MADAM LE CROIX

[June, 1686]

Madam Le Croix was a famous London fortune-teller. On February 16, 1685, Bridget Noel, daughter of Viscount Campden, wrote, “I have been with Madam Le Croy, the great fortune teller. One thing she told me which pleased me much was that I should never have the smallpox” (Rutland MS, II, 104). On April 9, 1686, a warrant was issued for apprehending Madam Le Croix “to answer to [Secretary Sunderland] certain matters of misdemeanor whereof she stands accused”—charges not specified (PRO, State Papers 44/336, p. 423). Four days later Henry Savile was more specific, “Madam de la Croix, the famous fortune teller, is seized in order to sending her away” (Savile Correspondence, p. 284). Nothing more is known about her.

Apparently our anonymous poet took advantage of the notoriety of Le Croix’s arrest to use her as the persona of his shotgun libel, probably written in June, 1686. The satire is practically a summary of all the scandals publicized in the first six months of 1686. According to the doubtful authority of one Tobias Thomas, the comedian Jo Haynes wrote “Madam Le Croix” (The Life of the Late Famous Comedian, Jo. Haynes, 1701, p. 47).

The copy text is Add. MS. 21, 094, f. 73. The poem is dated 1686 in MS. Firth c. 16, p. 215; Dyce MS. 43, II, 643; Harleian MS. 7319, p. 496; and “A Choyce Collection,” p. 203. It is undated in Douce MS. 357, f. 131; Add. Ms. 29, 497, p. 23; and Add. MS. 27, 408, f. 63. For printed versions see POAS, 1705, p. 350, and POAS, 1716, II, 152.

Of all the plagues mankind possess,
Defend me from the sorceress
Who draws from lines her calculations
Instead of squares for demonstrations,
Such as Le Croix imposes on
The credulous, deluded Town,
Who, though they know themselves but fooled,
Pay double fees for being gulled.
So client jilted of his suit
Loses his cause and pays to boot.

In comes a duke, from mighty place
And merit fallen into disgrace.
She views his hand and bids him joy,
Calls him his Excellence Viceroy!
With this high character the bubble
Is well content and pays her double,
Nor dreams he's banished with his fleet,
A slave, to Patmos or to Crete,
As Richmond to the northern frost,
Or Clarendon to the Irish coast.
Blinded with pride, senseless of ruin,
So fools embrace their own undoing.

Grafton, with jealousy oppressed,
She adds a crescent to his crest;
No planet mount his brow adorns,
Saturn and Venus turn to horns.
His grace is but an independent,
While Mordaunt rules in the ascendant.

Northumberland does next implore
The stars which Lucy cursed before;
And 'twas his fate, although he made
A cloister of the nuptial bed,
Whence she returned with double charms,
A vestal, to his faithless arms.
St. Albans' duke, who never sought her,
By the bargain gets Newcastle's daughter;
So says Le Croix, but juster Fate
Dooms him a match at Billingsgate;
Nor will Newcastle his hopes place
In a base, bastard, pippin race.
For Somerset she takes upon her
To sooth him up with Maids of Honor.
"Courage! Thought wit and beauty fail,
Your grace has charms that will prevail;
No virgin but must yield, a martyr
T'an idol of the star and garter."

These, Mulgrave, were the powerful charms
Brought Conway captive to thy arms;
'Twas not thy figure, wit, nor wealth,
It was the star that made the stealth.
Shortly she will repent the action;
Thy hopper-arse will cause the fraction.

Northampton, happier in his choice,
In virgin wedlock placed his joys.
Wisely he shunned that dire intrigue
Doomed to be thy eternal plague;
Of all, for better or for worse,
In missing her he 'scape the curse.
Grey's little hand she next does prove
Brimfull of luck and heart of love.
"The Fates you need no more importune,
This is the very line of fortune.
My lord, you are most sure of Nancy,
If there be truth in necromancy."

With Eland how shall we demean us?
"Bless us! What's here, the mount of Venus?
The table thwarted too; this shows
You'll die a martyr in the cause.
If you would shun this dismal fate,
Go home, my lord, and salivate;
Beware of Merucry and such foes;
Compound with Venus for your nose."

With love and indignation warm,
Cholmly begins to huff and storm,
"I dress and keep an equipage
With any coxcomb of the age."
Pray tell me then a reason why
Each tinker has his trull but I.”
“Your hand! You need not be so stout,
My lord, your line of love is out.
Learn then, if you would have success,
More wit and less affectedness.”

With shoulder belt and gaudy feather,
Ten yards of cravat tied together,
Comes Newburgh, by these lines expressed:
“As you’d a narrow ’scape i’th’west,
This demi-circle here declares
You’ll meet worse wounds in Venus’s wars;
But have a care how you engage
For a new coach and equipage.
Lavish and love’s a double dart,
That breaks your back and this your heart;
So hounds and huntsmen hare o’erpower,
And what those worry these devour.”

