

# The Athenian Mercury:

Tuesday, September 20. 1692. Licens'd, E. Bohun.

Quest. 1. **W**Hether the Ancients had the use of Letters, or conveying Intelligence from one place to another, seeing in Jacob's time he never heard of his Son Joseph till his Brethren went down into Egypt, and he there made known himself unto 'em, and when such a laudable practice may be thought to be first put in use?

Ans. Intelligence may be convey'd without Letters, and probably was so before those were invented, or common in the World. Letters, whether we understand Characters or Epistles, were certainly first invented or used by the Eastern Nations — The Phœnicians are said to have had 'em some of the first, and Cadmus either to have added some new Characters of his own to the Alphabet, or have got 'em from other Nations and inserted 'em. The Phœnicians very probably had 'em from the Jews, as they from Moses, and he either receiv'd 'em by Tradition from Shem, or Divine Revelation, or else himself invented 'em; for from the Egyptians it seems not at all likely he shou'd receive 'em, who indeed used Hieroglyphicks, but we don't read much of their Letters in those early days, nor are we sure they were invented, at least the common use of expressing the Mind by 'em at a distance, when Joseph was in Egypt, tho' there might be other Reasons for his not acquainting Jacob where he was. However, the first place we read of any Epistle in the H. Scriptures, unless we are mistaken, is that of David to Joab, and the first writing was that of Gods own Finger on the two Tables, tho' this is more properly engraving than writing.

Quest. 2. Whether Society or Solitude be most preferable in order to the noblest Ends of Man?

Ans. 'Twou'd be almost impossible to advance any thing new on a Common place, which has bin thumb'd so many thousand years, and by so many thousand Authors. Some of the freshest and best thoughts on both sides may be met with in Mr. Cowleys Essay for Solitude, and Mr. Evelyns against it. Honest old Aristotle has summ'd up almost all that can be said in a few words, "A Solitary Life, says he, is either Brutal or Divine, above or below a Man: Whence his other Assertion is clear, That Man must be a Political, or if you will, a Sociable Animal. We must confess, cou'd we believe a Man answer'd the End of his Creation, by an ascetick Heremical Life, we don't doubt but 'twou'd give the highest Pleasure he is capable of in this World, by Contemplation and Meditation. — But, Non sumus adeo felices, as was said in another Case, We are not yet so happy, nor ought we to be so, that being a cowardly sort of Content which is got by running away from whatever displeases. Shou'd all good men thus take a whim of leaving the World, what wou'd become of it? and wou'd it not be just such a piece of justice and kindness as for all the Physicians in a Nation to go live in a Wilderness, lest their Patients shou'd infect 'em? We don't in the least doubt but that 'tis much more difficult to live honest in the midst of so many thousand Temptations, which are unavoidable in this World, than to do so when retired from all things of that Nature: But tho' difficult 'tis possible, and the more difficulty the more Honour. Not but that we think the greatest tryal a true good man will have of his Virtue, while he remains on the Scene of Action, lies on the contrary side to that where 'tis generally suspected. In our Opinion he has more need of his Patience than his Temperance, and he must be better humour'd than we pretend to be, if when he once knows it well he does not almost lose all his Charity for this lewd World.

Quest. 3. I have to maintain my wicked Extravagancies wrong'd a certain Person who is now dead, both of Money

and other things, for which being very sensible of the hainousness of my offence against Almighty God, I'm now resolv'd to make a full and speedy restitution to the Widow of the Deceas'd: But the shame of owning my self guilty of such a Fact, makes me very unwilling to put my Name to a Letter I shall send with the Money. Pray your Opinion, whether the satisfaction won't be sufficient without discovering who I am to the Person I send it to: Your speedy Answer is earnestly desired, because I can have no rest till it be done?

Ans. This might have been sooner answer'd, but that 'tis without a Date; and besides, we have already reply'd to several Cases so very near it, as wou'd have given the Querist satisfaction, had he taken the pains to turn over our Indexes. However, in particular we think, that supposing the Person to whom he intends satisfaction be Discreet and Pious, he'd do very well to take Shame to himself, and either put his Name to his Letter, or in Person wait upon her, and acknowledge the Injury. But this we find most Divines think he's not obliged to do, if the Person to whom he's to make restitution has not those Characters, but is such a one as wou'd endanger his Reputation, or Life, if trusted with a Secret of that Nature.

