

# The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, September 24. 1692. Licens'd, E. B.

Quest. 1. **W**hether 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?

Ans. This Question is a little too generally put; besides Treason and Murder there are Rapes, Buggery, House-burning, and other abominable Crimes that deserve Death, and can no otherwise be effectually punished. We shall confine the Answer therefore to Theft and Robbery, and then we believe that Slavery is a better and more effectual Punishment than Death. In the more Ancient Times all Offences were punished by Fine and Imprisonment, except Treason; as the Nation grew Populous, the Laws were changed and made more severe, but then a Malefactor might have had his Clergy several times, and there were Sanctuaries, as also the Liberty of Abjuring the Realm for any Felony before the Coroner. The Clergy being restrained to one time, and not at all allowed in some Cases, as the stealing of Horses, &c. and all privileges of Sanctuaries being taken away by the 21 of Jam. 1. c. 28. the Privilege of Abjuration fell with it: Yet the Populosity of England enabled them at that time to spare those that thus fell by the hands of Justice, and besides, we had then no Foreign Plantations to take off them that were spared, and it was thought dangerous to keep them at home. In the Reign of Charles the II. there were several Statutes made for the allowing Transportation when desired, but none to inflict it as a Punishment: And Experience has shewn, that many of those that were thus Transported have become very honest and industrious men, and have helped to fill those Colonies, and England has been as well freed from their Depredations by Transportation, as it could be by their Death. Two things are the Causes of Theft, Laziness and Pride, and the effect of these Want. Force these Wretches to Industry, and abate their Pride by Slavery, and then provide for them, and they will be Cured of their Thievish Disposition; and this might be done in England as well as beyond the Seas, in our Plantations; for if there were a Brand set upon them, and they were then sold to him that would give most for them, and the money paid to them they had injured, the Purchaser having an absolute power of Life and Death over these Slaves, would keep them in order and awe, which for want of this Power others cannot now do. When a Malefactor is once hanged, he is soon forgotten, but every living Example of Justice is a Monitor to all others not to do the same thing for fear of the same Punishment, as often as they look upon him: And besides this, the want of Servants and People would be supplied in many places where they are now wanting, or at least the Western Plantations are able to take off all the Thieves that are Convicted in England, and it were much better to send them thither, than to cut them off by the Hand of Justice, to the Ruine perhaps of Body and Soul, and the depriving the Nation of so many strong, young, and able Bodies that are wanted both at home and abroad, but can be made usefull by nothing but Slavery; for no Man will run the Hazard, or take the pains that are needful to cure them, nor can he do it if he would, except he has a Power of Life and Death over them.

Quest. 2. In reading a late Book, &c. I find therein a most dreadful Relation of a Man that lay at an Inn where the Ghost of his Landlord appeared to him, desiring him to bring his Wife, Sister and Hostler to Punishment, for having Murder'd him, which the Man having done, the Ghost promis'd upon the Mans Request to tell him of his Death an hour before he was to dye, which accordingly he

did, and it fell out to be true. Now your Thoughts are desired, Whether Spirits do know the time of Persons Death before it come to pass? and whether it might be limited to that Spirit?

Ans. That there are such things as Spirits, we have not only Scripture to prove it, but there are very late Matters of Fact, tho' there are several that have writ upon this Subject, and have made undoubted Collections of such Faithful Instances, we shall only mention a late Author in his *World of Spirits*, lately published, which will abundantly satisfy all such as doubt hereof, as we are certain there are several that do so. As for the Relation in the Question, it is not our business to find out the Truth of such a thing: But upon Supposition that the Spirit shoud make such a Promise to the Traveller, and perform it, We answer, That Spirits, Angels, Souls, Devils, Witches, or Men, know nothing to come further than they gather from Predictions in Divine Revelation, or a particular Revelation unto them, or from a probability, as such and such Causes have produc'd such and such Effects formerly; and these Causes being again in Agitation, its more than probable they will have the same Effects again. An absolute fore-knowledge is the proper Attribute of God Almighty, and which he himself makes use of against Prognosticators, Southsayers, and the pretended Predictions of the Heathen Gods, in these words, *Tell me things that are to come, and hereby I shall know that ye are Gods*. Possibly this Spirit might have an immediate Commission, when he was made the Minister of Justice, to promise and perform so much to the Traveller; or else, which indeed appears more probable, Spirits when they leave our Bodies, have certainly a clearer Notion of the Causes and Effects of things than before. A skilfull Physician can in many Cases tell, whether such or such a Distemper will immediately kill or no; and a Spirit no doubt is better acquainted with the Frame and Nature of the Body than any Man, because being capable of moving a Body, its capable of knowing how that Motion is perform'd, which no man alive knows; and therefore we may fairly conclude, he may know every thing else appertaining to the Body, and by Consequence might easily promise and perform what is above related, especially having promised for so small time before his Death, which its probable might not be unknown to those about him.

Quest. 3. What's the Reason that when we move a Fire-stick swiftly round, there appears to be a Circle of Fire, altho the Fire is but in one place at a time?

Ans. The Images of things are impress'd upon the Brain by the Optick Power, and so long as that Impression remains, we believe we see such an Image, altho we see it not at all. Thus if we fix our Eyes a considerable time upon a Window, and immediately turn 'em towards some darker place, we may plainly distinguish the Quarries, Lead, &c. which is nothing else but the Image in the Brain: Now the Brain being purely Passive, its impossible it should not take these Impressions, whether from real or apparent Objects, as 'tis impossible for a Glass not to take Reflections. Thus the Fire appears Circular as in the Question, because it moves Circular, suppose through three hundred Points, the Eye strives to catch it in every one of these Points, and at every one of 'em the Brain receives the aforesaid Impression, which Impression is Circular according to the motion of the Fire, and the Fire moving quick, and repeating these Points several times, the Impression is more sensible, and not lost till renew'd again, which therefore appears to us as one continu'd Circle.

