In the summer of 1681, King Charles II, denied supplies by all his recent Parliaments, was very poor. Since the dissolution of the Oxford Parliament (March 28, 1681), he had been receiving a modest subsidy from France, but it was hardly enough to cover the bare needs of his government. The writer of "An Essay" chose to blame the King's poverty on his acknowledged mistresses, Portsmouth, Cleveland, and Gwyn, and suggested that the monarch get rid of them and turn to cheaper doxies. He seems to have had little hope that his advice would be followed.

The copy text is Add. MS. 27,407, p. 120. The manuscript, folded as a letter, is from the collection of Peter Le Neve. The satire is dated 1681 in MS. Firth c. 25, p. 102; Douce MS. 357, f. 85; Harleian MS. 6913, p. 159; Harleian MS. 7319, p. 133; and "A Choyce Collection," p. 88.

Of all the plagues with which this world abounds,
Our discords causes, wid'ners of our wounds,
Sure woman is the lewdest can be guessed;
Through woman, mankind early ills did taste;
She was the world's first curse, will be the last.
To show what woman is, Heav'n make Charles wise;
Some angel scale the blindness from his eyes.
Restored by miracle, he may believe,
And seeing's follies, learn though late to live.
Why art thou poor, O King? Embezzling cunt,
That wide-mouthed, greedy monster, that has done't.
Thee and three kingdoms have thy drabs destroyed,
Yet they are still uncured and thou uncloyed.
Go visit Ports[mouth] fasting if thou dar'st,
(Which well thou may'st, at the poor rate thou far'st)
She'll with her noisome breath blast ev'n thy face,
Till thou thyself grow uglier than her grace.
Remove that costly dunghill from thy doors;
If thou must have 'em, use cheap, wholesome whores.
Take Temple, who can live on cheese and ale,
Who never but to bishop yet turned tail;
She's seasoned, fit to bear a double brunt,
In her arse London, Rowley in her cunt.
Bishop and King, choose (handy-dandy) either;
They still club votes, why not club seeds together?
Else choose Godolphin, whom there's little hurt in;
She'll fuck for clothes, for all she's called a fortune.
Besides, there's Swan and Chevins—fuck 'em, fill 'em,
And Mrs. Villiers, sister of Sir William.
Ram all thy Maids of Honor whilst thou'rt able,
And make thy barren Queen keep up thy table.
But from her den expel old ulcer quite;
She shines i'th' dark like rotten wood by night,
Dreads pepper, penance, Parliaments, and light.
Once with thy peoples' prayers resolve to join;
She's all the nation's nuisance, why not thine?
Own to the world her brat's not thine at all,
For father Hamilton shines through him all,
His impudence, his falsehood, and ill nature,
Each inward vice and every outward feature;
True Hamilton in every act and look,
Yet to record thy blindness made a duke.

Then next turn N[ell]y out of door,
That hare-brained, wrinkled, stopped-up whore,
Daily struck, stabbed, by half the pricks in town;
Yet still her stubborn courses come not down
But lie and nourish old diseases there,
Which thou and many thy poor subjects share.
'Twas once indeed with her as 'twas with ore,
Uncoined, she was no public store,  
Only Buckhurst's private whore.  
But when that thou in wanton itch  
With royal tarse had stamped her breech,  
She grew a common, current bitch.  
Then for that cub, her son and heir,  
Let him remain in Otway's care  
To make him (if that's possible to be)  
A viler poet and more dull than he.  
So at the next Newmarket meeting  
(When thy senate should be sitting),  
Where knaves and fools and courtiers do resort,  
And players come from far to make thee sport,  
As in thy barn thou shalt in state behold  
The Fair Maid of the West, or Girl worth Gold,  
Sitting with most majestic grace,  
And she fleering in thy face—  
Then, like a monarch as thou art,  
Lay thy hand upon thy heart,  
Kick her for her lewd cajoling,  
And bid her turn to her old trade of strolling.  
But hectors shall forget to drink,  
Mall Hinton have no pox, nor stink,  
Lord Sun[derlan]d be honest, Mulgrave civil,  
Bishops believe a God, or Devil,  
Dryden not mouse a whore, when he can get her,  
Or have his pension paid, that's better.  
Mon[mouth] turn again to's duty,  
And Tartar Cox be thought a beauty.  
No more libels shall be written,  
And the Court without a Mitton,  
E'er thou shalt have a friend to tell  
Thee, I have here advised thee well.  
But how slight soe'er they make it,  
The counsel's good, believe and take it.


