

The Athenian Mercury:

Saturday, October 22. 1692. Licens'd, E. B.

Quest. 1. **A** Gentleman having some time since seen a Person of Honour, of a most extraordinary Beauty, at some small distance, has ever since made it his business to seek all Opportunities of seeing the Lady, without her perceiving or mistrusting of it, but never with any other Thoughts or Hopes, but only of admiring the Beautiful Object; however having lately by meer Accident seen the same Lady very near, he is of a sudden fallen into that desperate Condition, that he sleeps but very little, eats hardly any thing, and is so Melancholly, that he who was formerly of a very Gay Temper, now endeavours to avoid all Company, and when he is in Company hardly speaks: Your Opinion, Gentlemen, of what can be the Reason of this, and what Course the Unfortunate Gentleman ought to take, is heartily beg'd by his Friend, and your most Obliged Servant?

Ans. 'Tis Pity the Gentleman in a Countrey of Christians should dye without Aid: Not one Saint to be implored in this particular Case among all the Popish Bead-Roll! and if the Gentleman has a mind to try Philters, Sigils, or Love Powder, he flings away his money, unless he could procure that which Petrarch relates, Epist. 5. of Charles the Great: He doated upon a mean Woman many Years, and embraced her dead Body as his Daphne, had her Embalm'd Body with a rich Coffin, and always carried wherever he went, till a Pious Prelate had a return of his Prayers, that it was reveal'd to him, the Cause of the Emperours love lay under the Dead Woman's Tongue; the Prelate searched the Corps, and found a small Ring under the Tongue, then the Emperour fell as much in Love with the Prelate. The Ring was flung into a Lake, from that hour the Emperour neglecting his other Pallaces, dwelt at Ache, or Aix, built a sumptuous House in the midst of the March, and a Temple by it, where he after was interr'd, and in which City all his Posterity ever since use to be Crowned: If not, the Gentleman need not despair. Such Matches have been on both sides, the present French King has Married Madam Maintenon with his left hand, as the French Custom is in Noble and Unnoble Persons, because it excludes those Children from being Heirs. We are ignorant of the Circumstances, whether single Persons or not, therefore he must read, consult his Friends, Trace out a new path to himself, by comparing what steps others have taken in the like extraordinary Cases.

Quest. 2. **A** Friend of mine in his Young and Indiscreet years fell in Love with a certain Lady, she being Young, and of a very good Temper, and many ways Charming, he indulg'd the Passion, made his Addresses to her, and was kindly entertain'd; he did, as other Lovers are wont to do, tell her, That he lov'd her above all Creatures living, vow'd that if she would not entertain him, he would never make his Addresses to any Woman again; he wish'd he might never be credit-ed in any thing, if what he then said was not true, and he confirm'd these Protections divers times: But since upon sober and serious Considerations, by the Advice and Perswasion of his Friends his Affections have mightily abated, he finds her Fortunes are small, and somewhat precarious; his own Circumstances are low, and if he could handsomely break off, he might assure himself of a very considerable Fortune, and a Person every way well deserving: and further, he shall be in a Capacity of doing his Relations a Kindness, who are in low Circumstances, which it seems he is very desirous to do, and many more ways he proposes to himself, by being serviceable to his Generation; but yet if he breaks off, the young Creatures Affections are now so deeply engag'd to him, that he fears she will hardly survive the unkindness, nay he is almost assur'd that she will not: What to do in this Case, he knows not; he has many scruples lying upon him, if he marries he is like to ruine his growing Fortune; if not, he shall injure her,

and do the contrary to his former rash words: Your Advice is required in this Case, from which is expected much Satisfaction from your, &c.

Ans. We have many Questions of this Nature sent us, and we are still of the same Mind. You ought to have been more Cautious before-hand; you can't now retreat in Honour and Conscience without her Consent, and whatever you may propose to your Self, to palliate the matter, as being kind to Relations, &c. is all a frivolous and vain Excuse, there's no possible Inconvenience can excuse a certain and an unavoidable Sin; that this is one is too evident, and we know not how 'tis possible for any one to say he repents, that wilfully puts himself into such a State, where its impossible he shou'd ever make reparation, as in the Question.

