

A philosophical enquiry into the wonderful coney-warren, lately discovered at Godalmin near Guilford in Surrey: being an account of the birth of seventeen rabbits born of a woman at several times, and who still continues in strong labour, at the Bagnio in Leicester-fields.

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Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.

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A Philosophical enquiry into the wonderful ³
Coney Warren, lately discovered at Godalmin
near Guilford in Surrey.

In the first ages of the world, when mankind was in a state of innocence, miracles were uncommon and unnecessary; but as wickedness increased there was a pressing occasion for them, in order to restrain men from their various pursuits: nor can we find that there ever was a full cessation of them, as will more particularly appear by the late surprising tale of the good old woman of Godalmin, near Guilford in Surrey; who in the beginning of the last month, was delivered of a rabbit, and has since that been deliver'd of sixteen more, by the care and help of Mr Howard, an eminent surgeon and man midwife of Guilford; at stated times of about thirty hours distance, after having miscarried in a natural way. For the truth of this, I shall beg leave to insert a part of a letter from the above Mr. Howard

Guilford, Novemb. 22. 1726.

"This morning I deliver'd the poor woman of Godalmin of the seventeenth rabbit, which I believe may be the last. On Sunday I had, in his coach, Mr. Ahlers, surgeon to the Kings household, he came by the Kings order: he took part of the sixteenth rabbit from her, and carried it to Kensington. He was to have stay'd till all was over, but being taken ill, returned the same night. Last Tuesday I had Mr. St Andre, his Majestys anatomist, by the Kings order; who took part of one from her which weighed twenty two ounces; and were both satisfied in the truth of the wondrous delivery; as was Mr. Molineux, secretary to the prince, who was also here: I hear they have made their report to the King and the prince."

Now, tho' there are many who disbelieve and endeavour to discredit this story; yet, I hope, the following reasons will be enough to satisfy those, who delight not to be



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in the number of infidels, with which our present age⁵ seems to abound. We are assured, that this woman, being in a field, saw a rabbit, which she run after, but could not catch; the loss of which, by the strength of imagination, may in all probability be the cause; since all authors of books in Midwifery, tell us of the particular ways and means of working, which the imagination has on the fetus; and the many cells of generation that are capable of containing many children at the same time; tho' they seem a little defective indeed, and at a loss to account for the birth of any child without the navel string.

There are some that would account for this wonderful production, by saying, the woman had a criminal conversation with a buck rabbit, which ran lame about her house; having been seen to shew some acts of kindness to him; for which she had more than once been reprehended, in a modest way, by a learned divine.

Others there are, who seem rather to believe, the woman designed to cheat the world, by suffering a doe rabbit to kindle within her; but I must dissent from this way of accounting for it, in the same manner that Councillor C— did the other day in Westminster Hall; who, being asked, if he had read Gullivers voyages? answered, He had, but they seemed to be a little improbable, so that he could hardly believe they were true.

The learned Mr Wh— on takes her to be the whore of Babylon, with seven heads and ten horns; which the divines of our church have always interpreted to be the church of Rome.

Now there are others who hold that witchcraft is at the bottom of all this, and that the woman is certainly bewitched; but this opinion is easily exploded, when we consider that she did not vomit crooked pins; which is a symptom constantly attending that profession; and that there was grass found in the haunch of one of the rabbits; and this likewise, I hope, will solve

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to compute those who held they were not rabbits; but this I
will not strongly insist upon, because it may be answered that
this is no proof of it, since all flesh is grass.

Some believe her to be a real rabbit in the shape of a
woman, and give instances of the same nature, from
the ingenious Mr Glanvilles Treatise of Witches.

Nor is the number of little ones contained within her,
at all surprising, notwithstanding the weight of one of
them was 22 ounces. We all know that the story of the Tro-
jan horse was at first look'd on as a fable; in this indeed
the allusion differs, that live men were the production of
the lifeless horse, and dead rabbits of the live woman;
which, I hope, will be a full confutation of those Philoso-
phers, who hold there is no equivocal generation.

To confirm us in belief of the truth of this story, we have
the testimony of the ingenious Mr. St Andre' himself,
the Kings anatomist, who not only has asserted it, but
seems to put his whole reputation on it, altho' Mr Whlers
the Kings surgeon, very heretically dissent from his ac-
count; but as the one denies what the other affirms, no-
thing remains but that we judge for ourselves, and then
his not doubted, the former will acquit himself to the
satisfaction of the world, as he did in his late famous
vindication of himself in the Gazette, against the ma-
lice of his enemies: but this we are sure, that the Physi-
cians at Paris give credit to the whole, except one or two
who are noted for their infidelity.

Upon the whole, I could wish it were proved, that
there were no truth in, or that there never had been any
talk of it; because of the uneasiness it gives me, to see the ge-
neral consternation of the whole fraternity of Poulterers, or
rabbit-mongers.

Tho' I cannot help giving my assent to any thing up-
on conviction, yet I will not believe upon meer report,
and without farther proof, the account which came in
several merchants in London from Antegoa, that a wo-
man was brought to bed of a piece of roast beef; however
it be; it has certainly had a very great effect upon the
butchers of Leadenhall market, tho' I think they have
no reason to be concerned, since, if such an accident

should unfortunately happen here, it could not prejudice them because of the act of parliament made in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, which makes it felony to sell, vend, or cause to be sold or vendued, the dead flesh of any human creature

But the most probable account of this affair, if we set aside miracles, is its being done by practice in this art; and the reasons assigned for it are first, that she was known to converse privately with rabbits; and secondly, that the periodical distance of time, which was 30 hours between each act of her labour, shews she must have been a practitioner this way, and we have the most reason to adhere to this way of accounting for it, since we have the concurrent testimonies of the fathers for our satisfaction. I shall only at present quote two, St Bernard and St Austin; the former of which says, "That by a constant application of any part to any particular thing we may make that become, as it were, natural in us which is unnatural in others,

Artis est celare artem.

and the latter, in his *City of God*. p. 494. 499. says "There are those who can by practice move their ears; there are, that can swallow ye twenty shillings whole, and contracting but their guts a little, give you every thing up, as whole as if they had put it in a bag. There are that can break wind backward so artificially, that you would think they sung.

Heathen writers are full of extraordinary conceptions, such as according to Ovid, that the earth, at the command of Neptune, brought forth a horse; and, at the command of Minerva, brought forth an olive tree.

Nor is this conception more wonderful than the Mares of Cappadocia, which conceive the wind, but indeed the foals are said to live but three years; & the Mares of Andalusia conceive by the south west wind, as is affirmed by Homer, Varro, Columella, Pliny.

Ludovicus Vives, in his annotations on St Austin, says, Jupiter, in the shape of a swan, under pretence of avoiding Venus, in the shape of an eagle, flew into

Leda's lap, who took and kept him; but she being asleep, ¹¹he
got her with egg, of which came Castor, Pollux, and Helena.
and that Helena was firmly thought to be of the Swans
begetting, because of her long and white neck; and all
our astronomers concur in this, by placing the swan
in the Heavens, as a monument of this holy act; and
Castor and Pollux are the signs Gemini, which shine
by turns.

It is easy to furnish ourselves with innumerable
instances of the same kind from history; but I hope
what I have said is sufficient to inculcate the be-
lief of it; if not, I must refer them to two famous
physicians, who are constantly attending her at
the Bagno in Leicester fields, in order to satisfy
the world of the truth of this wonderful birth.

FINIS.