Quest. 4. I am near 33 years of Age, and have for these 15 years past led an idle and loose Life. I have considered of the Folly of it, and am mightily concern'd I shou'd wast so many years in Debauchery and Extravagance: I am extraordinary desirous to reform, but I find these Obstacles, viz. When I was about 18 years, I did for Gain swear to an Account that it was perfect, when I did think the contrary. Some Years after a Young Woman did profess a Kindness to me, tho' I never encourag'd her, yet in my Cups I did tell, nay Swore to her Mother that I wou'd never marry to any other Woman but her Daughter, notwithstanding I soon after made my Address to a Vertuous Lady of a good Estate, and after some time I gain'd her Consent, and we made a mutual Promise, but she hearing of my Circumstances, put me off for some years. At length I grew tyr'd, and withdrew my Affections, and plac'd them on another Woman, (who was then a Wife) which the Lady hearing, she thought her self acquitted of her Promise, and marry'd another. The Husband of my new Lady dyes suddenly, and gives me liberty to perfect my Address, (which I have done) but not in that way I ought, tho' I from time to time have promis'd her Marriage, but have not yet perform'd it: This Woman has no Fortune, and I have wasted mine. Now I have two Sisters, whose Portions were in my hands, I have likewise consum'd them; they are both Elder than my self, and unmarried, and depend absolutely upon me; I am in Debt, have no Employment, nor Income, I run further in Debt, and my Sisters work for their Living, (which heartily concerns me.) I have so foolishly behaved my self, that I have neither Relation nor Acquaintance that will do any thing for me. Gentlemen, I humbly beg of you to direct which way I shall make my peace with God and Man: I am of the Church of England, tho' I was never confirm'd, nor ever receiv'd the Sacrament. I did once so disoblige my Mother, that I am inform'd she curs'd me, tho' afterwards she was sorry for her rash expression, and did ever after embrace me with a more tender Affection. Gentlemen, I cou'd not tell how to make you understand me in fewer words, but if you please, this is the Substance of what I desire, Whether I am perjur'd, it being a Customary Oath, and in a publick Concern? How far, or whether my Oath to the Mother of the first Woman was binding, the Daughter not long after was contracted to another? Whether I was guilty of breach of Pro.



Promise in the second, and whether I am oblig'd to Marry the third, or whether I may Marry any other who will enable me to pay my Debts, and make restitution to my Sisters, &c. Whether my Mothers Curse (the repenting) be of any validity? Whether I ought to receive the Sacrament in the state I am now in, I mean upon an unfeigned Repentance of my sins past, until I am Confirmed by a Bishop? *Gentlemen, I do humbly desire your Advice in these distractions, and am resolv'd to follow your Directions, and if ever I am in a Capacity will find out some way to acknowledge your Kindness: I am, Gentlemen, your Unfortunate Suppliant, but hope much Comfort from your Advice?*

*Ans.* As to the matter of Accounts, Swearing where you believ'd (or was not perswaded but that) you forswore your self, if it was not to the injury of any body, your sin was only against God Almighty, and must be confess'd to him, and begg'd Pardon for; if it was in order to injure any Person, you ought to make restitution, or resolve to do it so soon as you can. As for your Promise and Oath to the Mother of the first Woman, it was a Wickedness if you did not design what you said, but 'twas no Contract with the Daughter; however, the Daughter being afterwards Contracted to another, your Obligation ceases. As for your Promise to the second, your sin was breaking your Promise with the Mother, and living so ill as to discourage her from giving you entertainment, which probably she would not have done, if you had acted otherwise. As for your Obligations to the third Lady, if you had not enjoy'd her but upon Condition of Marriage, you ought to proceed and satisfy the World publickly, notwithstanding the unhappy and mean Circumstances attending; but if otherwise, 'tis our Opinion that you are free, for Marriage is a Sacred Institution, and its ends are ill answer'd in tying ones self to an Adulteress, at least one that has not given very good Evidence of Repentance for being so. As to your Marrying a fourth, it depends upon your management of the third, and what has pass'd betwixt you, which you have not been particular enough in to give us a true Notion of the State of the Case, which therefore we desire you would open to some learned Divine for your resolution. As to your Mothers Curse, you may assure your self it can have no influence upon your Soul, if you repent and become a good Man, we know not what it may as to your Body or Temporal Concerns, for it's a more dreadful thing to be disobedient to Parents, and turn their Blessings into Curses than every Body thinks of: As for your Repentance, you ought to be as particular and resolv'd as you can, before you approach the Sacrament, and it would be very well to have a particular Spiritual Guide to have always ready at hand to Consult with upon occasion. You ought to be Confirm'd before you Communicate, (if you can conveniently) 'tis the order Christ's Church has observ'd, which is all We think you have demanded of us.

*Quest. 5. We have in our Common Books of Arithmetick for the Measuring of a Circle, these two Numbers given to us, 7. 22. for the Proportion of a Diameter to its Circumference; Query, Whether they be exact, and who was the Author of 'em?*

*Ans.* Archimedes, de *Dimensione Circuli*, has given us these Numbers; *Metius* gives us 113. 355. which is something nearer the truth: Mr. *Kersey* has given us 1 to 3.14158: Dr. *Vallis* in his Treatise of Algebra has enlarg'd it, 1 to 3.14159265358979323846264338327950288 $\frac{1}{2}$ ; those that please may go further, that of *Metius* is near enough the truth for Practice.

