

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, April 26. 1692.

We have receiv'd several Letters from the same hand, the last marked with *W. M.* 688. complaining of our not answering some *Queries* long since sent in for our *Mercury*: We must say in our defence, in this Instance as well as many others, that we are many times beat out of our promis'd and design'd method, by the importunity of our *Querists*, or opposition of our Adversaries, not to say, in some cases by the mistakes of those from whom we immediately receive the Questions; for which reason 'tis an absolutely impossible thing but thousands of *Querists* must be *postpon'd* till their patience is gone, till such time we publish our APPENDIX, which will certainly clear all once a Year, and give us liberty to proceed in our design'd method, to our own and others satisfaction. In the mean while we must be forc'd to take some of the many we receive, either such as appear most remarkable, or as we can have no quiet till they are dispatch'd; nor can it be avoided but sometimes a better Question will in the mean time lie upon the File and remain unanswered: However, had we bin before sensible that those above mention'd had bin sent by one of the Fair Sex, as we understand by this last Letter, we shou'd have gone near before this to have crouded 'em in, especially when propos'd with so much Modesty and Civility, and so well worth answering. For that of the Sin against the Holy Ghost, which has been also twice propos'd by another hand, we must still ask a little longer time to consider on't, it being a Case of so great difficulty and moment, tho' we promise not to neglect or forget it: for the others yet unanswered, they shall not long remain so: For the Ladys Complement, That she and her Friend resolve to be concluded by our Judgments, being at present of different Opinions: We are so much oblig'd for their Esteem of us, that we earnestly desire both them and all other Readers, by no means to take any such resolution, since it may in many cases rather hinder than advance Knowledge; we rather desire 'em calmly to weigh what we endeavour fairly to propose, and to be so far guided by us as we are by reason, who own our selves Men, and therefore think it no shame to be sometimes mistaken. Now to the Question the Lady sent in her last Letter.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether it be lawful to wear Black Patches? if not, wherein consists the Sin? what command or Precept

is broke by it: For as to those Objections generally brought, as, That 'tis a design to mend what God has made; may not this be as well said of any Ornament we wear which we think best becomes us, and the same to that other so often used, If we were born with such a spot on our Faces, we shou'd endeavour to get it off, which I believe on the contrary, but I am sure as to any other thing we wear, tho' the most necessary, as a Petticoat, &c. we shou'd be much more concern'd to get rid of it if it came into the World with us, and so for a Black Hood or Hat on our Heads: But as for any solid Argument or Reason against Patches I ne're saw any, except, That to some persons they give offence, and amongst them I'd never wear 'em, but in themselves if they have any harm, I must confess my self ignorant of it?

Ans. The Lady her self has said so much in so little room on her own Question, that 'tis not easie to add any thing to what she advances, and we think what she says can hardly be answer'd. We are not ignorant that many zealous Casuists of late Years have very bitterly inveigh'd against 'em, especially those among our dissenting Brethren; but yet we find the most judicious of 'em speak but very doubtfully as to their being in themselves unlawful. Thus one of the greatest men they ever had, in his Answer to that Question, Whether it be lawful for any person to hide their Deformity by cloathing, or by Spots or Painting to make themselves seem to others as beautiful as they can: He replies, It is lawful for some persons by some means, for some good Ends and reasons when a greater Evil is not like to follow it, to hide their Deformities, and to adorn themselves so as to seem more comely than they are. The some means he mentions must be those he had before recited, Spots, &c. or else he says nothing to the purpose; and if these are lawful to some persons, and for good Ends, they must certainly be in themselves indifferent, otherwise circumstances cou'd never change their Nature. However he clearly supercedes the common popular Objection against 'em, (nay, against Painting too, which seems much more obnoxious) viz. That 'tis a Sin to attempt mending Gods work, since he clearly grants 'tis lawful in some cases both to hide Deformities, and to use means to appear more beautiful than persons really are. And indeed the case is plain so far, for otherwise 'twere a Sin for one that's Crooked to wear a Gown that hides it, or that has but one Eye to wear a Glass one, or indeed for a Bald-pate to wear a Periwig. For the other Objection, That if we were born with such Patches we shou'd desire to get rid of 'em, The Lady does with equal Truth and Justice deny both the Fact and Consequence; for the Fact, what's more becoming than a handsome Mole? For the Consequence, 'tis just none at all, for the Reason she gives: If it be urg'd as a Judgment, that some have bin born with patch'd Faces, whose Parents wore 'em, we must desire those who think it so, to get a little more Charity and Prudence too to mix with their Zeal; for first, the thing is plainly Natural, and only the common effect of a strong and lively Fancy; and then 2dly, if there's any strength in their Argument, it must be thus form'd, "Whenever any Child is markt, 'tis a Judgment of God upon the Parent, at least a sign that he's displeas'd with 'em. — If they do not first lay down that general proposition, they come short of proving any thing as to this particular Instance; if they do, they must find some Sin in longing for Strawberrys, Claret, and Cow-heels, or at least make those Marks which are so frequent on Children, the Tokens of Divine Vengeance. For the Ladies condescension, not to wear 'em where they'll give scandal, we think it very commendable, tho' more than she's in Conscience oblig'd to, for the case of scandal is far different here from that the Apostle mentions at the beginning of Christianity; nor can it be ever suppos'd, that the sight of a spotted Face shou'd destroy any of those for whom Christ dy'd, by tempting 'em to do evil; which is the true notion of scandal, tho' far enough differing from what is commonly assign'd. And this is at present, after mature Deliberation, our Judgment in the Case propos'd, which we are yet ready to change if any can bring better Reason for the contrary Opinion.

