

The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, July 19. 1692.

Quest. 1. **H**aving for a long time pretended kindness to a Young Woman, and promis'd her Marriage if ever in a Capacity to maintain her, she thereupon yielded to my unlawful desires. Since this I'm sensible of my Crime, and wou'd willingly make her what satisfaction I'm able, but am not yet in a capacity to live with her, too she's extremely apprehensive that I'll forsake her, and I under Temptation of doing it. On the whole I desire your Advice, Whether I had not best immediately marry her to put her out of her Fear, and endeavour also to make her sensible of the Crime we have together bin guilty of: Pray give a speedy answer?

Ans. His first Duty is, to be sure he's truly sensible of his Crime, and troubled for it, and endeavour to make her Partner in his Repentance, as she has bin in the sin. Then we think 'tis a plain case, that he ought to marry her to prevent those Inconveniences he has mentioned, and many others: And if they are not wealthy in the World, to depend upon Gods Providence, and endeavour to make up what's wanting by honest Industry and a contented mind.

Quest. 2. *Worthy Sirs! Contentedness in Ignorance is the greatest Impediment to Learning, but the Ingenious are prompted by their Curiosity to seek for Solutions to their doubts, and the first step to knowledge is velle Scire: Wherefore since your goodness invites all doubting thoughts to have recourse to your Learned Society for satisfaction, I presume on your Patience to beg an Answer to this important Question. A Friend of mine being lately upon the Road a Horseback, was extremely incommoded by loss of Leather; which coming to the knowledge of one of his Fellow Travellers, he overpersuaded him to put two Eldersticks in his Pocket, which not only eas'd him of his pain, but secur'd the remaining portion of his Posteriors, not yet excoriated, throughout the rest of his Journey: Pray let us have the true Philosophical account of this strange operation?*

Ans. Grave Sir! Communication of Knowledge is the greatest advancement of Learning, but the whimsical are prompted by their own Maggots to seek solution of such doubts as don't deserve it, and the first and last step of their Knowledge is to ridicule all others. But hoping that your goodness cou'd admit no such sinister design into your hypercritical Noddle, we shall for once gravely consider what you have with so much satisfaction proposed to our Society for a plenary satisfaction, and try what we can make of your very important Question. You must know then that there's a pretence of a business call'd Sympathy, that no body knows what to make of, but yet it helps out many a poor Philosopher at a dead lift when he can't tell what to say, and did we only refer to that in the present weighty Affair, we shou'd yet advance as far as thousands have done before us. But not to rest there, you must farther know, that there are certain very pretty little atoms, ether know, that what you please to call 'em, that are perfectly effluvia, or what you please to call 'em, that are perpetually flying off from the most solid Bodies, and roaming up and down the Air no body knows whether; nor have they the Wit to direct their own course aright, but like meer atoms as they are, sometimes fall foul on their Foes, break one another's Shins, and maul every thing that stands in their way, — As Gods meet Gods and jostle in the dark; other times they meet their Friends, and then there's such shaking hands, caressing and embracing among 'em, as you cannot imagine, they assist one another as much as possible, and away they march together with doubled force to grope out and destroy their Enemies. Thus Sir, to come to Instances, we read in a certain famous Philosopher, that if any sawcy Skipkennel defiles your door, and presents you with a cast of his — without saying by your leave, the ready way to be reveng'd of him is to take a red hot Spit and run into the Premises: Upon which (d'ye take

me) out muster all the poor Atoms, (like the Hornets when the Smith run his hot Gad into his Thatch) and abroad they ramble till they beat up poor Skips hinder Quarters, where finding some of their kindred Atoms, (for you know Lads are generally in haste, and can seldom stay to make clean work) they presently fall a scraping Acquaintance with 'em, and penetrating the Orifice in the shape of Suppositors, make such a dreadful racket, that the little Gentleman wonders what's come to him, and can never be at rest till he leaps into the Thames to cool himself, and almost makes it hiss about him with the strange Empyreumatical Qualities impress'd upon those parts that shall still be nameless: So Sir, in the weighty case of the Elder-sticks, the parts aforesaid being excoriated, an infinity of little particles fly off, insensible indeed to the naked Eye, but perhaps discernable by the nearer approximation of the olfactory Organs, if Sir, you have the curiosity to make the Experiment: Now Sir, the Elder-sticks aforesaid, having in them a Sanative vertue, or the particles which do perpetually avolare from them being lenitive and healing, mixing with these before mentioned, which they meet in their short Ramble (no farther than from the bottom of the Breeches to the bottom of the —) they are easily carry'd thither, and in a few moments, like the famous Sympathetick Powder, perform their friendly operation. And this we hope may suffice in reply to this arduous Question.

Quest. 3. *Pray why does not AND spell TOM; THE NED? &c.*

Ans. In every Letter we are to consider the Power, and the Character distinct from each other; the Power, force, or sound, which is the same, or little differing in all Nations and Languages: The Character or Figure whereby those powers are express'd, which almost infinitely disagree, seem perfectly arbitrary, alterable, and still altering at pleasure, as the new Runic after the old, the way of writing by Characters, and Bp. Wilkins many new Alphabets, to add no more, do sufficiently evince. To make all this bear, the word AND can be no otherwise express'd, as to its proper sound and Power, than by those 3 different sounds which we express to the Eye by the Characters A. N. D. — but form'd in the mouth by the Organs of Speech after a different manner, and all Mankind wou'd make use of those 3 same sounds to express it — But for the Characters whereby we represent those sounds to the Eye, with us in English, and most of the European Languages AND, they may be almost infinitely varied, and every Nation whose Alphabet bears a different form, will express 'em in a different manner. There is therefore no other reason why AND, as 'tis written, shou'd not spell TOM, T. H. E. NED, or NICK, or your HUMBLE SERVANT, or what you please, besides the Institution and Custom of Nations, which has resolv'd to express those sounds by different Figures and Characters.

