

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, February 13. 1692.

Quest. 1. **W**hat Accounts do you meet with about the Original of Shrovetide?

Ans. Shrovetide is from the Saxon, it comes from the word *shrive*, *shrift*, or *shrove*; or the Tide or Time when they Shrove or confess'd their Sins, (as was customary with the *Catholicks*) and received the blessed Sacrament, to the end that they might more religiously observe the Holy time of *Lent* immediately ensuing. Some believe it might come from the word *Scribere*, to write down, because their Confession was usually taken in Writing; but in process of time they turn'd it into a Custom of Invitations, and taking their leave of Flesh and other Dainties, and afterwards by degrees into Sports and Merriments. — Nor was this the only Custom of *Catholicks*, but we find the same practis'd by the *Turks*, &c. which they call *Ramadan*, 'twas then (as they say) that the *Alcoran* came down from Heaven, and therein they fast, which they begin in this manner. The night before they all Junket and revell till they can distinguish a White thread from a black by the Morning Light, and then they leave off and begin to fast, such as eat or drink privately, are (at least) bastinado'd, if no greater punishment be inflicted on 'em: The *Turks Lent* is very strictly observed, even in War, Travel, Sicknes, &c. See *Thevenots Travels into the Levant*, p. 41. for a fuller account of this matter, as also the Carnivals of other Countries.

Quest. 2. What Nation invented Painting?

Ans. Some have been of Opinion that the Off-spring of *Abraham* that went into *Egypt* were the first, and that they taught it to the *Egyptians*; but 'tis more universally believed that the *Egyptians* were the first Painters, (*Statuaries* and *Philosophers*) and that *Greece* brought it to perfection, but what part of *Greece* is yet doubted. Some wou'd assign it to the *Sicyones*, others to *Corinth*, where by drawing lines round the Extremities of a Man, was rudely made the first step to picture. The *Greeks* began with one Colour, and by degrees brought it to the perfection which we find in the days of *Apelles*: From *Greece* it went to *Rome*, where it was almost lost again by the Inundations of the *Huns*, *Vandals*, *Goths* and *Lombards*, but was restor'd afterwards by *Titian*, *Papaeal*, *Urbino*, *Angelo*, &c.

Altho' it be the Opinion of a late Author, that the *Egyptians* were the first Painters, yet we find the most Ancient Writers deny it, tho' in assigning the place they disagree amongst themselves. *Pliny* wou'd persuade us that one *Gyges* a *Lydian* was the very first Author: *Theophrastus* wou'd have one *Polignotus* an *Athenian* to be the Institutor thereof, but *Pliny* says that *Polignotus* was a *Thalian*, and was only the first that painted Women in single Apparel, and trimmed their heads with Curls and sundry Colours: And 'tis very probable that *Pliny* was in the right, since Painting with divers Colours was not practis'd for a considerable time after the first Invention, *Cleophrastus* of *Corinth* being the first Author of divers Colours, as *Telephanes* was the first that drew with one Colour only: So that after all, a full Answer to the Question now, wou'd be very Marvellous, since the Ancients themselves disagree about it.

We shall only take notice by the by, that a late Author that has writ on this Subject, when he endeavour'd to prove that the House of *Israel* that went down into *Egypt* were not the first Authors of Painting, he affirms, that the *Egyptians* had too mean a value of 'em to learn any thing of 'em, and that the Interest of *Joseph* was not sufficient to gain his Brethren a greater favour than the Province; which is a gross mistake: see *Gen.* 45. 6. and there 'tis evident, that they had the CHOICE of all *Egypt* to dwell in. He says also that *Aaron* learn'd

to make the Golden Calf from the *Egyptians*: See *Exod.* 32. 24. from whence 'tis plain that the words, *I cast 'em into the fire*, (meaning the Ear-rings and Gold it was made on) and there came out this Calf: Suppose that 'twas a rude accidental Form, liker a Calf than any thing else, and not an Imitation of the *Egyptian Apis*, and by consequence not learn'd of the *Egyptians*. Another Error is, that the *Egyptians* bragg'd they had Painting six thousand Years before it went into *Greece*, which was long before the World was made, and ought to have been but six hundred years: As also that the *Sicyones*, not *Sicyones*, as he asserts, were the first Practisers of Painting in *Greece*.

Quest. 3. Is there any such thing as the Philosophers Stone?

Ans. We have already laugh'd at this Question, and not only so, but shou'd an Impossibility how it shou'd be effected; and if another comes, or shou'd come, who shou'd laugh more or less at it, it is but *actum agere*, the same in another dress, which consider'd, there's nothing in the World more ridiculous in the case of new discoveries, or the decision of Questions, to do what has been done already.