But these are not the only fools;
Le Croix has choice of female gulls,
Who, puffed with pride, do flock in vain,
Blown up ere they discerned the train.

Thus Lucy into bondage run,
For a great name to be undone;
Deluded with the hopes of duchess,
She fell into the lion’s clutches.
This was Le Croix’s bewitching cheat:
Her sacred thirst of being great.
While Grafton, in her duke less blest,
Is of her buccaneer possessed,
With Shrewsbury, whose love’s intent,
And all the rout that nose the scent.
With withered hand and wrinkled brow,
Cleveland in rage comes next to know
What desperate tatterdemallion
Should next vouchsafe to be her stallion;
But by the ruins of her face
She's told her charms have lost their grace,
And since she coupled with a stroller,
Her next admirer must be Jowler.

Arran, with counterfeited grace
And muffled veil about her face,
Shows to Le Croix her snowy fist,
Who cries, "Six husbands, at the least!"
And yet there's none; to that lewd damp
No second love dares light a lamp.

Kildare, a beauty in her bloom,
In vizor steals to know her doom.
"You Gods! A double line of life!
Madam, you'll make a thundering wife; •
Great Jove himself, and all the land,
Besides your lord, at your command;
Devon and Mulgrave, Scarsdale, all
Shall captive to your empire fall,
'Till for a virtuous wife renowned,
Your wittol lord at last is crowned."

Next comes young Fox's barren bliss;
She reads her fortune in her phiz.
"Besides, I find it in your hand,
Madam, you must be better manned;
Your brawny spouse's gross infusion
Suits not your airy constitution;
But if an heir you would not want,
Make meagre Darcy your gallant."

Fine Lady Cartwright in her chair,
To know her doom does next appear,
Pursued by Fenwick, Frank, and Grey,
Who sigh all night and dog all day;
As beggars dream of golden heaps,
Each longs, but none the treasure reaps.

The next, fine Widow Whitmore, she
Is told of gentle Cornbury;
But the sly wight secured the prey,
And flying bore the nymph away.

Miss Nancy shall bring up the rear,
Whose fortune is to have a peer,
It'sn't her harder fate to be
Confounded with variety;
So, tired with change, some Courtly Nice
She makes the last, but the worst choice.

Why should I tire your patience out
With Warwick and the wrinkled rout,
Hinton or Howard? I could tell ye
Of thousands besides Hughes and Nelly
Who daily crowd upon the plains
To find out choice of youthful swains;
But all those charms that did kind warmth infuse,
Worn out of date, have chilled my tired muse.

3. *lines*. Lines in the hand as compared to the squares of an astrologer's horoscope.
11. *a duke*. MS marginal note, "Albemarle." Christopher Monck, second Duke of Albemarle, was out of favor and employment in 1685, but in April, 1686, King James appointed him Governor of Jamaica. His commission was finally dated November 26, 1686; he sailed on October 5, 1687.
17. *his fleet*. Perhaps the ships *James and Mary* and the *Henry*, which Albemarle and his fellow adventurers had sent out on March 1, 1686, ostensibly for trade but actually to seek sunken treasure in the West Indies. In spite of the poet's claim that Albemarle was "senseless of ruin," in June, 1687, the ships returned to England laden with salvaged Spanish treasure, and Albemarle was richer by some £90,000 (E. F. Ward, *Christopher Monck, Duke of Albemarle*, 1915, pp. 243–52).
19. *Richmond*. Charles Stuart, fourth Duke of Richmond, died in December, 1672, while Ambassador to Denmark.
23. *Grafton*. Henry Fitzroy (1665–90), the sailor Duke of Grafton, seems to have had reason to be jealous of his duchess.
25. *planet mount*. Elevations in the hand at the bases of the thumb and fingers, at the edge, and in the palm. The palmist identified these areas thus: at the base of the thumb, the Mount of Venus; first finger, Jove or Jupiter; second finger, Saturn; third finger, Sol or Apollo; fourth finger, Mercury; the edge of the hand, Cynthia, the Moon; the hollow of the palm, Mars.
26. *Saturn and Venus.* The mounts of Saturn, denoting wisdom and sobriety, and Venus, denoting love and passion, together form the horns of a cuckold.


29. *Northumberland.* Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Northumberland. For his marriage to widowed Katherine Lucy, see Appendix, Northumberland; and see above, "The Two Tom Lucys."

30. *Lucy.* Captain Thomas Lucy, who died in 1684, was cursed by the stars because he was the first husband of wanton Katherine Lucy.

32. *a cloister.* See above, "The Two Tom Lucys."


38. *Billingsgate.* A London fish market, famous for its fishwives and their coarse language.

40. *pippen race.* John Evelyn once described the Duke of St. Albans as the base son "of Nelly, the comedian and applewoman's daughter" (*Diary*, October 23, 1684).


