

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, February 23. 1692.

Quest. 1. **A** Bout 16 Years since I fell in Love with a very deserving Young Lady, and tho her Fortune's were below mine, made her acquainted with my Passion, which she neither encourag'd nor refus'd, but deferr'd giving me an Answer, nor would ever see or suffer me to come into her Company for 13 Years. At last she fell sick, sent for me and resign'd her last Breath in my Arms, with all the expressions of a real Affection, 3 Tears are since pass'd, in which notwithstanding all my endeavours to a Christian Resignation, my Grief has at last brought me into a wasting Consumption, so that 'tis impossible for me to be cured, altho I may for some time continue — On the whole my request is, that your Society would give their Opinion on the following Questions:

First, Will this my unaccountable Love to a Creature be imputed to me for Sin, since I can by no means whatever prevent this my inevitable Fate?

2. If her departed Spirit can be sensible of this my Grief, or if at the Day of Judgment she will know me thus to have lov'd her?

3. If we meet in Heaven, whether there we shall have more Love to each other than to the rest of the glorified Saints notwithstanding all carnal Love shall be quite banisht in that State, where there is neither marrying nor giving in Marriage?

Ans. The Gentleman who proposes these Questions desired us not to insert the Letter he sent with 'em, accordingly we have Printed no more of it than we thought absolutely necessary, that the Reader might understand the thing. For the First of the Relation, we shoud think it a Romance, the passages are so strange, only the expressions seem too lively to be feign'd: But whether one or t'other, we doubt not but the Ladies will extreamly pity the Unfortunate Lover, and blame his Mistress for her unaccountable Severity and Folly, tho he on the other side is bound by all the Laws of Knight Errantry, right or wrong, to defend her, and find out some secret Reason or other to call her the most generous Woman in the World. However, we shall meddle no further with that Controversie, least, supposing the Story true, we shoud be thought to make our selves too merry with the miserable, and therefore shall immediately fall to answering his Questions. To the

First, He talks more like a Lover than a Christian, in his inevitable Fate, and his actions are but too correspondent to his words. It's an usual thing with Lovers to call that Fate, which is only an inveterate habit, or an unreasonable Resolution, and to think they have used all the means possible to conquer such a passion or habit, when they do the quite contrary, and feed and indulge 'em as much as they are able. It's a very difficult thing to love any Creature very passionately, without loving it better than him who deserves infinitely more than all our Love; which is not only a Sin, but a damning one without Repentance, and will undoubtedly be imputed as such to those who are guilty of it. In this case nothing of difficulty, which Lovers call impossibility can excuse, the Conquest being absolutely necessary, and therefore, as Catullus says in a like case, It must be done, whether it can or no. 'Twould be enquired, whether he has indeed used all the proper means, as well as endeavours, to obtain this Resignation. Has he call'd in Religion as well as Reason to his aid against a fruitless Love? Has he desired stronger help than his own resolutions, both from Earth and Heaven? Has he acknowledged his Idolatry in loving too well what he has now lost, and which might be the occasion of his losing her? Has he read Mr. Boyle of Seraphick Love, where Philanders Case is very near the same with his own; if he has done all this, we think he may look on his distemper as the punishment, as well as effect of his extravagant Passion, and woud hope he has had all his Hell here, as we are sure he has had all his Purgatory, and that on acts of continu'd Resignation and Repentance he may hope to be happy in a better World.

2d, For the second, it consists of two parts, Whether her departed Spirit can be now sensible of his Grief? And whether at the Day of Judgment she will know him thus to have lov'd her? To the first, we are extreamly in the dark as to the Laws of the Inhabitants of the other World. It shoud seem by many authentick Relations, that at least on extraordinary occasions, there have bin appearances in the Shapes and Names of deceased Persons to their Friends. But this we are apt to believe to have bin either the illusions of the Devil, or if the deceased were good Men, some good Spirit forming themselves an airy Body, (tho the case of Samuel is perhaps an exception) since the Spirits of the Righteous are at rest, far remote from our dusty little spot of matter, tho we know not but those of Bad men, being already in the Custody of their Tormentors, may be hurried about (like the Roman Prisoners) wherever their Jaylor pleases. To the Question then, If the Lady were really so Pious as her Lovers Character describes her, she's now Happy, and tho not in a State fully perfect, yet sure in such a one as admits of no Diminution. But this it must needs be, cou'd she know how miserable she has made one that loves her, supposing she has yet any of the Sentiments of humanity left, which it shoud seem by the parable of Dives, are not quite divested, even in a darker World; and if she has none such, 'tis indifferent whether she knows her Lovers Grief, or is ignorant of it. To the 2d. part of the Query, Whether at the Day of Judgment she will know him thus to have lov'd her? We answer, if she knows it not before, 'tis not likely she'll know it then, unless he's call'd to answer for it at that dreadful Bar. However, whether she does or no, he may assure himself they'll be then both too much concern'd, either with suspense, or rather Joy or Sorrow, at the Success of the Great Assize, which must conclude their Estates to endless Ages, ever to mind the Effects of a fruitless Passion, which lasted for a few moments while they were upon Earth. To the