Quest. 4. Whence have we our Opium, whether is it hot or cold, if hot, why Narcotick, (or stupifying) if cold, why Sudorifick; (or procuring sweat;) let it be what it will, how comes it to have that deference for those Animal Spirits that are required for the Motion of the Heart, and for respiration, as very often to spare 'em, whilst it seizes the others that communicate with the Organs of the External Senses?

Ans. Opium is but the Tear that distills from *Poppies*, which at certain times in the Year have incisions made in 'em for that end. We have it from *Greece*, *Cabaia* in the *East Indies*, *Grand Cairo* in *Egypt*.

No one has ever ask'd whether Opium be hot or cold for some Ages; the Opinion of the Ancients about its being cold having been for a long time exploded, since upon Experiment its found to be inflammable, bitter and Sulphureous, and of all Narcoticks it has the finest Sulphur; that of *Henbane*, *Hemlock* and *Mandrake* being more impure and gross, and consequently more injurious, even sometimes to fatality it self. Opium is primarily Hypnotick, whereas other Anodine Sulphurs are but so by accident, as that of *Mettals*, *Minerals*, and that which lodges in *Native Cinnabar*. The Reason why Treacle and *Mithridate* provoke Sweat, is from the Opium that is in 'em; for if those Electuaries are prepared without it, they have not that Effect, as we find by the Experiments of the Learned *Wallaus*, p. 61. Add to this that Narcoticks have in 'em a Volatile Salt, as Opium, *Saffron*, from whence arises the proper reason of their resolution in the Stomach, when given in Emulsions, Spirit of Wine, Brandy, &c. The Salt is left behind, whilst the sulphureous Effluvia's are convey'd to, and circulated with the Blood, if applyed outwardly, and worn for 24 hours together; it only works by demulcing and mollifying, not by stupifying; taken inwardly it particularly affects the Nervous parts, and acts both by demulcing, digesting, mollifying, &c. as also by stupifying or fixing the Animal Spirits, by stopping up their small passages into the Brain, as also their influx into the Nerves, whereby the *Archeus* of Nature becomes lax, inactive and drowsie. The reason why it affects not those Spirits which serve for respiration, pulsation, and the motion of the Heart, whilst the other are stagnated, is because the Dose usually prescribed is but barely enough to affect the first small passages it meets with, and so stupifies the Senses, whereas a large Dose wou'd reach to the *Cerebellum*, where the *par Octavum* has its rise, the dependant Channels of which being obstructed, their ensues an universal Narcosis, or stupefaction, and by consequence Death.

Quest.

Quest. 5. There is a Plant that grows on Mount Lebanon in Syria, which the Arabian calls the Golden Herb, it begins to appear in the Month of May, after the Snow is thawed; in the twilight it appears all in a Flame, and continues like a Torch until the Morning without diminution of its substance: Moreover, the People of that Countrey think that by it the Transmutation of Metals might be compassed, but they dare not dig it up, because such as have attempted it dyed on a sudden, and in the Undertaking: Pray your Thoughts upon these surprizing Phenomena's?

Ans. A late Author writing upon this Subject, tells the World that possibly 'tis a Sulphureous Soil which is always exhaling steams in great Quantity, which being condensed by the Cold of the Night kindles into a Flame: The word Exhaling will be unintelligible, till a Ferula corrects it at School again, and turns it into a passive; but how the Cold of the Night should Condense it, and kindle it into a Flame, is as reasonable to believe, as that the River of Thames should burn like Brandy, being now frozen over; but perhaps a Cup of the Creature might have elevated the Author into the middle Region of the Air for an Antiperistasis: — Our Opinion is this, that let it be what it will, it is no real Fire if it consumes not, and vanishes with the light, but a Meteor, or dry Exhalation, like our Will-*it*-Wisp, or Jack-a-Lanterns, which have as real Existence in the Day as in the Night, but only are invisible by means of a greater Light. — As to the Transmutation of Metals, see our Question about the Philosophers Stone: And as for dying in digging up the Herb, we look upon't as fabulous.

Quest. 6. Whether do you think most in the right, Aristotle that thought the Rational Soul diffus'd all over the Body, or Cartesius, who confin'd it to the Glandula pinealis, or a late Author who would place it in the Nerves?

Ans. Since the late Author who placed the Soul in the Nerves pretends to examine the other two, we'll consider the weight of his Arguments, and afterwards give our Sentiments upon the whole.

