

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, July 9. 1692.

Quest. 1. **A** Lady with a good Fortune, has a Mind to marry and dispose of her Person and it, but is unwilling to have either a Fool, a Fop, or a Beau, a Cotquean, or a Book-learn'd Sot, or one they call a sober honest Man, such a one I mean as goes plodding about all day, minding only the main chance, in the Evening for his diversion drinks his Pint, or smoaks some hours in a Coffee-house with Company that pleases him, then comes home and grumbles at his Wife if the days Expences have been a half-penny extraordinary, that will buy his Wife some good Cloaths to go abroad with him on Holydays, or to a Neighbours Christning, hardly else allowing her to stir, and sometimes giving her a Crown or half a Crown in her Pocket, of which she must render an exact account: I say, a Lady being to make her choice, which of these think ye is the least evil, and if she likes none of 'em, what sort of Husband must she chuse?

Ans. The Lady's a little difficult to be pleas'd, tho we confess she seems to have reason; however, we can easily foretell she's not in haste to be marry'd, if she stays till one offers that's not toucht with any of the Characters she has given. If she desires our advice in exclusion to all these, she may more easily meet with it in our former Mercuries, than find the Man who will answer that description we there give, tho we believe the World is pretty even for the quality as well as for the number of both Sexes, and perhaps an Argument for Providence may be drawn from this as well as that, for were it an easie matter for Persons exactly pair'd with excellent Qualifications to meet and be happy in one another, and were most of the World in such circumstances, there would not be many; it might be a difficult thing to perswade 'em there were any higher State of Life design'd for rational Beings. Well, 'tis now time to compare these fine Rivals one with 'other, and see which of 'em best deserves the honour of a Ladies Love: For the first, a Fool, (whom for the present we'll suppose distinguish'd from his near kindred that follow after, Fop, Beau, &c.) time has been when he stood as fair as any, nay was snapt at by the Ladies, and they almost quarrell'd who shou'd have him for a Husband: But we would hope 'twas only in those Reigns when 'twas so much the Fashion to get a wiser man (or at least a brisker) to supply his room; and are unwilling to believe, how much soever they are slander'd, that many of the fair Sex would make choice of him now, tho not for that, yet for no very good reason, that they might be Heads, when he that shou'd be so, wanted Brains to be so: For we shou'd think a preposterous desire of Domination would hardly outweigh the inconvenience of his nauseous Folly; besides that, sometimes the Lady may be mistaken, for some Fools are certainly the most unmanagable Beasts in Nature, and a wise Woman will not, and need not desire to have her will more than a wise man would permit her. — Exit Fool. — Now for Fop, who only thinks a little better of himself than his Elder Brother, tho of the self-same Family, he has as little Wit, tho more noise; he wears a Feather instead of a Fools Cap, he's not so heavy as his Brother, and is hardly so much Fool as Mad-man; a dancing, singing, empty New-Nothing, just the same for a Man that he thinks all Women, and may make an indifferent Play-thing, but a very bad Husband, unless you intend to share him with all the kind Souls in the Nation. The Beau is only a Fop of the last Edition, a very Fortune-hunter, and therefore the Ladies must look to themselves, for he aims as sharply at all the young, as the crazy King of Portugal used to do at the Old women, and hopes as surely to fetch 'em down with his Heart-breakers, as 'other with his Blunderbuss. He's in love with his Cloaths as much as the Fop with himself, he's all

