose him to act according to his Conscience, whether otherwise he be in the right or no, and then Query, How must such a Man act, so as to keep a good Conscience towards God and Man, so as not to be guilty of the blood of the Prisoner, as well as of Perjury, if he bring him in guilty and he is not, of Perjury if he brings him in not guilty and he be, or of hazarding his own Life, and the lives of his fellow Furors, by being shut up without Food, till one of them dye, or else comply, tho' against his Conscience, that he and they may not undergo that hardship and danger?

Ans. The Law supposes not only good men but men of Sence to be concern'd in Verdicts; and if so, Truth never clashing with Truth, they must all be of one mind at the first, or else upon laying down their Arguments the prejudices are soon remov'd, for truth will take place of every unprejudic'd person. Tho' we willingly grant, that if we take the World as it is, the majority of Votes would be an argument of Error: but the care is infinitely alter'd, where persons of Sence and Judgment are concern'd. But suppose, as you say, that one amongst the rest, as in the case of Mr. Crone, does withstand all the rest, and cannot comply without Perjury or Murder as he pretends. To which we answer, If the most reasonable Arguments cannot be enough convincing, 'tis ten to one but 'tis the prejudice of Interest, Passion, &c. and not Reason that holds up the side, and then the Question belongs not to such persons, for such as are so prejudic'd in Cases of Life and Death, can easily away with Perjury or Murder: but to go yet nearer, and suppose both sides honest and Conscientious, we answer then, honest and Conscientious Arguments will soon decide the Controversie, for 'tis absolutely impossible that many Patrons of Truth cannot explain it to the convincing one or two: So that after all, we conclude the Supposition an Impossibility, or else the Wisdom of our Judges, and the very essential parts of our Laws were wicked and unreasonable in enacting such Obligations; but never could the greatest Enemies of our Laws, charge our Laws themselves, as wicked and Erroneous, only the abuse and perverting of 'em, has and may be in too many Cases censurable.

Quest. 3. The Tuesday before Christmas day I gave you an account of a Gentlewoman who hath mightily impoverished her self and Children by daily relieving the necessities of her near Relations, the tenderness of her Nature being such, that she could not possibly forbear supplying their wants, whilst she had a competency, tho' she thought she should suffer for it hereafter: Indeed her Objects of Charity were always very destitute of any other help, seeming to be thrown upon her by the immediate hand of Providence, upon which Providence she depends for a maintenance of her own Children; but she is very fearful since she finds so much difficulty in her declining condition, that God Almighty who is the best Judge will rather scourge her for her folly in doing more than she was able, than reward her good intentions in any degree: This Gentlewoman is a Friend of mine, and it is a great grief to me to see her in so much Affliction, and in such doubt of such a present and future punishment for her good deeds: Pray Sirs your Thoughts and Advice upon the whole?

Ans.



*Ans.* Every person ought to keep as near as they can an exact account of their Incomes, that they may proportion their Expences to 'em. If this Rule were observ'd, a great deal of Debts and Cheats wou'd vanish out of the Commonwealth, and we might also have very good Rules and limits for our *Actual Charities*, (our intentional ones are only known and rewarded by God.) Having an Account, or very near it of our Incomes, 'tis easie by experience to find what is absolutely necessary for our selves. What is above that we may give, but no more is any where expected from us; but if after all, some well meaning and charitable persons shou'd act imprudently, by making coming *Guzmans* and unfit persons the Objects of their Charity; nay, if they shou'd intrench upon their own absolute Necessities, they may yet be assur'd, provided they are not willfully wasteful, and do it not with a design to tempt by Providence, they shall be certainly provided for. There is not, that we know of halffo many promises made in the whole Sacred Writ to any one thing as Charity, no doubt but because God very well knew the distrustfulness of our Nature. Our Saviour was well acquainted with this when he spent so many words, contrary to his usual Custom upon other Subjects, in perswading his Disciples of a certainty of convenient Subsistence, Consider the Lillies of the Field, &c. It wou'd be too long for our design to enumerate all the promises made to the Charitable, of which the Proverbs are very full, we shall only take notice of Davids Observation. *I never knew the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging bread*; from which some wou'd infer, that to see a poor Beggar is always a certain Sign that he or his Parents were wicked. This Verse is truly explain'd (tho' not commonly taken notice of) by the preceding, *The Righteous is merciful and lendeth*, &c. So that without any far fetch't Interpretations, the Merciful and Lender is Davids Righteous man here; and then the Sence is, *I never knew the merciful and Lender forsaken, nor his Seed begging their Bread*; which agrees very well with the rest of the promises to the Charitable. Our Advice is, that the Querist take heed of Melancholly, which may do her an Injury; that she compute her Estate, that her Expences every way may not exceed her Receipts, and then let her be as charitable as her own Necessities will let her, and wish to do more if she were able, and 'tis all that God and Nature demand of her.

