BALLAD ON BETTY FELTON

[Summer, 1680]

Although libels on King Charles's mistresses, notably Nell Gwyn and the Duchesses of Cleveland and Portsmouth, were common enough, satires attacking only one lesser Court lady at a time were rare. Wanton Lady Betty Felton is frequently mentioned in shotgun libels, and in "Rochester’s Farewell,” 1680 (POAS, Yale, II, 224), she is listed as one of the Duchess Mazarin’s three “whores of honor.” She seems to have been one of the Duke of Monmouth’s many mistresses, and, according to this satire, in 1680 she was sharing her favors between William, Lord Cavendish, and “bold Frank” Newport. Lady Betty, daughter of James Howard, third Earl of Suffolk, was the wife of Thomas Felton, a Groom of the King’s Bedchamber (see Appendix, Felton).

The copy text is Dyce MS. I, 37. In Harleian MS. 6913, p. 14, the satire is titled simply “A Ballad.”

Of all quality whores, modest Betty for me;
He’s an impudent rogue dares lay virtue to thee.
Both of tongue and of tail, there’s no female more free;
She’s always attended by ballocks and tarse,
Sweet Candish in cunt and bold Frank at her arse.

Her Savoy devotion she has lately given o’er,
How could she play saint and refrain from the whore,
When more lewd than e’er Howard was, or Villiers before?
She’s always attended, etc.

Her zeal and her lust, both equally known,
Just gods will reward with a heavenly crown,
Outshining the mitre of sanctified Joan.
She’s always attended, etc.
COURT SATIRES OF THE RESTORATION

She starts at no runion of lubbardly stallion,
But quickly chastizes all pricks in rebellion,
And is able to break a whole catso battalion.
She's always attended, etc.

Believe, little Jockey, full nimbly she stirs,
Without the incitement of whip or of spurs;
May Newmarket ne'er want such true mettle [whores].
She's always attended, etc.

She's a delicate filly, that all men agree,
More able than Dragon, than Darcy, or Gee.
What pity it is she runs resty with thee.
She's always attended with ballocks and tarse,
Sweet Candish in cunt and bold Frank at her arse.

4. tarse. Penis.
5. Candish. William, Lord Cavendish (1640–1707). On June 9, 1680, Lady Sunderland wrote that Cavendish’s “whole business now is to watch where my Lady Betty Felton goes and to follow her” (Cartwright, Sacharissa, p. 262). bold Frank. Francis Newport, second son of Francis, Viscount Newport, died unmarried on November 29, 1692.
8. Howard. Mall Howard, a pattern for lewdness; Villiers. Barbara (Villiers), Duchess of Cleveland.
12. sanctified Joan. According to legend, Pope Joan was a nun who dressed as a man and was elected Pope. The allusion may have been brought to the poet’s mind by the King's Company’s production on May 31, 1680, of Settle’s The Female Prelate, or the History of the Life and Death of Pope Joan.
16. catso. Or cadzo, vulgar Italian for penis.
18. little Jockey. Lady Betty’s husband, Thomas Felton, was a small man and an excellent horseman.
23. Dragon, etc. Famous race horses. Dragon belonged to King Charles II (A. J. Dasent, Nell Gwynne, 1924, p. 222).