Garniture, and if you'd but let him lay by his Hat and Wig, wou'd no more take the Law of you for a kick or a Box o' th' Ear, than a Russian Priest can do for beating him, if you first strike his Cap off. Cou'd a Lady change him as oft as he does his Fashions, 'twou'd be a little safer ventring upon him; but she may have him a better pennyworth, if she can find any way to purchase his Cloaths, for then she has all of him, or at least a more essential part than either his Soul or Body. For a Cotquean, 'tis an awkward sort of a Creature too to make a Husband of, but the best is, he'll be more troublesome to your Maids in the Kitchen than to you; and besides, you'll be sure to have him much at home, for this two-legg'd Turnspit, exactly contrary to his Brother Brute, can't endure to be out of the way when the Cook has any business. For a Book-learn'd Sot, the Truth is, 'tis very hard, to have him always making Love to his Books, and forget his own Flesh and Blood, and it would tempt a Lady to wish her fell a Book, (as she in the Story) that she might now and then be folded down, or turn'd over; but for the most part those Wives have no great reason to complain, if some People were not unreasonable, for they have their Husbands always at home, safe lock'd up, as their Plate or Jewels, and can resort to 'em for advice as often as there is occasion. Lastly, for the sober honest man, who minds the main chance, &c. one would think he shou'd please; but then he goes plodding about all day, and drinks his Pint of Wine, or what's worse, of Coffee, in the Evening, perhaps too stays out late at Night; why all this is pretty tolerable, nor is what follows very ill, Buys his Wife good Cloaths, lets her go abroad to see her Neighbours, gives her Money to spend there, tho if she has but Wit enough to prevent being begg'd, if she has a good Fortune, she will reserve so much to her self when she gives the rest, as never to be reduced to such meannefs. And if the Man has any more, he'll give her a weekly allowance for Family expences, without either requiring or undertaking the Drudgery of trifling accounts in so small a matter. However, this Character is easily enough distinguishable from the rest, and we suppose the Lady means by it, a Hum-drum, soulless, wooden Fellow, a meer Husband, with no Life, nor Edge, nor Conversation; in a word, a Trading Blockhead, which no Ingenious Woman sure would be bound Prentice to for Life, if she cou'd avoid it, as she may easily do, if at her own dispose, since 'tis almost impossible in this case to be cheated, for he's such a kind of a thing as no disguise will fit him; he must show himself when he puts on his Holyday Suit, and steps a Courting, (tho leaving word whither he's gone for fear of a Customer) nor can he so much as ask the Grand Question out of his Shopboard phrase, — Madam! what d'ye please to buy? However, even this we think much more tolerable than most of his Rivals, the Fool is too bad, the Fop, the Beau, and brisk careless Fellow, will if possible, beggar himself, and you, and all his Family: The Cotquean is a fitter Scullion than a Husband. This plodding Main-chance Fellow will secure you good Cloaths, and one of the highest Pews in the Church while he lives, and if he happens to drop off, leaves you another Chance, and your Fortune better than ever. Nor have we forgot him that we left plodding in his Study, whom perhaps sympathy makes us inclin'd to vote for before all the rest. He's no Fool, tho he looks like one: He's generally sound and honest, so are not Fop and Beau; he plagues you not in the Kitchen, like Sir Cot, — nor calls you Coram Nobis for the odd farthings in the buying a piece of Beef, as your Lump of a Spark behind the Shopboard, but let's you alone to rule and order his Family, buy as many fine Cloaths

Cloaths as you will, do what you will — And if you wouldn't have an *Angel*, where could you ever find a Letter? And so much for this weighty Question, on which we have been something long, but will make even in those seven that follow, all sent by the same Hand.

Quest. 2. *Can Marriage and Chastity consist together?*

Ans. Yes: Why not? as well as a Man may be Temperate at the most splendid Banquet: Tho' no Body ever thought this Temperance consisted in not tasting a Bit, but in forbearing to eat more than is sufficient.

Quest. 3. *Is it lawful to keep ones self a Virgin, or is Virginity a Virtue?*

Ans. Not so fast Madam — Here are two Questions wide enough from one another; for many things may be lawful that are not Virtues, tho' to be sure no Virtue but is lawful; and yet even there circumstances make so great a difference, that that may be lawful, nay, a Virtue in one, which would be neither in another — And in both Cases you know your self best, and therefore are fittest to Answer your own Question.

Quest. 4. *Is Virginity or Marriage most excellent?*

Ans. To be sure the Monks are for Virginity, because 'tis most like the *Angels* — (So *Angels* love, so let 'em do for me!) but at the same rate they must keep us from eating or drinking, unless they could find *Manna* for our Food. But certainly when Man was in *Paradise*, he was in the most excellent State his present Nature is capable of, and this was Marriage, not Virginity, it being not good for Man to be alone, even in that happy place — A rare Habitation for a *Hermit*, had it been best for him to continue so. If it be said, this was only for Peopling the World, the same still holds; whereas if the other should obtain, there would be an End on't in the next generation: If 'tis said there's no Fear — we hope so too, however this would be the direct and certain tendency of that Doctrine, if believ'd and practis'd; as in effect it began to appear pretty plainly about the Fall of the *Roman Empire*, when so many Men and Women ran into Holes and Wilderesses that the Empire was unpeopled, and had not Hands enough left to defend it from the Irruption of the *Barbarous Nations*, as Historians of those times acquaint us.