*Quest. 4.* Besides the many gross Immoralities which have overspread a great part of the Nation; there is a certain Infirmary, which hath seized almost all the rest, which I call the Prudentials; and in short, it is the Scorbute of the Soul. It hath of late been bred more than ever before, from the Excrements of a late Plagiary, called Thomas Hobbes of Malmsbury, who used by stealth to lick up the Spittle of an ancient ingenious Orator call'd Carneades; and with that and the scraps which he stole from the Troughs of Epicurus and one or two of his Herd, he fed a rotten and most poisonous Carcass. Yet being well skil'd in the Art of Dressing and Trimming, he presented himself to the World as a sound and strong Philosopher, and hoped to be ador'd by Posterity as the Author of a famous Sect: and he had the advantage of a very degenerate Age of people, who having little sence of the Virtue and Manhood of their Ancestors, but despising that, became very sequacious to this Impostor. Some of them so much admired him, that they even fed upon his Excrements: And those became thereby almost transform'd into Brutes and Devils. Others, whose Stomachs could not bear so gross food as that, having been better educated from their Childhood, were yet infected, at a distance, with the Odor of them: and tho' they retain indeed the form of Men, and would be thought no mean Men in their Countrey, yet are they in truth, God knows, a very sickly weak Generation; always complaining, usually of Ill management and the State of the Nation, but with great Caution, that no body hear them, but such as are as cautious as themselves that they come in no danger; or gravely censuring the Rashness, or tenderly pitying the Indiscretion of such as will not be govern'd to act by their Prudentials. Little Sence they have of the Powers either of Truth, or of a manifest just Cause, or of the Divine Providence in protecting and assisting honest, Virtuous and Generous Undertakings. The great and late Experiments of the Admirable Providence of God in the Deliverance of these Nations from the very brink of Ruine, hath

little or no effect to animate them to any generous Action: And as little hath the Noble Example of the Glorious Undertaking of a most Heroick Prince. No Sence of Religion, no Honour of a Virtuous Prince, no regard to the preservation of a Noble Constitution, no sence of Duty or necessity can raise in these Scorbuteck Souls any thing worthy of an English-man, much less of a Christian. Not only the the fear of a Great Man, but even of Reproach, and being laugh't at by a few empty dissolute People, presently extinguisheth all sence of those things in such as are infected with this Disease. Were there nothing worse in it, even Charity and Pity to those Persons would move a good Nature to think of some fit Remedy for their Relief; but there is more in it. The persons infected with this Disease have a very specious appearance, and like fat rotten Sheep, can hardly be known until they be opened: And if we should have any store of this sort (as I fear we have too many) get into places, how sick and weak a State and Management of Affairs must it needs produce! This, Gentlemen, is the Case, and my Question upon it is only this, What Remedies are most proper and fit to be used in this Case?

*Ans.* We have heretofore engaged our selves to consider of Mr. Hobbs Principles, not but that there are several Learned Pens have sufficiently expos'd 'em already, and shewn that whatever he has advanc'd, is either false or old discoveries disguis'd and muffled up in new Language, which he pass'd off for his own, knowing well enough that noise and words take with most persons, sooner than a genuine and distinct Idea of things themselves. All that we can offer in answer to the Question is this, that since it is too probable, but that Mr. Hobbs's Writings have spread farther than their Answers, we will undertake to prove this Assertion against all his Disciples, which are numerous enough, That every particular period in all his Writings is either destructive to the Principles of Reason, or else that he has borrow'd 'em elsewhere; if this upon Examination appears to be truth, Mr. Hobbs's Followers may be asham'd of their Master; if it be not, we desire his Followers to offer a few particulars, naming the Book, Page, &c. whereby our charge upon him may appear to be ill grounded. We promise the World to be very faithful in publishing what any person shall offer to us on this Subject, with our Animadversions upon 'em, which perhaps may be a little serviceable to the Age where prejudices are not already habituated.

\* \* The Ladies Questions will be answer'd next Tuesday.  
J. F. 670. 4.

All Gentlemen who expect the benefit of our Proposals for the Young Students Library, are desired to send in their Money with all speed to John Duntun at the Raven in the Poultry; for we having already got a great number of Subscribers, not only in England, but in Foreign parts, shall have this Work in the Press, in a few Days, in which such great care will be taken both as to good paper, and as to the accuracy of the Translations, &c. that we doubt not but to give Satisfaction to all Subscribers.

An ADVERTISEMENT to all those who suffer'd under the late Cruelties of George Lord Jefferies.

The third Impression of the Book entituled, The New Martyrology, Or Bloody Assizes, being quite sold off, a 4th Impression of the said Book is speedily design'd. This is therefore to desire all those Countrey Gentlemen, and others who had Friends that suffer'd in the West of England, and elsewhere, under the Cruelty of George Lord Jefferies, to send to John Duntun at the Raven in the Poultry, all they have met with remarkable relating to the Lives, Tryals, Apprehensions, Imprisonments, Sufferings and Deaths of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, Arthur Earl of Essex, William Lord Russell, Coll. Sidney, Alderman Cornish, Mr. Colledge, the late Duke of Monmouth, or his Expedition into the West, the E. of Argyle, Coll. Rumbolds, Mr. Dangerfields, Sir Thomas Armstrong, Capt. Wadcot, Mr. Rouse, Mr. Benjamin and Mr. William Hewling, Mr. William Fenkins, Mr. Batiscomb, the Lady Life, Mrs. Gault, Mr. Northrop, Mr. Charles Speak, Coll. Holmes, Mr. Hicks, Mr. Lark, Mr. Madders, Capt. Kid, Dr. Temple, Mr. Parret, Capt. Annesley, and Capt. Mathews. This is also to desire 'em to send to the forementioned place all that they have met with remarkable, in reference to others not here recited who suffer'd in the West, &c. from the Year 1678. to 1689. or any thing they have met with remarkable relating to the Life and Death of George Lord Jefferies, that so this Book, entituled, The Bloody Assizes, may be now compleated in this New Edition, to which will be added an Alphabetical Table, as also the Portraits of the most eminent Sufferers, (and the Elegies and Epitaphs that were written upon them) if sent to the Raven in the Poultry by the tenth of February next.