23. London. Henry Compton (1632–1713), sixth son of Spencer, second Earl of Northampton, was Bishop of London from 1675. Rowley. King Charles II.

26. Godolphin. Elizabeth (1665–83), daughter of Sir John Godolphin, was appointed Maid of Honor to the Queen in December, 1677 (Rutland MS, II, 43).

28. Swan. "One Mrs. Swan, the daughter of Sir Will Swan of Kent, who is very young and pretty, is to succeed [Dorothy Howard] and be Maid of Honor" (Bulstrode, I, 325, December 10, 1675). Cecilia Swan appears as a Maid of Honor to the Queen in the Calendars of Treasury Books from 1676 through 1682. Chevins. Barbara, daughter of William Chiffinch, Closet Keeper to King Charles II. On December 8, 1681, Barbara, about eighteen, married Sir Edward Villiers ("scabby Ned"), son of the Knight Marshall, Colonel Edward Villiers (London Marriage Licenses).

29. Mrs. Villiers. Katherine Villiers, a daughter of Colonel Edward Villiers, was Maid of Honor to Queen Catherine from 1680 to 1685. See Newdigate Newsletter, May 20, 1680, "fine Mrs. ffrasier one of the Maids of Honor is lately withdrawn from the Court and Colonel Villliers' daughter sworn in her place." See Appendix, Villiers (Jersey). Sir William is probably a mistake for Sir Edward, Katherine's brother. Sir William Villiers of Brokesby (1644–1711), who was in charge of the King's stables, was Katherine's cousin.

32. old ulcer. Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, the King's mistress emeritus. Although the duchess was living in France, almost forgotten by the Court poets, there were rumors in the summer of 1681 that she was returning to live in England (Luttrell, I, 127). She returned on April 12, 1682.

34. pepper. Supposed to prevent decay in meat. penance. In 1663 the duchess became a Roman Catholic.

38. father Hamilton. The gossips whispered that the duchess's son by the King, Henry Fitzroy, created Duke of Grafton in 1675, was actually the son of Colonel James Hamilton, a handsome Groom of the Bedchamber.


51. Buckhurst. Charles Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, and after August 27, 1677, Earl of Dorset, was Nell's first "keeper" (see Pepys, July 13, 1667).

53. tarse. Penis.


56. Otway. Thomas Otway (1652–85), the playwright, was at this time young Burford's tutor.

59. Newmarket. On September 8, 1681, King Charles went to the race meetings at Newmarket.

64. the Fair Maid. I.e., The Fair Maid of the West, or A Girl Worth Gold, a play by Thomas Heywood, first produced in 1631.

66. fleering. Grinning.

72. Hinton. Mall Hinton, a famous cyprian; see Appendix.

73. Sun[derlan]d. Robert Spencer, Earl of Sunderland (1641–1702), was First Secretary of State from February 11, 1679, to January 14, 1681. He was dismissed for
having advocated exclusion of the Duke of York, and found himself distrusted by both Whigs and Tories. *Mulgrave*. John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, was commonly accused of arrogance and bad manners.

75. The apparently pointless sneer at John Dryden may have been motivated by anger at a Tory pamphlet, *His Majesty's Declaration Defended*, June, 1681, which was attributed to Dryden (C. E. Ward, *Life of John Dryden*, 1961, pp. 160–64). *mouze*. Ruffle, play amorously. Dryden was commonly accused of lechery. An MS note to Langbaine's *An Account of the English Dramatick Poets*, 1691 (British Museum), quotes a secondhand version of a story by a drawer at a tavern frequented by Dryden, who "often brought women of the town thither." Peeping through the keyhole, the drawer saw "the most filthy obscenities practised by the old goatish poet and his doxies."

77. *Monmouth*. Since the Duke of Monmouth's return from foreign exile without permission on November 27, 1679, he had been dismissed from all his posts and forbidden the Court.

78. *Tartar Cox*. "Tartar," a sharper. On July 8, 1680, a true bill was returned that "John Coxe alias Tartar, late of the said parish, yeoman, an infamous and evil person . . . maliciously and scandalously uttered published and offered for sale a certain most pernicious, wicked and vicious book entitled 'The Schoole of Venus or the Ladies Delight, Reduced into Rules of Practice; being the translation of the French L'Escole des Filles in two Dialogues Anno 1680'" (Middlesex County Records, IV, 146). On October 24, 1682, *The Loyal Protestant and True Domestic Intelligence* noted the death of Captain John Cox, "commonly called "The Tartar."

80. *Mitton*. Sir John Mitton had long been a Gentleman Usher of the Privy Chamber.