

SATIRE ON THE COURT LADIES

([*Spring,*] 1680)

The author of this shotgun libel seems to have been a confirmed misogynist, more interested in denigrating women in general than in vilifying a few choice specimens. But he was also viciously anti-York and anti-Catholic; it is significant that many of his victims were or had been Roman Catholics. Probably the author was a "Mutineer," a member of the "Country" Party (soon to be known as Whigs), and a bigoted Protestant. References to events late in 1679 tend to place the satire early in 1680.

The copy text is Harleian MS. 7319, p. 87, dated 1680. It is dated 1680 also in MS. Firth, c. 15, p. 78; and in "A Choyce Collection," p. 69. It is undated in Dyce MS. 43, I, 215, and Harleian MS. 6913, p. 137.

Curse on those critics, ignorant and vain,
Who say a satire is too sharp and plain;
Who blame the matchless Dryden's bold essay
Because it spares no vices in its way.
'Tis charity to foes, kindness to's friend. 5
The more we love, the more we wish they'd mend.
To purge lewd follies and destructive sins,
Prophets and poets are th'appointed means.
The men of wit and judgment do admire
In useful satire a resistless fire; 10
The heavenly lightning church and throne destroys,
While the dim candle only sings flies.
Speak out, then, Muse, and all the vices tell
With which our countries, Courts, and cities swell.
Though Oglethorpe, bold Lucy, and the Beast 15
Are stately pillars of York's interest,

Yet still we'll curse the monster who'd enslave
 Our free-born souls and make's own brother's grave.
 Though Portsmouth have strong ruffians she can trust
 As well to serve her malice as her lust, 20
 Yet still she's slavish, prostrate, false and foul,
 Destroys our prince's honor, health, and soul.
 Though Richmond can complain at council table
 That single strength to please her was not able,
 Her house and body have a thousand ways 25
 To let in fucksters which she still betrays.
 These from their wickedness do boldness get,
 As bleeding mastiffs does their courage whet.
 Yet while their infamies do libels crave,
 We'll fear nor ruffian, minister, nor brave. 30
 Example from the great the lesser take,
 And some grow scandalous for scandal's sake.
 While Arundel lies low at Cloris's feet,
 Pleased with contempt he is so used to meet,
 Or while, content, to his wife's woman sneaks, 35
 And there the sweets of a belle-passion takes,
 His lady 'mongst a crowd of stallions lies,
 Nor is less sparing of her arse than eyes,
 Whose glances all that seek 'em may divide,
 But mighty lust can't innate malice hide. 40
 Dissolute lewdness, falseness, and ill nature
 Appear in every look, in every feature.
 The common coxcombs which about her buzz,
 And which I think (as male) she can't refuse,
 Are Lumley beau and Mall Howard's witty Harry, 45
 Who lately went to Wales but did not marry.
 She suffers these because she'd still be getting,
 But Shrewsbury's the man in constant waiting.
 From plays to park, thence to Millbank at night,
 He scarcely loses smell, and seldom sight; 50
 Whenever she removes to country house,
 He is as sure packed up as wearing clothes.

And thus the industrious cuckold does obtain
Shame and contempt at mighty cost and pain.

Felton's false sacrifice no virtue proves; 55
'Tis not enough t'have once refused to love,
While in a course of lewdness still she lives,
And scarce such pleasure as she scandal gives.
Broughal's her friend and darling of her eye,
The pink of goodness and of modesty; 60
She'll either make the bed or hold the door;
Nature has made her better bawd than whore;
Though where she may, both functions she supplies;
When Mrs. Gosnel's cruel, down she lies,
For Mulgrave triumphs in varieties. 65

Albemarle's folly and detested pride
The Bath as well as Court does now deride,
And smart Dumbarton has her virtue tried.
She weakness, but they impudence, betrayed,
Who prostrate under Monmouth's window laid, 70
Expressed lewd wishes in soft serenade.

These are the pretty innocent delights
In which our greatest ladies spend their nights.
These are diversions they'll scarce blush to own,
But blame the nauseous, unjust, censuring Town, 75
For why should strangers show a discontent,
Where husbands, mothers, and all friends consent?
Few wives are base, few maidens are betrayed,
But husband is the pimp, and dam the bawd.
Some, portions for their daughter's honor get, 80
And they that don't contrive at least permit.
The good man smiles to see his lady pleased,
And hugs the fop by whom his horns are raised,
While, next her lust, the chiefest joy she takes
Is slyly to deride the fool she makes. 85
Nor will she to one lover be confined,
But is as surely false as she is kind.
Husbands and lovers all, she makes her prey,

And for her ends by turns will all betray.
 No ways to vice does this our age produce, 90
 But women, with less shame than men, do use.
 They'll play, they'll drink, talk filth'ly and profane,
 With more extravagance than any man.
 I blush to think one impious day has seen
 Three duchesses roaring drunk on Richmond Green. 95
 Yet still we sigh, we love, nay, worse, some wed
 And bring pollution to a sacred bed.
 Most are deceived by whores to others known,
 But some are fools enough to take their own.

3. *Dryden's bold essay*: Lord Mulgrave's *An Essay upon Satire*, which circulated in manuscript in November, 1679, was at first attributed to Dryden. For a modern edition of the *Satire*, see *POAS*, Yale, I, 396.

15. *Oglethorpe*. In 1680 Theophilus Oglethorpe (1650–1702) of Godalming, Surrey, was lieutenant colonel in the Duke of York's troop of Guards. An ardent Yorkist, and quick with his sword, he was knighted by King James II in 1685, promoted to brigadier general, and made Gentleman of the Horse. About 1681 he married the Duchess of Portsmouth's personal maid, Eleanor Wall (died 1732), daughter of Richard Wall of Tipperary. *Lucy*: Captain Thomas Lucy of Charlecote commanded a troop of the King's Household Guards. His wife, Katherine, was fond of cards and frequented the Duchess of Portsmouth's gaming tables (see A. Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys*, 1958). *the Beast*. One of many epithets applied to the Church of Rome (Rev. 13:17). See, for example, "Funeral Tears Upon the Death of Captain William Bedloe," *The Roxburghe Ballads*, ed. J. W. Ebsworth, 8 vols., 1878–96, IV, 169,

The valiant Bedloe, learned Oates,
 From Popish knives saved all our throats;
 By such a Sword, and such a Gown,
 Soon would the Beast have tumbled down.

19. *Portsmouth*. Louise, Duchess of Portsmouth, was suspected of instigating the attack on Dryden in Rose Alley, December 18, 1679. Luttrell wrote (I, 50), "Mr. John Dryden was sett on in Covent Garden in the evening by three fellows, who beat him very severely, and on peoples coming in they run away; 'tis thought to be done by order of the dutchesse of Portsmouth, she being abused in a late libell called an Essay upon Satyr, of which Mr. Dryden is suspected to be the author."

23. *Richmond*. The poet has confused the story. On November 2, 1679, Dorothy, Lady Sunderland, wrote that Frances, Duchess of Richmond, had "complained to the King of the great injury [Jack] Howe had done her in bragging of her favors and letters, when she had never given him cause for either" (Cartwright, *Sacharissa*, p. 219). Lady Richmond had been brought up in France as a Roman Catholic.

33. *Arundel*. Henry Howard, Earl of Arundel (later Duke of Norfolk) had been a Roman Catholic; he turned Protestant in 1679 to save his seat in the House of Lords. *Cloris*, a common pastoral name, cannot be identified.

35. *his wife's woman*. Probably Mall Howard, a distant cousin and Lady Arundel's companion. Mall was a pattern of lechery for the age; see Appendix, Howard.

37. *his wife*. Mary (Mordaunt), Countess of Arundel, was accused of numerous intrigues. In 1700 her husband divorced her for a notorious affair with John Germaine, a Dutch gambler; see Appendix, Norfolk.

45. *Lumley beau*. The line is from Harleian MS. 6913, p. 138. The copy text has "Is Lumley beau; Mall Howard's witty Harry," but clearly there are two men involved. "Lumley beau," a Roman Catholic, was Henry, younger brother of Richard, Viscount Lumley. *Harry*. Henry Wharton, third son of Philip, Lord Wharton, was a scapegrace whose name was frequently linked with that of Mall Howard.

48. *Shrewsbury*. Charles Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, a Roman Catholic who turned Protestant in 1681, was said to be Lady Arundel's lover; see Appendix, Shrewsbury.

49. *Millbank*. Lady Arundel's father, Henry Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, had leased a house on the Millbank, Chelsea, just beyond the horse ferry to Lambeth. The building was known as either "Millbank" or "Peterborough House."

51. *country house*. Lady Arundel retired frequently to her family's country house, Drayton, Northants.

55. *Felton*. Perhaps Lady Betty Felton's "false sacrifice" involved her rivalry with Lady Arundel for the affections of Lord Shrewsbury; see Appendix, Felton.

59. *Broughal*. On February 6, 1665, Mary, daughter of Richard Sackville, fifth Earl of Dorset, married Roger Boyle (1646-82), who was styled Lord Broghill until he inherited as second Earl of Orrery on October 18, 1679. Properly, then, his wife should have been called Lady Orrery, but the name Broghill (or Broughal) seems to have lingered. See, for example, "Rochester's Farewell" (*POAS*, Yale, II, 224), written in the summer of 1680, in which the Duchess Mazarin's three intimates are listed as "Sussex, Broghill, Betty Felton." Lady Broghill, a malicious, quarrelsome woman, separated from her husband in 1675, leaving him in Ireland while she attended the English Court. See *Calendar of Orrery Papers*, passim.

64. *Gosnel*. Perhaps Winifred Gosnel, formerly an actress and once maid to Mrs. Samuel Pepys. From "In Defense of Satire" (*POAS*, Yale, I, 369) we learn that "Grandio" (the Earl of Mulgrave) "Is caught with Gosnell, that old hag, abed."

66. *Albemarle*. In 1669, Elizabeth (1654-1734), daughter of William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, married Christopher Monck, second Duke of Albemarle. A capricious, unstable young woman, eventually she lost her mind.

68. *Dumbarton*. George Douglas (c. 1635-92), Earl of Dumbarton in Scotland, was brought up in France as a Roman Catholic and served with distinction in the French army. When he returned to England, he refused to take the necessary oaths and was barred from military command until 1685, when James II appointed him colonel of the Royal Regiment of Foot. He married Anne, daughter of Robert Wheatley of Bracknell, Berks., and sister of Mrs. Katherine Lucy.

70. *Monmouth*. Handsome James, Duke of Monmouth, the King's favorite natural son, was beloved by many Court ladies.

95. *Three duchesses*. This bacchanalian episode has eluded me.