3d. Whether if they are so happy to meet in Heaven, there will be more Love between 'em to each other, than to the rest of the glorified Saints: We must first enquire, whether we shall so much as know one another there; if not, we doubt Lovers Souls will be in the same case with others, unless they make use of Mr. Drydens expedient, and wear Inscriptions to distinguish 'em: \*Tho we must confess our Judgment is for the Affirmative, as we think we have formerly declar'd it, and that separate Souls shall know each other, at least glorify'd Saints, when perfect in Heaven; because their knowledge woud be imperfect if they shoud not, and that in relation to such Objects as woud conduce to the addition and perfection of their Happiness, as well as the Glory of him who chiefly makes it: Because the Society of Saints in Glory, is by all granted to be one of the Bliss'es of Heaven, but Society without Knowledge can't be easily conceiv'd. Because we shall be then like the Angels, who we are sure know each other, and whom we believe indu'd with all Knowledge they are capable of, as they seem to be of all but what is infinite. Because otherwise we shoud be less perfect than we are upon Earth. Because if there be any thing of humanity left, (and the Essentials will still remain) it seems congruous to suppose we shan't be without what we shoud think woud conduce so much to our happiness, as to see our Friends partake thereof. Because there are no valuable objections against it, that of Abrahams being ignorant of us, and St. Pauls knowing no man after the Flesh, relating plainly to our state in this World. And lastly, Because it seems agreeable to the Divine Equity, that the Obligations of Gratitude shoud never cease, but last even to the other World, we mean

\*See Mr. Drydens Tyrannic Love.

such



such real Obligations, as the Effects of 'em are Eternal, such as make us more Virtuous and Holy, and such especially as bring us to Heaven; and if they last so long, how can they be acknowledg'd and repay'd, unless we know those who conferr'd 'em: Notwithstanding which lower degree of Happiness, the Infinite Being may be still *all in all*, and we may in all the rest only admire and love the expressions, or *Emanations* of his Goodness. There's a Notion which may add some light to this, which is embrac'd by persons of very good Sense and Learning, and which we think, but few deny; namely, That such good Works of good Men as survive 'em here, for instance Books of Devotion, and in a sence good *Examples*, &c. when they have an effect on such as they leave behind, shall thereby advance their actual Glory and Felicity in the other World. And it's not then highly probable, that such as are advantag'd by 'em, nay, directed to that happy place, shou'd, when they once arrive there, both know and acknowledge their Benefactors?—And here may be room for the *Unhappy Lover* to please himself with not impossible hopes; for if any of those pieces of Service he did the Lady while she liv'd, were such as made her really more Religious here, and more happy above; nay, if he imitates her Piety and Virtue, wherein he thinks she as far exceeded others, as in her Generosity and Beauty, then they may probably not only *know*, but *Love* each other better than others in a better World. But then he must have a care to regulate his extravagant Passion for her Memory here, or else he only flatters himself when he hopes to get thither, and must expect to exchange this long separation for what will be Eternal. And thus much for the 3 Questions of our despairing Lover.

Quest. 4. A certain person having bin contracted to a virtuous Gentlewoman, being troubled in Conscience about some unjust actions he had formerly committed, he reveals his discontent to her, but withal promises to make a full restitution to all that he had wrong'd, and immediately sets about and performs it, without prejudice to his Reputation: However, this Discovery has sunk him so low in her esteem, and 'tis so great a Trouble to her to find her self engag'd to a Man that has own'd himself guilty of such Crimes, that she thinks she may justly free her self from all the promises she has made him of being his Wife. The Question is, Whether a Man that has made a voluntary restitution without any compulsion, but that of his Conscience, and firmly resolves never to commit the least injustice agen, ought to be reflected upon, and treated as a dishonest Person, when he hopes the stains of what's past may be wash'd off by his repentance, and whether this be a just Cause for her to disengage her self from him? A speedy Answer is desired, for the parties concern'd referr themselves to your determination?

Ans. Then we'll soon decide the Controversie, and doubt not but the Ladies will be of our side, and for once all vote against their own Sex. If *Ingenuity* or *Repentance* be a Sin, the Lover has certainly committed the unpardonable one. Sure the Lady never lov'd him, or else her other now properly scrupulous Virtues have perswaded her that neither Prudence or Generosity were to be reckon'd in that number. Where shou'd a Lover trust a Secret if not where he loves, and its but a very ill return to reject him for the highest voluntary Argument of his confidence and Esteem? But she thinks he's an ill Man, and that disengages her? No, he's good and virtuous, and this shou'd chain her more closely than before. Repentance is a lovely Virtue, and it ought not to be frown'd upon, but to be encourag'd and rewarded, and gives a new Title to her Heart: He's really as good, nay perhaps better than he was before, nay we dare positively affirm he is so, on supposition he's sincere, for true Repentance is better than bare Moral honesty; and that this is true, we have all the marks whereby it can be known to Man. Here's Sorrow, here's Confession, here's Restitution, nor is so much as his Reputation lully'd, 'tis clear before God, what was done being now undone agen, and man knows it not, nor any but she her self, who knows it as a secret only, and therefore 'tis to be as if not known, and at the same time knows his Restitution and Repentance. 'Tis no Crime against publick Government, for which restitution can't be made, as Treason or Murder. But here Repen-

tance has remov'd the stain, and Restitution the Injustice. The Case being thus stated, and the Evidence summed up, we now gravely proceed to Sentence, and 'tis, That she Seal his Pardon immediately, and in witness thereof give him her Hand at Dukes-place, or where else she pleases.