Quest. 3. **I** have sent several times to desire to know of you, how a Woman ought to behave her self to a man who has made Attempts against her Honour; for if she treats him civilly, and suffers him to see her, she transgresses the Laws of Decency, she exposes her self to the same Danger, and gives him occasion to think she has not a just abhorrence of his designs; on the other hand, if she uses him as an Enemy, and upon earnest intreaties and pardon begg'd, refuses to see him, she disobeys that Christian Law of forgiving Injuries: Pray don't fail to give your Thoughts in your next Mercury, for it concerns me.

Ans. The Question resolves it self, she can pardon him without seeing him; and after that if she admit him to see her privately, she administers new Fuel to the Temptation, which she ought to avoid as well as forgive.

Quest. 4. *Whether the World decays, and grows Old?*

Ans. There are some Fanisful men of Opinion, that Earthquakes are the Effects of the decays of Nature; and that this Earth grows old, sickly, and vveak, and that Hills and Vales are not the Effect either of Creation, or of Noah's Flood, but that they are wrinkles and furrows of Old age, just like the Deformities of Aged People: And they wou'd back this their Opinion by their Observation of Hills being for the most part Barren and Sandy, as if the Radical moisture of Nature was either exhausted or withdrawn into the Valleys which are nearer the Center of the Earth, just as a mans Spirits retire to the Heart, to relieve that, when he comes near his end. But this merry Hypothesis is too unphilosophical to be embrac'd; for 'tis plain that the World is Naturally uncorruptible, because there's no Natural Agent that can destroy it self. 'Tis an Error which some maintain, that the World decays, that Men grow less, or live shorter Lives than those who liv'd four thousand years since, as is evident by Psalm 90, compos'd by Moses, Men then liv'd 70 or 80 years as now: And those Travellers that have visited Egypt, give an Account that the Common length of the Tombs of the Ancient Kings of Egypt, which have been for several thousand years, are but about two yards long one with another. If the World is decay'd, 'tis owing to the immediate Providence of God, who will also one day effect that notable Change we read of in Sacred Writ.

Quest. 5. *Whether One be any Number?*

Ans. Diophantus, that Prince of Arithmeticians, calls it a Number, and we take it to be so too: Some say 'tis rather the Genesis, or beginning of Numbers, than a Number it self, since all other Numbers are made out of it; but that is to make it both Integer and Fraction at once, which is impossible.

Quest. 6. Gentlemen, There is a Gentleman an Acquaintance of mine, who has a Son who for some time kept a Correspondence with a Gentlewoman, which some of his Relations hearing of, imagined that it wou'd grow to be a Match; to prevent which, they immediately went and acquainted his Father with

it, which put him in such a Passion that he immediately swore to disinherite him, although his Son satisfied him long before that he would never marry that Person (she being much beneath the young Gentleman's quality) nor any other without his Consent: Now Gentlemen, I desire your Opinion, Whether an Oath so rashly made, may not safely be broken without a prejudice to his Conscience?

Ans. It is a Discretionary thing, the Father may Observe it, but it has no Obligation of an Oath.

Quest. 7. A the Husband marries B the Wife, and afterwards C, whilst B was alive, and known to be so by C; some time after C leaves A and marries D, D also knowing A to be living; after this D turns off C, and marries E. This is certain matter of fact, and all the Persons are now alive. Gentlemen, You are now desired to tell us whose Wife C is? and whether the Children of E, who knows nothing of all this, begot by D, may Inherit their Mothers Joynture settled upon her in Marriage by the said D? as likewise whether the Sons of the said D lawfully begotten by a former Wife, may in Conscience publish their Father's Crime? (they only having found out the truth of it, and being unwilling to expose him without your particular directions herein) and if they may do it, whether this Method may prevent his disposal of another part of his Estate which he designs to give his Child that is very like him, begot on the Body of C, and whether this their publishing the matter may endanger his Life? Gentlemen, Your sense of the whole Case is earnestly importun'd by, &c?

