

The Athenian Mercury.

HAVING lately received a very *Civil Letter*, from an unknown Ingenious Gentleman, it's thought fit to *Print* some part thereof, as well as a *Query* contain'd therein.

Gentlemen,

"I happen'd to read that Sheet of your *Athenian Mercury*, in which you resolv'd a *Query* concerning some *Actions* of Brutes that resembled *Reason*. Your Discourse there, was so very *acute* and *solid*, that it invited me to peruse divers others, which without Flattery gave me that esteem for you, that I resolv'd to lend my best assistance to render your endeavours beneficial to the World, which I ought to suppose, is the mark you aim at. I look on your *undertaking*, as on one of the most laudable Projects our *Age* has invented, and if prudently managed, the most conducing to improve Knowledge in the *Generality* of *Mankind*, according to their several Capacities: Whence out of my Zeal, for the Common good, I make bold to offer you my Friendly Advice, that you would not bestow one Minute of your precious Time in answering *Impertinent* and *Piqueish Queries*, no not even those that concern the Interest of any *Party* or *Faction*. The Promoters of Truth shou'd move in a higher *Sphere*, and indeed shou'd write to none but *Cosmopolitans*: The descending from that heighth, declines you into a lower *Class* of *Writers*, it abates the respect otherwise due to your *Excellent Labours*, it exposes you, as the World goes, to ridicule, it lessens the *Credit* and *Currency* of your Papers, by stirring up the anger of the *Parties* you disgust, and must needs force you upon Banter now and then, to humour the *Palate* of the *Times*. And whereas Truth is *immortal*, and those writings which have only Truth for their *Motive* and *Object*, do partake a *Lastingness* from her *unchangeable Nature*, the meddling with the Interest of any *State* or *Party* will reduce your Works to the *Transitory Condition* of *Gazetts* and *Almanacks*, and shou'd a *Revolution* happen, would render 'em *obnoxious*, blast their *Credit*, and to make 'em become *useless*.

"One thing more — I think it a very necessary rule to be observ'd by all those, who are task't to give Answers to many cramp Questions, never to puzzle their *Brains* by seeking out a *Reason* for any strange pretended Effect, till they had perfect Assurance the Matter of *Fact* was *True*: Particularly to such, as that of the *Fesch-Light* in *Cambridgeshire*, Vol. 6. Num. 6. My self have been divers times imposed upon by Relations of *Spirits* haunting Houses, &c. which I fear had as great or greater Authority than

"has that *uncomth* and very *unlikely Story*, nay some of 'em pretended to have above a hundred *Eye-Witnesses*, which yet upon narrow Examination prov'd but meer *Fopperies*.

"I heartily Congratulate your design, to lay open the Vanity of the *Silly, Witty Athenist*, Mr. *Hobbs*, whose bold unprov'd talk has done much mischief among that pitch of Men, who are meerly given to quaint Conceits, and plausible Drollery, which unhappy Temper inclines 'em to put off their *Humane Nature*, as far as they are able, by subjecting their Reason to their *Fancy*, and 'tis but fitting, that they who desert their *Christianity*, shou'd first renounce the *true Nature* God has given 'em, their Reason.

Thus much we have Printed of this Letter, to let it be known that there are some Ingenious Men, who don't think so ill of us as our Brethren of *Lacedemon*, tho' perhaps the Gentleman may be almost as much out of one side as they are o'ther. However we must own our selves extremely oblig'd to him for his good Thoughts, and Wishes, and Advices. As to the last of those, the Advice he gives to be of no Party, or at least to appear of none in our Papers — we own 'tis safe and prudent, but confess, we can't think it honourable. Not but that we were once in the Mind to have done so, for some of the Reasons he gives us, but our Sentiments as to matters of Policy were unawares extorted from us by the —

of some men, who wou'd not be quiet, neither with Letters, nor Abuses, till we at length return'd 'em such answers as we thought they deserv'd.

However, *Facta est alea* — We are now in, and we must through as well as our betters, or else justly fall unpitied, and sink for ever. Every one now knows what Party we have engaged in, 'tis so notorious that some of the contrary side have thought it worth the while publicly to oppose us, and 'tis the same that all that's brave in Europe now draw their Swords for; and at the Head of 'em all the bravest Prince in the World. Nay, if it be a weakness, we must acknowledge it, that had we our Liberty and Choice to begin again, we shou'd frankly espouse the same Cause, tho' perhaps with less Reflections on the contrary, which we confess are neither Necessary, nor Prudent in such a way of Writing, for the Reasons the Gentleman gives, and which for the future, we shall, unless extremely provoked, endeavour to avoid — upon all other Parties as well as that Faction in State, which we ingenuously confess, we can never love: But this not out of any mean Politics, with vain hopes that our little Cock-boat shou'd scape if the Royal-Sovereign perish'd, (better we and all our Querists

Querists i'th' bottom of the *Sea*) for we neither wish, hope nor desire, to outlive the Liberties of Europe, and are much of the ingenuous Dr. Brown's mind, that "he must extremely value Life, who wou'd outlive the Ruines of the World — this we say is not the Reason, and to preclude any such expectation, (tho' God forbid there shou'd be any occasion for't) have thus plainly declar'd our Judgments, and not to flatter such Princes as need it not, for we cou'd expect no Benefit by it, some few of our Names being only guess't at, which we never intend publickly to own. But the true Cause, why we shall forbear answering such Piqueish Queries (only begging pardon for one single, very witty, very waggish one, which we are afraid will croud in, in our next Love-Paper,) is because, we wou'd write more like Philosophers, and offend as few as possible; and therefore, if hereafter we find a necessity of answering any thing of controverfie between particular Sects or Factions, we shall only produce the Arguments on both sides, and leave 'em fairly to shift for themselves.