Quest. 2. Whether it be not a great Inconvenience in our Christian Churches to admit Women to sit unvail'd promiscuously with the Men, and whether it wou'd not be better for both if different places were appointed for 'em?

Ans. Were our Mercury to pass for a Canon, or Statute Book, wou'd be forc'd to anger all the Beauty-hunters of St. Brides, and perhaps some of the Beauties too, who only Spectatum veniunt, by answering this Question in the Affirmative. We have formerly sufficiently satisfi'd the World, that we are not of their ridiculous Opinion, who think, (or at least pretend they do so) that Women have no Souls, who very well know the consequence of this Doctrine, since as an excellent Author no less tartly than truly expresses it, "If they can once perswade Women they have no Souls, they think they shall easily command their Bodies." dies.

So far are we from that *Extream*, that we profess 'tis a quite contrary *Cause* that makes us wish there might be different *Appartments* for them and us in *holy Assemblies*. Any Man that knows himself well, will not be willing in that place to *trust his Eyes*, for tho' he shou'd ne're so often make a *Covenant* with 'em, (for the same reason *Job* did,) they'd be apt to break it. For the same reason then we wish 'em remov'd a little further in the Church, that our Reformers had for removing *Images* quite out on't, least they shou'd dazle and divert the mind of *Beholders* with their *Splendor* and *Beauty*, and instead of devout *Christian worshippers*, transform 'em into mistaken blind *Idolaters*.

Quest. 3. I've promis'd Marriage against the Consent of my Friends, which they suspecting, have forbid my Lover to make any further Addresses, and commanded me not to entertain him any longer, and resolve to marry me to another, for whom I have a great aversion: Your Direction is desired how I'm to behave my self in this difficult Affair?

Ans. The resolving 2 Questions will clear all the difficulty in this matter, Whether a Promise of Marriage is obliging, when made against the consent of Friends? and whether Friends have any power to force consent to Marriage? For the first, if the person be of years of Discretion, we think the Promise is really binding, tho' not lawfully made, binding not only negatively, so as never to marry any other, but positively too, to marry that person, as soon as all Obstructions are remov'd; but we take the want of Parents consent to be a very just Obstruction as long as they live, tho' not any longer, for we can't think they have power to disannul any such Contract or Promise when once actually and solemnly made, the Instance generally given of the Parents power under the Law to vacate and null the Vow of his Daughter, not reaching the present Case, that was a Political Institution proper to the Jews, and were the same a Law of our Countrey, as 'twas of theirs, and is of the French at present, the Case were clear: Besides, there seems a considerable difference between a Vow and a Contract, one is with God, the other with Man, God may give up, or depute his own right in this Case, but it follows not that he does *mans*; It's urg'd, they are not *Sui juris*, being their Parents goods, and therefore not at their own dispose: it may be answer'd, they are partly *sui juris*, partly not; they are born free, not Slaves, Men, not Beasts, therefore have something of choice, and are not to be alienated, &c. like other Goods, (but we are insensibly fallen into the *purlieus* of the 2d. Question,) so far then as Children are not under Government, and not at their own disposal, they undoubtedly Sin in making any such Promises, and can't perform 'em till their Parents consent, or Death gives 'em liberty. But so far as they are free and rational Creatures, they have power of disposing even their Souls, and therefore their Bodies, at least Negatively, to the Exclusion of any other, for so much power no Parent himself, unless a Tyrant can deny 'em, which also clears the 2d. Question. Children are neither *Cattel* nor *Slaves*, we think they have therefore at least a Negative voice, even where there was no Prior obligation, much more where there is; tho' supposing there were none, they ought to endeavour as much as possible to submit to their Parents choice, unless where 'tis a plain case that 't would make 'em miserable. The summ is, the positive Promise here was unlawful, nor is't to be actually perform'd without the Parents consent or Death, yet the Parent has not power to vacate this promise, much less to force their Child to marry any other.