*Quest. 6. Whether the Quadrature of a Circle be possible?*

*Ans.* Not 'till an odd Number can be divided into two equal Integer Numbers, which can't be done by our common way of Notation; what succeeding Ages may find out we know not, but as in the preceding Question the Proportion of a Circles Diameter to its Perimeter may be found inexpressly near the truth, tho' not exactly, so the Circle may be squar'd by the help of Poligons so near the truth as to deceive the sense, which is near enough for Practice, as we said in the last Question.

*Quest. 7. Do Fishes smell, taste, and hear?*

*Ans.* If we were not assur'd by matter of Fact that

Fishes smell, common reason wou'd teach us that they do; for since Nature does nothing in vain (perhaps I need not add) at least ordinarily, it wou'd never have bestow'd Nostrils upon Fishes to no use: If it be objected that Water is too thick a Medium for the conveyance of smells, it wou'd be answer'd, that Water is the proper Element of Fishes, and therefore it might as well be said, 'tis impossible that Man should smell in so thin and subtile a Medium as Air, for both are equally ridiculous. As for their Tasting, the same Argument holds good, Nature having provided them with a Tongue and Pallat, or else they would be often cheated in their feeding, since their Eye cou'd not always exactly distinguish their Food, especially in the Night time, which is the chief time of feeding for the largest sort of Fish, I mean in our Common Rivers, especially where a way lyes along the Water-side: 'twou'd be needless to add, that several ingenious Fisher-men prepare their Baits with the Tincture of Asper, and other Oyls, to allure that Sense, and successfully too, as they will tell you. As for Hearing we have already Answer'd it in a Question by it self, and shou'd it impossible, both from the Structure of their Organs, they having no Ears or any thing else that supplies the Office of that Sense, as also from Matter of Fact, Fish being terrified by the least Motion, when they lye Sunning themselves, but by no Noise whatever, unless it be such a Noise as shakes their Element, and the Earth too, as the Shot of a Cannon, &c. and then 'tis not the Noise but the Motion that affects them.

*Quest. 8. Whether the Story of Greatricks (that famous Irish-man) stroaking and Curing most Diseases by laying on of his Hands, be a Truth, and by what means is it thought that he got that Power? or is the whole but a Fable?*

*Ans.* There's none of us that has had any Personal Acquaintance with him, or can receive better satisfaction than publick Relations: As to the possibility of such Actions, they are indisputable, and we have in some of our former Volumes, in treating upon the Cure of the King's Evil, given a full account of things of this Nature, and shou'd that 'tis not only Irish-men, but particular Families of several Nations, that have been Notorious for their respective Cures.

*¶* We have lately receiv'd the following Question, viz. *Whether if the Punishment of Criminals (except for Treason and Murder) were changed from being Capital to perpetual or Temporary Slavery, according to the nature of the Crime, it would not probably be more effectual?* — This Question came not time enough to be Answer'd in this Mercury, but (being a Question of great moment) shall be answer'd first of all in next Saturdays Mercury.

## Advertisement.

*¶* The Compleat Library, or News for the Ingenious, containing an Historical Account of the choicest Books newly printed in England and in the Forreign Journals; as also the State of Learning in the World. To be Published Monthly. This for AUGUST. Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry; of whom is to be had The Compleat Library for MAY, JUNE, JULY, being the three first that were Publish'd. The Compleat Library for SEPTEMBER is now in the Press.

*¶* In Grays-Inn-lane in Flow-yard, the third Door, lives Dr. Thomas Kirleus, a Collegiate Physician, and Sworn Physician in Ordinary to King Charles the Second, until his death; who with a Drink and Pill (hindring no Business) undertakes to Cure any Ulcers, Sores, Swellings in the Nose, Face, or other parts; Scabs, Itch, Scurfis, Leprosies, and Venereal Disease, expecting nothing until the Cure be finished: Of the last he hath cured many hundreds in this City, many of them after fluxing, which carries the evil from the Lower Parts to the Head, and so destroys many. The Drink is 3 s. the Quart, the Pill 1 s. a Box, with Directions; a better Purger than which was never given, for they cleanse the Body of all Impurities, which are the causes of Dropsies, Gouts, Scurvis, Stone or Gravel, Pains in the Head, and other parts. With another Drink at 1 s. 6 d. a Quart. He cures all Fevers and hot Distempers without Bleeding, except in few Bodies. He gives his Opinion of all that writes or comes for nothing.

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