For the Gentlemans further advice, not to be too credulous, we acknowledge it's very necessary to those who have undertaken so difficult a Province — But we have in very many Instances already observ'd it, continuing in pure suspense till the Fact is more clearly attested, particularly that of the Fetch-Lights he mentions — but on the other side — we must think eternal Scepticism, or a continu'd and resolute Doubting after sufficient Evidence, is even a greater Enemy to Philosophy and true Knowledge, than Credulity it self; The latter of which may croud in some Falshoods, but the former will ne're suffer us to acknowledge any Truth. Now we think we have reasonable, creditable Evidence for a thing tho' ne're so strange, where Fact is attested, especially if even upon Oath, by many credible Witnesses, as in the Story of the enchanted Ship, sometime since publish'd to the World. However we own the Advice is kind, and perhaps not altogether needless, and shall endeavour for the future to observe it.

For the last Branch concerning Mr. Hobbs we are still of the same mind we ever were, that he has done Philosophy almost as much mischief as Religion; It's true he's Dead, but his works yet speak, tho' not at all to his Praise, and 'tis a just Curse, "That the Name of the Wicked shall rot; and we may here as lawfully call and prove him a Fool, as he does, (the first we mean, for the last he never can) by so many thousands of Holy Martyrs — and there are but too many of his Gang still living, with whom we declare, we'll neither give nor take Quarter; and hope as little Wit and Reason as we have we shall at least make shift to be hard enough for the Atheist, who has been a Fool upon Record for above these three thousand Years.

Now for the Gentlemans Query — What is the Cause of that common Motion in Nature, call'd Gravitation, or the Descending of those Bodies we call heavy?

Ans. The Querist himself justly rejects the Cause that was assign'd by the old Philoso-

phers — "Because they have an innate Quality call'd weight, which determines their Nature downwards; for that, as he observes, is only *Idem per Idem*, or it does so because it does so. He as justly rejects the second Reason alledg'd for it, by the Followers of the Garden, namely, "that all Atoms move downwards in an Infinite space, whereas in such a space, there's no higher or lower, because 'tis Infinite, having no Terms to move towards or fromwards. Further, if he takes downwards to signifie the Line from our Head to our Feet, he adds, 'twill be ask't why they move that way rather than the other, since their Nature, and Figure are indifferent, & *ex indifferenti nihil sequitur*, (we may add that, turn but the Man with his Head in a contrary Posture, and at that rate downwards wou'd be upwards, and upwards, downwards, heavy wou'd be Light, and Light heavy, which confounds all again.) Nor, he goes on, are there any different Degrees of Resistance in the Medium to incline those Atoms, cou'd they at all move themselves to take one way rather than the other.

He next produces the opinion of Mr. White, Sir Kenelm Digby's Tutor, with Sir Kenelm's Improvements, and his own Thoughts upon 'em. Mr. Whites Hypothesis was — "That the first natural Cause of all Motion is the Heat or Fire of the Sun, and goes about to demonstrate, that this must it self first have been put into motion by an Incorporeal agent. Sir Kenelm hence subsuming, and improving the notion makes the Sun-beams reflecting upwards to resist those particles that are more Rare, which must necessarily cause those that are more dense to Descend, whose fall determines the motion of all those others on which their Impulse Lights downwards. Against this the Querist himself Objects — That if this held, then on the tops of highest Hills, whether this Reflection either reaches not, or at least is not so strong, there wou'd either be no Gravitation, or not so great as is in the Air near the surface of the Earth below, which none e're observed — But in this we doubt the Gentleman is mistaken, for unless we are so, the Gravitation is not so great on high Hills, as nearer the Center, as appears by the Barometer. He adds, he has walkt under Marble Quarries, entring in at the bottom of a high-Hill, yet cou'd not discern there was less Gravitation there than i'th' open Air, nor that his Legs did bear his Body with more ease, than when he walk't on the Tops of the highest Mountains, and it seems incredible, that the denser Atoms shou'd fall upon those Bodies, which are under that Mountainous Bulk of Stone and Earth with the same Facility and force, as they do upon the Top of the Hill, where there's nothing but the free and liquid Air to hinder their descent. Lastly the Reflection of the Sun carrying up those rarer Particles is far more vigorous in Summer than Winter, and Day than Night; but there's no discernably lesser Gravitation in those latter Seasons than the former. — Which Arguments we think do absolutely invalidate that Hypothesis, to which we can add another of our own. The Sun was not made till the third day of