Quest. 5. *Why are Women more subject to Passion than Men?*

Ans. Those who han't so great a Respect for their Sex as we profess to have, will pretend 'tis from the Weakness of their Reason — We rather turn it to their Commendation, whatever the malicious World says, we are willing to believe they are more open and free than our own Sex, and can't dissemble so well, for Men are certainly (as far as we have observ'd) much oftener in a Passion, only they are for the most part the better Hypocrites, and (in both senses) know better how to dissemble a Passion — In this we would be understood of Hatred, Anger, Revenge, and the other ill-natur'd Perturbations, in which, and all others — Setting gentle Love aside — the Ladies may without any Injury to themselves, give our Sex the Preheminence.

Quest. 6. *Do the Eyes or Tongue help most to Love?*

Ans. 'Tis much as they are manag'd, tho' the Eyes are two to one, and may often speak, where the Tongue must be silent.

Quest. 7. *Is not Kissing an insipid thing? is there any real Pleasure in't?*

Ans. We must leave that to your own Experience, tho' 'tis much as the Person is.

Quest. 8. *Why may not a Woman, without any Impeachment to her Modesty, suffer a Man to Kiss her often, as well as to shake Hands with her?*

Ans. Are Kisses insipid still? — But to let that Unlucky Question alone, tho' only to come to another: If the Innocence of applying Lips to Lips be argu'd from that of applying Hands to Hands — *dos æquæ sũ* — Ladies, you know the meaning.

Quest. 9. *Sirs, Amongst the Ladies Questions next Saturday, pray Answer mine about a Sallet, which I sent last Week, to enquire whether Blanching Herbs in Earth, made them more or less wholsom?*

Ans. If it's meant discolouring Herbs by Earth, it can no way make them more or less unwholsom, because Earth is Natural to them, only they must be weakned in their Virtues. The Gentleman would do well to Propose his way of Blanching a Sallet, that the Ladies may have Cause to return the Gentleman their thanks for the Favour.

Quest. 10. *There are several desire you to consider farther upon the Question of the Decay'd Gentleman?*

Ans. The Decay'd Gentleman is not altogether to reflect upon his Daughters and Friends, as if they were the Cause, or Poysoned in their Principles, and so disregard him: But he is to think upon the Stroke from Heaven: Afflictions come not out of the Dust. The Decay'd Gentleman ought to remember that the first Command in *Paradise* was the Love and Obedience of Husbands and Wives, and his Daughters as Married are under that immediate Obligation: And, Parents, provoke not your Children, is for this Reason, lest you lose your Honour, or else there is no force in the Caution: Therefore what Provocations this Gentleman has given his Relations and Friends, is not Couched in the Question, as it ought to have been: However it may be the imperscrutable Method of Punishment that God has taken to reward his Folly, and the best way to mortifie him. And if he be a *Papist*, (altho' that is omitted in the question) his best way is to Cover his Condition with a Monastery, where he may bewail the JUST JUDGMENT that has befallen him: For suppose a Father ought (as he is in a Publick Capacity) to have his Wife brought to Bed with such Persons about her as by Custom and Law ought to be at that time. Now if he and she will have those about them as are against Law and Custom in that Case, if the Child were her own, yet they must take it for their Pains, (if he loose his Publick Station) if no Body will believe them; and it is not to Complain his Daughter or Friends will not believe him about his second Wife's Son, seeing his acting so illegally in this and in all his other Proceedings, have given a just occasion for their disbelief, and for his Friends forsaking him. This may be one Cause, but there being none mention'd in the Question, as there would have been, had dot the Querist been a SENSELESS BIGOT, it's forborn to add more.

Several Questions sent us this Week are already Answered.

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