Quest. 5. Whether it be lawful for a marry'd Man to kiss his Neighbours Wife, out of real respect and affection?

Ans. Yes undoubtedly, out of respect none will deny, and if not real, so much the worse; out of affection too, for we are to Love our Neighbour. 'Tis *ἡ ἀφροσύνη*, no Sex excepted, or mention'd; but it must be an honest affection and respect, tho' we may thus Love our Neighbours Wife, we mayn't Covet our Neighbours Wife. The Affection shou'd be pure and innocent, as was that of the Primitive Christians in their Kifs of Peace, and if either the Cause or Effect of what's mention'd be otherwise, we ought to forbear it.

Quest. 6. Whether a Lady being in Love with any Man, it be lawful for her to ask his Consent?

Ans. Yes, yes, poor Creature, its hard to starve out of Civility, for want of asking meat when we are hungry. But if she has no Friend in the World to speak a good word for her, if she can't so much as write neither, let her show him the *Athenian Mercury*, Vol. 5. N. 13. Qu. 6. and that's as much a handsomer way than downright coming to the point, as those are accounted more Genteel Beggars, who trudge about with their Papers and Recommendations, than such as ply in Bedlam walks, with Pray Mr.--for Gods sake bestow the Gift of one Farthing.

Quest. 7. I desire the speedy Answer of this Question: Five years ago I marry'd a Gentlewoman only for her Virtue and Beauty, which she yet retains to the highest degree. A Friend to us both being very melancholly, and near raving mad with disorder of Mind, I press'd to know the occasion, he tells me he is passionately in love with my Wife, and without Enjoyment shall lay violent hands on himself, because his torment seems insupportable: Considering he is my Friend, I ought to assist him, considering she is my Wife I ought not; yet I have given my leave, and she purely to oblige me, yields, tho' with much reluctance, and desires it may be deferr'd till we have your Opinion: Whether it be a Sin in one, or all three, and if a Sin, as undoubtedly it must, whether its not better to commit it, then for our good Friend to use violence, being the former may be repented of, but the latter, according to H. Writ, must be his inevitable damnation?

Ans. If ever a story had the Air of a Romance, this certainly has, (and indeed there's a Novel extant much like it.) But if really true, sure they are all 3 raving mad as well as one of 'em, for that's the most charitable Opinion we can have of the matter: Its plain the Man is no Fool that writ the Letter, and yet we can hardly think one who wou'd be such a Contented Beast, cou'd be capable of writing at that rate; therefore we rather suspect 'twas the Spark himself, or the cunning somewhat of a Wife that indited it. But if there be any thing of sincerity or truth in the business, (since as to his Wives admired Virtue we must beg his pardon) we answer what sure none doubt but themselves, that supposing the Spark in any haste or necessity of killing himself, which it seems he is not, for he can stay till he hears our answer, better he shou'd do so, than all 3 be guilty of wilfully pondred Adultery, a damning Sin as well as Murder. If he's really so mad as represented, get him chain'd, tho' we doubt Bedlam wou'd not be so fit for him as Bridewell.

#### An Advertisement to all our Querists.

That we may effectually make good our first promise of Answering all manner of Questions sent us relating to Religion, Politicks, Poetry, Musick, Antiquity, History, Natural Philosophy, &c. we design to print an APPENDIX to be added to every 5 Volumes of our *Athenian Mercury*, which said Appendix shall consist of 120 sheets, with Answers to all those ingenious Questions and Occurrences, &c. which we have not room to insert either in our 18 weekly Mercuries or 12 Numbers that compleat 'em, or Supplements to 'em, which said Supplements are now to contain Answers to Questions, as well as the Rarities of England, &c. This is therefore to desire all our Querists to continue sending in their Questions as formerly to Smiths Coffee-house in Stocks-Market, and when we have received Questions enough (with what we have already by us) to fill up the foremention'd Appendix, we shall give publick Notice thereof. To carry on this great and difficult Work, we have in our Society several Cambridge and Oxford Scholars, on purpose to render our Undertaking compleat, and to give full satisfaction to all our Querists. To the Appendix here promis'd we shall add an Alphabetical Table, comprehending the Contents of it, and of all our Mercuries and Supplements for the Year 1692.

L O N D O N, Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry. 1692.