Quest. 4. Since the making of the Act, obliging all Persons in Publick Employments to take the Oath of Fidelity to their Majesties King William, and Queen Mary, within a limited time, on penalty of losing their Places, we have had this Story: That A B, to save his Friend C D who would not swear, from the penalty of this Law, did go before a Court of Record, and in the Name of his Friend C D, (whereas his own Name was A B.) did swear, I C D, &c. Qu. Is A B in foro Conscientiæ, guilty of the Crime of taking a false Oath, or as we usually term it, Perjury?

Ans. Personating another Man is Criminal, but personating another man swearing in anothers Name in a Court of Record, is Perjury in the highest Nature, and

a Step further than subornation, because its willful and corrupt, with an intention to aid, shelter and assist one of the Kings Enemies, in that by this Perjury an opportunity is given to conceal a Traytor by it, and there cannot but be more than ordinary in it, for he that would scruple an Oath in Conscience, would never allow or Suborn another to perjure or receive the benefit of Perjury.

Quest. 5. 'Twas my misfortune to fall in love with a virtuous young Lady; I have so far indulg'd my passion that 'tis now impossible to shake it off. She is young, and I have some Obligations upon me not to marry these 3 years, and the Lady is as great a Stranger to my Love as to my Person, I being ignorant of those Affairs, desirous to know which way I shall make known my Affections to the Dear Angel: Dear Gent. I earnestly desire your Advice, and am, &c.

Ans. Hes smitten sure enough,--Virtuous Young Lady, impossible to shake it off, Dear Angel, nay, Dear Gent. and all. Well, Semel infortuna, as Mr. Cowley says, we all have bin, or must be in Love, unless downright Fools, which he thinks are not capable of that Passion, and we know can never be Mad. But we would not be thought to sport with the miserable, we shall therefore give the Gent. better advice than the direct answer to his Question, and that is, Considering his Circumstances, either to shake off, or at least adjourn his Amour some 2 or 3 years longer; for it seems they are both young, and he has time enough to be unfortunate, as a man to one he is as soon as he loves in earnest. But this he tells us is impossible-- In answer, Lovers often use the word impossible, when one less harsh would do the business, 'tis only impossible in the strict signification that the Greek sometimes used, that is, for extreme difficult, but 'tis not absolutely so unless he'll make it. Let him not see her, not write to her, not hear Music, sing Songs, make verses, nay try if he cannot think of her for one Quarter of a Year, and he'll then tell us another Tale, and thank us for this Advice.

Qu. 6. There's a certain Gentleman, whom I can never see without most violent Emotions, my Heart pants, and my Colour comes and goes, tho' I know no reason for't. I can't believe 'tis Love that puts me in such disorder at the sight of this terrible Spark, because I never was in Love, nor think my self so much as capable of that Passion: Pray your Judgment in this matter?

Ans. Now what a Paradise would these 2 Querists be in, if the foregoing, shoud they happen to intend one another. Well, this Love is certainly the arrantest little Sophister in the World, it makes people grant the premises, & yet thilt the Conclusion. 'Tis neither better nor worse, Lady, but by all these Tokens you are as surely infected with the plague of love, as ever was your humble Servant unknown.

☞ The Questions concerning the Custom of saying Grace before meat, Light and darkness, Fellow the expos'd his Goods to Sale, Nutmegs, and moral honesty, punishment of Adultery, Gentleman was affronted, Number 666, going round the Earth, shall be all answer'd next Saturday, together with all those sent us this morning.

☞ The Gentleman that has two Narratives relating to the Bloody Affizes, is desired to send 'em speedily to the Raven in the Poultry.

Advertisements.

An Advertisement about the Patent for easie Coaches.

All the Nobility and Gentry may have the Carriage of their Coaches made new, or their old ones altered after this New Invention at reasonable Rates, Hackney and Stage-Coachmen may have Licenses from the Patentee Mr. John Green, and Mr. William Dockwra his Partner, at the rate of 12. d. per week to drive the Roads and Streets, some of which having already begun, and may be known from the Common Coaches, by the words Patent-Coach upon the Doors. These Coaches are so hung, as to render them easier for the Passenger, and less labour to the Horses, the motion being that of a Sedan, and are free from that tossing and jouncing to which other Coaches are liable, over rough and broken Roads, Pavements or Kennels. These great Conveniencies (besides others) are Invitations sufficient for all Persons (that love their own ease, and to save their Horses draft) to make use of this Invention, for their Coaches needs no alteration, 'tis only the Carriage. All persons may be further inform'd at Mr. Greens house in Carteret-street by the Cock-pit Road in Westminster, and at Mr. Dockwra's house in Little St. Helen in Bishopgate-street, who hopes his Partner and he will fare better by this Invention, than he did by setting that of the Penny-Post.

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