Quest. 4. *What think you of Dr. Wilkins's Universal Character, and Philosophical Language, and whether or no you esteem it practicable?*

Ans. We think that piece of his, wherein he treats on those Subjects, (as well as other of his Works) deserves the highest Esteem and Admiration. 'Twas indeed a prodigious design, enough almost to have frighted any but him from the Undertaking. — Nor yet did he fail in the Attempt, or come short in the most greedy expectations. The character is natural, graceful, and easie, containing a lively picture, description or indeed definition of the thing it represents; the Language numerous, copious, and noble, as round as the Greek, and more full and expressive than any extant, if we are not mistaken, and yet not much behind the Italian in softness. After all,

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'tis not only practicable but easie to any who understand Things; nay if they don't before, his System is sufficient to instruct 'em — This we pronounce positively from our own Experience and Knowledge, being assur'd that the World is mistaken in the Difficulty of this as the Chinese Language, the latter of which the Fathers can now attain the Mastery of, so as to Write whole Books elegantly therein in a short time, as Magellans assures us on his own Experience; and the former a Man may learn to write, read, and speak indifferently well in a Months time, tho' one great excellency of it is, that it needs not its own sound, but the Character may as well be read or exprest in any other Language.

Quest. 5. How is't that Signs and Wonders are said to be wrought by False Prophets?

Ans. The Question is not at all clearly express'd; but we think either the Querist means by his How, by what means, or to what End or Reason. As to the first, all the true Signs and Wonders really wrought by False Prophets in the Scripture, were wrought by the Devil, by Enchantment or Magick, to seduce Mankind, and persuade 'em to embrace a false Religion, or at least take off their Dependence upon Heaven — The End or Reason of God's permitting those things, is for the showing his Glory by greater Miracles, for the Tryal of the good, and just hardning of the impenitent and wicked, all which may be clearly discover'd in the instance of Pharaoh, and the Magicians of Egypt.

Quest. 6. How shall we know which Wonders are wrought by God, and which by Satan?

Ans. See our former Answers about Miracles, and if those don't satisfie, Object against 'em.

Quest. 7. What are Prodigies, and whereof do they consist?

Ans. We think they may be tolerably thus describ'd: Any unaccountable or very unusual Phenomenon in Nature, presented to the World by the Interposition of some supernatural Agent. That there really are such things, may be proved, we think unanswerably, both from the Old Testament and the New, as well as the Experience of all Ages. In the Old, 1 Gen. 14. of the Lights in the Heaven, Sun, Moon, and Stars, God says, Let them be for Signs — εἰς σημεῖα, says the 70. Accordingly says our Saviour in the New Testament, 21 St. Luke and 11th. There shall be fearfull sights, and great signs from Heaven — σημεῖα αὐτῶν οὐρανόθεν μετὰ ταῦτα, and v. 25. καὶ ἔσονται σημεῖα, &c. And there shall be Signs in the Sun, and in the Moon and in the Stars; as in effect there were, at our Saviour's Death, when the Sun was darkened, and before the Destruction of Jerusalem.

Quest. 8. When Prodigies happen in a Countrey where there are two different sides or Professions in Religion, how it may be known whether of them they concern?

Ans. Undoubtedly they concern both, they are sent to the Community, and are a Warning to all to Repent?

Quest. 9. How we may know the Circumstances of Prodigies, or when, where, and how they are to happen?

Ans. It is not to be expected this should be ordinarily known, for they would then very probably lose their Operation, and not answer their Design of alarming the World. When Armies are seen encountering in the Air, (the Truth of which we can't doubt, 'twou'd undoubtedly Pose a Galileo himself, to fix the Time or Place before hand, or to give a true and satisfactory Reason in Nature, how they appear in that dreadful Form.

Quest. 10. It hath been often observed that Canary-Wines brought into England shall ferment here at the time of the Vintage, when the Vines flourish in Spain, and are in the Bud — what think you may be the Reason of it?

Ans. The Question is so worded, that we hardly know what to make of it — Whether the Querist means that Wines are upon the Fret at the time of Vintage, or when the Vines are in Flower or in Bud, for they can't be all together, the Flowering time being as far from Vintage as our Spring is from Autumn. However, we suppose, if at any time, this happens in the time of Flowering, and we know no better account of it than what Sir Kenelm gives us — That the Vinous Particles, then flying off in great Quantities, and first mingled with the

Air, are drawn by the Circulation thereof, tho' at so vast a distance, to their similar substance, mix with the Wines, and raise that little effervescence or ebullition in them.

Quest. 11. A late Virtuoso, in a Philosophical Treatise, affirms that if a Man hath Quicksilver in his Body, or any where about him, any Gold Ring which he wears on his Finger, or but holds in his Mouth, will turn White; and if it be afterwards thrown into the Fire, the Quicksilver immediately evaporates and flies away; and if the same Ring be again held in the Mouth, 'twill still grow White every time, as long as any Quick-silver remains in the Body: Your Thoughts are desired of the Truth of Fact, and reason of the thing?

Ans. It's the same Virtuoso reports this, who tells the former, and many other strange Stories: This we are sure from Experience and Sense, that Quick-silver is the most subtle and piercing of any Substance ever yet found; but whether it has so strange a Quality, we very much question, and don't think it worth the while to make the Experiment on our selves or any others, and must ask the Querist Pardon, if 'till we have done it, we can't give him any certain Resolution in this Matter.

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