Ans. Here's a company of very Nice Questions coucht under this uncommon Relation, some of which we dare not pretend to give Judgment decisive upon, but only tell you our private Opinion, and desire you would Consult (if all be real matter of fact) such Persons as you may receive better satisfaction from. As to the first Question, *Whose Wife is C?* We dare be positive she is none of A's, for she can pretend no such thing as Marriage with A before God, for in our Office of Marriage 'tis said, *So many as are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow, are not joined together by God:* And in the Eye of our Law a Man has but one Wife, the Woman will be lookt upon as either a Wife or an Adulteress; a Wife it can't be here, since then A must have two Wives, and if so, is lyable to Death, for so the Law provides in such Cases: It then remains, that she's the Wife of D, if of any Body (who it's suppos'd by the Relation had no other Wife at the same time) nor will D's marrying E cancel the former Marriage; for if I marry another Man's Whore, she's my Wife, and may be suppos'd to be honest for the future; but if I marry another Man's Wife, she's not my Wife but my Whore. 'Tis our Opinion, that E tho' she be really innocent before God, yet she is not D's Wife whilst C is alive; and by consequence in Answer to the second Question, her Children by D can't inherit her Joynture without some other Act, but the Child of C, who is not guilty of its Parents Crimes, may and ought to receive its Portion amongst its elder Brethren, begot on a former Wife, which prevents the fourth Question. As to the third Question, which asks, *Whether the Sons of D, begotten on a former Wife, may in Conscience publish their Father's Crime?* We dare not be positive in our Answer, but we think they ought not for what's past; but we believe if upon a full satisfaction (which we dare not determine) they find that their Father's Marriage with E is not valid, or lawful before God or Man, they ought to inform their Father of it, and desire his Separation from her, and if he will not, we think they ought not to publish it; 'tis unnatural to take away that life by which a Child lives, and how otherwise to avoid being partakers of the Fathers sin, is a great difficulty. As for the last Query, *Whether their publishing the whole to a Magistrate may endanger their Father's life?* We answer, *Yes.* We desire the Querist to get better satisfaction as to the last Marriage with E, Whether lawful or not? before they determine any thing, and then to send to us again; and if any Person who is more assur'd in this Case will send to us about it, we will communicate it to the Querists by a Private Letter to be left with our Bookseller.

Quest. 8. *Whether Privateering be lawful?*

Ans. As sure as it is lawful to kill a French-man that is in actual Arms and Hostility against us, which no body doubts of that has not a mind to have his Throat cut in Bed, or burn at Stake, all Europe's Engagement in a Common Cause actually determining the Case in the affirmative at this day: Every private Man is a licens'd Officer of Justice in such a Case. Where I'm oblig'd in duty to do an Action, I do not understand how the Obligation is less because it is my Interest to do it, as in the Case of Privateers; if I get a Prize, and serve my Countrey, it is a double Obligation to venture.

Quest. 9. *It is well known that Cocks crow at certain times in the Night, or rather towards the Morning: Your Opinion is desired, whether those Creatures distinguish time, and by their such Crowing do indicate the certain hour? in the 13 ch. Mark 35 v. mention is made of Even, Midnight, the Cock-crowing, the Morning: You will hereby oblige one of your Friends?*

Ans. The Jews divided their Night into four Watches, each Watch containing three hours: The first began at six a Clock in the Evening, and was called the Beginning of the Watches, Lament. 2. 19. The second was the Middle Watch, because it lasted 'till Midnight; the third began at Midnight, and held 'till three in the Mornhig, Luke 12. 38. and the fourth or last Watch was called the Morning Watch, it began at three, and ended at six in the Morning, Math. 14. 25. These Watches were also called by other Names, according to that part of the Night which closed each Watch. The first Watch was called the *Even* or *Evening*; the second Watch was called *Midnight*, the third Watch was called *Cock-crowing*, and the fourth was called the *Dawning*, all which are exprest in the Text, Mark 13. 35. "Ye know not when the Master of the House will come, at Even, or at Midnight, or at Cock-crowing, or at the Dawning of the Morning." This Bird is a constant Herald to the New-born day, and a diligent Watch to the silent Night, altering his Note as the day approacheth; for in the deadeft time he Crows more deeply than when the Night is wearing out, shewing thereby as it were the differing Hours and changing Watches.

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