1. He denies the Soul to be in all the Body, Because (says he) if a Nerve be tyed, all the dependant Ramifications become Motionless, and feel no impression whatever, therefore the Soul cannot be in the parts below the Ligature: As much as to say thus, if a Man expires in a great Glass Bottle seal'd up Hermetically, his Soul cannot get out; an excellent way for Atheists that have a mind to secure themselves from the Devil. But if after all we shall find the Soul of too refin'd a Substance to be cag'd up, the Atheist will be at a loss: And thus also if the Soul can't be ty'd by a material Ligature; nay, tho' a Leg were cut off, if the Soul it self is indivisible, immaterial, &c. then our Authors Opinion is as weak at least as either that of Aristotle, or that of Des Cartes; since it may be thus solv'd, The Soul retires from those Ramifications below the Ligature, as being by such usage incapacitated for a proper actuation.

The next he engages Des Cartes, and says the Glandula pinealis is neither pensile, nor moveable, &c. Alas poor Soul, that cannot stay in any place where 'tis not hang'd like a Pig in a string, or toss'd like a Cat in a Blanket: the rest is too ridiculous to proceed in.

Nor must the last Authors position find better treatment than the Opinions of Aristotle and Cartesius, whom he pretends to confute; for since he says the Soul is in the Nerves, we demand of him what it is, and how big? We know how much 'tis possible for the Nerves to contain, and that they are a place: Now if the Soul according to all Definitions that have ever yet been made of it, is of such a Nature as is incompatible with Longitude, Magnitude, Divisibility, Place, and such gross Terms, how unreasonable is it to assign to it either the Nerves, or any other place, we leave to all the World to judge. Wherever we feel the Effects of it, we can reasonably say it is there, but the manner how we know not; and if so, we must say 'tis tota in toto, and pars in qualibet parte, which position will always stand good till we can distinguish Savors by the Eyes, and Sounds by the Palate; that is, Objects by powers altogether incompatible to 'em.

Quest. 7. I was in Covent Garden when the Clock struck two, when I came to Somerset-house by that it wanted a quarter of two, when I came to St. Clements it was half an hour past two, when I came to St. Dunstons it wanted a quarter of two, by Mr. Knib's Dial in Fleet-street it was just two, when I came to Ludgate it was half an hour past one, when I came to Bow Church, it wanted a quarter of two, by the Dial near Stocks Market it was a quarter past two, and when I came to the Royal Exchange it wanted a quarter of two: This I averr for a Truth, and desire to know how long I was walking from Covent Garden to the Royal Exchange?

Ans. This is a merry sort of a Question, but not without something of Curiosity in't. We can tell you what 'twas o'th' Clock when you came just half of the way, by taking the Medium of your Walk, and the Medium of the Differences amongst the Dyals: Since therefore 'tis suppos'd that you walk'd the same pace all the way, and that the Clocks, tho' differently set, moved the same pace; and since you could not be at all places at once, we'll suppose you just half way, which is narrowly about Knib's Dial in Fleet-street, which you say was 1. h. 45. m. post. Merid. which taken in with the rest, the Resolution may be thus:

h. p. Mer.	h.	h. min.
2 —	17 $\frac{1}{4}$	17: 15
1 $\frac{3}{4}$		60
2 $\frac{1}{2}$		—
1 $\frac{3}{4}$		1035
2 —		—
1 $\frac{1}{2}$	9 the N ^o of Differences.	
1 $\frac{3}{4}$	60	h. m. post Mer.
2 $\frac{1}{4}$	540	1035 1: 5
1 $\frac{3}{4}$		495 99 33 11
17 $\frac{1}{4}$		540 108 36 12 = 1: 55

Ans. Knib's Dial went 5 minutes too fast, and you were just half the way at 55 minutes past one of the Clock: the Question admits no better Answer that we know of.

The Gentleman that desires an Account of our Young Students Library, will find it in the Works of the Learned for January, p. 274. if not too high a Complement upon it.

The Question concerning Scepticism, &c. will be answer'd in our next Mercury.

The 12 Numbers that compleat our 5th. Volume will be publisht next Wednesday, with a Preface and Index to the whole.

Advertisements.

The Works of the Learned, Or an Historical Account, and Impartial Judgment of Books newly Printed, both Foreign and Domestic: As also the State of Learning in the World. To be published Monthly January, 1691. by J. De la Croix, a late Author of the Universal and Historical Bibliotheque. London Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry.

** There is newly published the Effigies of the great General Ginckle, after Mr. Hill in York Buildings, by the Life since his return from Ireland, done in 20-Tinto. By Robert Williams over against the Bagnio in Long Acre, sold at most Print Shops in London.

This is to give Notice, That Dr. Cafarelli an Italian Minister, will preach every Sunday in the Afternoon in the Guild-hall Chappel, beginning next Sunday of this February, where will also be Prayers according to the Rites and Liturgy of the Church of England.

L O N D O N, Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry.