A BALLAD

[1667]

King Charles II had barely entered into his inheritance when a host of broken cavaliers who had lost everything but their lives in the civil wars descended upon Whitehall with petitions for the repayment of loans, for the return of sequestered estates, or for places in the government. In the new King's circumstances, he could do little or nothing to satisfy their demands. The embittered cavaliers referred to the Act of Indemnity and Oblivion (August 29, 1660) as an act of indemnity for the King's enemies and of oblivion for his friends.

No doubt the disgruntled cavalier who wrote "A Ballad" had been defeated in his own expectations and chose to lay the blame on a Court ruled by pimps, drabs, and cheats. He is unfair to Clarendon, an honest old man whose only fault was that he had passed his prime and was too rigid to cope with the new Restoration society.

The copy text is Add. MS. 34, 362, f. 18v. For an identical version see Bodleian MS. Don b. 8, p. 184. The satire is undated, but it must have been written before Clarendon was removed from office, August 30, 1667.

Good people, draw near
If a ballad you'd hear,
It will teach you the new way of thriving.

Ne'er trouble your heads
With your books or your beads;
The world's ruled by cheating and swiving.

Ne'er prattle nor prate
Of the miscarriages of state,
It will not avail you a button.

He that sticks to the church
Shall be left in the lurch,
With never a tatter to put on.
Old fatguts himself,  
With his tripes and his pelf,  
    With a purse as full as his paunch is,  
Will confess that his Nanny  
Fopdoodled her Jemmy,  
    And his kingdom is come to the haunches.

Our Arlington Harry,  
The prime Secretary,  
    Was first of the smock a secretis;  
Being esquire of the frock  
And true to the smock,  
    Now admitted to manage the state is.

And Dapper his clerk,  
Being true to the mark,  
    Was at once both his scribe and his setter;  
But Joseph, we hear,  
Would fain be a peer;  
    Lord and lackey begin with a letter.

The controller Clifford  
Was forced to stand stiff for't,  
    To make his way to the table;  
He had a friend at a shift  
To give him a lift;  
    Tom fool may thank G. for his bauble.

'Tis well for the Babs  
That the pimps and the drabs  
Are now in the way of promotion;  
Else Villiers and May  
Had been out of play,  
    But Denham went off with a potion.

Next comes Castlemaine,  
That prerogative quean;
If I had such a bitch I would spay her.  
She swives like a stoat,  
Goes to't leg and foot,  
Level coil with a prince and a player.

6. *swiving.* Copulating. From AS *swifan,* to shake or move quickly.

10. *the church.* The Anglican, or Established Church.

13. *old fatguts.* Edward Hyde (1607–74), first Earl of Clarendon, a corpulent man, was Lord Chancellor from 1660 to 1667. He was accused of enriching himself at the expense of the state. He was removed from office on August 30, 1667, and impeached by the House of Commons in October. He fled abroad on November 29, 1667.

17. *fopdoodled.* Cheated, deceived. The poet accuses Anne Hyde (1637–71), daughter of Clarendon, of tricking James (“Jemmy”), Duke of York, into marrying her on September 3, 1660, seven weeks before her first child by the Duke was born. Since King Charles still lacked legitimate offspring, Anne’s children were in the line of succession to the throne.

18. *haunches.* I.e., James, who should have married a princess, has debased his royal blood merely for the satisfaction of his loins.

19. *Arlington Harry.* Henry Bennet (1618–85) became Keeper of the King’s Privy Purse (and ex officio pimp to the King) after the Restoration. He became First Secretary of State in October, 1662, and was created Baron Arlington in 1665 and Earl of Arlington in 1672. According to Thomas Carte {Ormonde, II, 147), Arlington “was a fourbe in his politics, loose in his principles, and thought to be a secret convert to the Roman Catholic religion.” In 1674 he became Lord Chamberlain of the Household.

21. *the smock.* A chemise or loose undergarment of linen worn by women. *secretis.* The poet may have had in mind the Latin *secretus:* secret or private.

25. *Dapper.* Joseph Williamson (1633–1703) was at this time Keeper of the State Paper Office and Under-Secretary of State. Apliant and genial courtier, he was knighted on January 24, 1672, and succeeded Arlington as Secretary of State, 1674–79.


31. *Clifford.* Sir Thomas Clifford (1630–73), a fiery Roman Catholic, was appointed Comptroller of the Household on November 28, 1666. Thereafter he was successively a Commissioner of the Treasury (1667) and Lord High Treasurer (1672) until the Test Act forced him out of office.

36. *Tom fool.* Clifford. “G” has eluded me. Guineas? It was generally believed that Clifford owed his “bauble,” the white wand of office borne by officers of the Royal Household, to his friend and patron, Henry Bennett, Lord Arlington.

37. *Babs.* Probably one was Dame Barbara Villiers, grandmother of Barbara, Lady Castlemaine, the King’s reigning mistress. Dame Barbara (who died in 1672) had a house in King Street, a part of Whitehall just beyond the Privy Garden. The poet suggests that she procured for her granddaughter, Barbara. The other Bab was Baptist May (c. 1627–93), Keeper of the Privy Purse after Arlington, and his successor as pimp in ordinary.
42. *Denham.* Margaret (Brooke), wife of the eccentric poet Sir John Denham, was one of the Duke of York’s mistresses. She died January 6, 1667, supposedly poisoned in a cup of chocolate by the Duchess of York’s sister-in-law, Henrietta Hyde, later Countess of Rochester.

43. *Castlemaine.* Barbara, Countess of Castlemaine, the King’s chief mistress; see Appendix, Cleveland. *quean.* Whore.

46. *stoat.* Ermine, reputedly lubricious.

48. *level coil.* On even terms. *a player.* According to the gossips, handsome Charles Hart, leading man of the King’s Company of players, was one of Lady Castlemaine’s numerous lovers (Pepys, April 7, 1668).