Quest. 4. What does that Lawyer deserve who discovers his Clients Breviate to his Adversary?

Ans.



*Ans.* He deserves to lose his Fee, and to have his Govvn pull'd over his Ears.

*Quest. 5.* In Cheshire there is a River called Dee, this River upon the fall of much Rain riseth but little, but if the South Wind beat long upon it, it swells and overflows the ground adjoining; I desire your Answer in next Saturday's Mercury, what may be the reason thereof?

*Ans.* The Wind driving the Sea round, will raise the Waves higher than the access of Waters, therefore it's not to be wonder'd it should effect the same on this River.

*Quest. 6.* 'Tis reported that the Composition whereof China-Ware is made, lyes many Years under ground before it is fit for that use: What is your Opinion? Can you tell the Composition?

*Ans.* The Composition is Powder of Glass, Calcin'd Bones, Powder of Lead, and red, white, yellow, or other Earths, according to the Colour you design; these are melted in a Fornace like as Glass at our Glais-houses, and it becomes a fluid Mettal, which they cast in Clay-moulds inviron'd with Lead, and when Cold is this Vitrified Earth or China Ware: Whereas the outside only of our fine Earthen Ware is glased with such a sort of Composition.

*Quest. 7.* Whether a strict Care of the Education of all Children, and constant, certain and proper Employments, would not more successfully root out Vice, than all the Pains and Terrors of Punishments?

*Ans.* If Education could conferr Grace and Virtue, *ex opere operato*, as the School-men jabber, there would be no doubt of what the Gentleman supposes in his Query, because Love is a more ingenious, and a more forcible motive than Fear — But considering the Nature of Man, the Fear of Punishment is at least as necessary to restrain him from ill things, as the Love of Virtue or hope of Reward. Adam was purely Innocent, more than any Child can be supposed, tho' never so strictly Educated, and had such Principles of Knowledge and Goodness created with him, or inspired into him (as all but a few Hereticks unanimously believe) as might have been more than equivalent to the best Education, and yet God Almighty himself thought fit to threaten Death to preserve him in his Obedience; and tho' even this did not keep our First Parents from sinning, yet it preserv'd them a few moments more in their Innocence, that being the Argument wherewith Eve at first repell'd the Serpent, "God hath said, ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, least ye dye." It's true, we daily see many Persons who have had the advantage of the best Education, when once they have broke loose from its troublesome Chains, have proved the veriest Rakehells in Nature. However Parents are not to neglect their Duty, any more than Judges theirs; for 'tis more likely a good Education and good Laws should deter from Vice when both together, than either of them afunder.

*Quest. 8.* What's the Reason that all Nations, as well the Civiliz'd as Barbarous, do in their Counting never exceed Ten, without repeating some of the former Characters, as 13 is ten and three?

*Ans.* 'Tis said in History that there are a certain sort of People amongst the Thracians that never count beyond four, but as for the truth we can't warrant it. 'Tis very improbable that such a Number as 10 should be found out by chance, either Nature or Instruction must do it: Some believe that there are many Nations too rude for any Correspondence: Others rather suppose that Nature taught Persons, and tell us that Nature works by the most easie and familiar Methods, and has given to Mankind ten Fingers which are always at hand, ready to count or reckon by: Or, according to the Pythagoreans in ten Analogies, there are four Cubick Numbers, upon which (as they say) the whole Universe is founded, or perhaps because the Tenth Number is so perfect that it contains the form of all Lines, Numbers and Quantities; but these suppositions do also presuppose something else, that at the same time that Persons learn'd to count, they could make such curious applications of Numbers as above, which were not found out 'till many Ages after, therefore the Number Ten could not be found on purpose, because of such Ap-

plications as no body knew of — The most probable Account that we can give of it is this, That as Adam made in his perfect reason, so he was capable of reckoning or numbering, which also his Children must learn of him, but we find that before the Confusion of Languages they reckon'd by Tens, as is evident by several passages; to name one (which is well translated) *Cain shall be revenged sevenfold, surely Lamech seventy sevenfold*. Now if all counted by Tens before the Confusion of Tongues at Babel, we may reasonably conclude that they did so afterwards, for none lost their Reason with their Native Speech; 'tis very improbable the different way of Counting by Tens could come any otherwise than from the Confusion of Tongues, since every Nation makes use of the Tenth Number in Conjunction with the Nine Units: So that tho' the first articulate Sound be changed in the like manner of using other articulate Sounds shows the same reason as much as two Tens and three does answer to twenty three, and if any of the Thracians or other barbarous places should count by fours, 'tis reasonable to conclude that two Children might be left before they could speak or might be educated without Correspondence on purpose, and so get a Language by themselves, and that such two were the Original of the People if any such there be, which is very much suspected.

☞ We receiv'd a Letter of an Antient Gentleman that has cast his Coat, and become young again; if the Querist please to send the Name, &c. because 'tis so notorious a thing, as he is pleas'd to say, it will much oblige the Publick, for such a Renovation depends not upon Natural Causes.

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L O N D O N, Printed for John Dunton at the Raven in the Poultry, 1693