46. *star and garter.* Emblems of the Order of the Garter, to which both Mulgrave and Somerset belonged.

47. *Mulgrave.* On March 18, 1685, John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, married Ursula (Stawell), widowed Lady Conway.

52. *hopper-arse.* Large in the breech.

53. *Northampton.* George Compton, fourth Earl of Northampton, had been a suitor for the hand of wealthy Lady Conway. On May 9, 1686, he married ("virgin wedlock") Jane, youngest daughter of Sir Stephen Fox. At the end of the Douce MS. 357 version of "Madam Le Croix" is the signature "Northamton," as if he were the author of the satire.

55. *dire intrigue.* See above, "The Two Tom Lucys," note to line 39.

59. *Grey.* Not Ford, Lord Grey of Werke, who was finally freed from the Tower on November 12, 1685, and seems to have spent the next two or three years in the country. But Henry Yelverton, Lord Grey of Ruthin (c. 1664-1704), a little man, was much about the Court during the reign of James II. He was not married until July 11, 1689.

63. *Nancy.* Presumably Lord Grey was considering Anne Villiers, a daughter of George, fourth Viscount Grandison, as a possible wife; if so, Le Croix's prediction went awry.

64. *necromancy.* Black magic. Perhaps the poet was trying to think of chiromancy, palmistry.

65. *Eland.* Henry Savile, Lord Eland (1661-87), son of George, Marquis of Halifax, was a trivial poet and a very debauched rake.

66. *Venus.* A well-developed Mount of Venus, at the base of the thumb, indicated strong sexual passion.
67. the table. The line of fortune, or table line, thwarted (i.e., crossed) predicted sickness.

70. salivate. The mercury treatment for venereal disease produced an excessive flow of saliva.

72. compound. Eland is advised to compromise with, or buy off, the goddess of love in order to save his nose, likely to be eaten away by venereal disease.

74. Cholmly. Hugh Cholmondeley (1662–1725), third Viscount Cholmondeley of Kells (Ireland), and in 1706 Earl of Cholmondeley, died unmarried.

80. line of love. The heart line has come to an end.

85. Newburgh. Charles Livingston, Earl of Newburgh (1662–94). In a skirmish between the King's Guards and Monmouth's rebel forces, "My Lord Newburgh [was] shot into the belly" (Rutland MS, II, 89, July 27, 1685).

87. demi-circle. A half-moon on the head line indicated sickness, here, of course, venereal disease.

96. gulls. Dupes, victims.


102. the lion. Northumberland's older brother, the brawny Duke of Grafton, who persuaded Northumberland to carry his wife to Flanders and place her in a nunnery. She returned to England in June, 1686.

105. Grafton. Isabella (Bennet), Duchess of Grafton.

106. buccaneer. Viscount Mordaunt (see above, line 28, and also "The Court Diversion") had spent two years at sea in the wars with Algiers. For his relations with the Duchess of Grafton, see "Tunbridge Satire," 1688 (Stowe MS. 969, f. 43), in which the poet addresses the Duke of Grafton,

You did your work by halves, my lord,
When you kidnapped your brother's wife on board.
What made you be so blind
To leave your own behind,
Who with her Mordaunt did your absence moan?
Alas, poor tender heart, she could not weep alone.


110. Cleveland. Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland, formerly chief mistress to King Charles II; see Appendix.

115. a stroller. The Duchess of Cleveland's current stallion was Cardell Goodman, a distinguished actor, formerly famous as Alexander the Great in Lee's The Rival Queens. In April, 1686, while Cleveland's sons were conducting the new Duchess of Northumberland to Flanders, a gossip wrote, "In the meantime, their gracious mother is brought to bed of a son, which the Town has christened Goodman Cleveland" (Rutland MS, II, 107). The son was only the wind of rumor.


117. Arran. Dorothy (Ferrers), was the widow of Richard Butler, Earl of Arran, who died on January 27, 1686.

121. damp. An explosive gas, fire-damp, in mines.

A double life line signified long life and good health.

Great Jove. King James II.


wittol. A cuckold who tamely accepts his fate. In short, Lady Kildare's intrigues will be discovered, and Lord Kildare with be crowned with horns.

Fox. In 1679, Charles Fox (1659—1713), eldest son of Sir John Fox, married Elizabeth Trollope, daughter of Sir John Trollope. Charles was Paymaster General to the Army from 1682 to 1685. According to Evelyn (Diary, June 2, 1681), Charles had grown "very fat." He died childless. See above, "Satire. 1682" and "Satire to Julian," 1682. Mrs. Fox had been mistress to Lord Lumley and, no doubt, to others. On February 26, 1688, Etherege wrote to Charles, Earl of Middleton (Secretary of State), "Be what you please, you can never be more happy than you were in Mrs. Fox's days" (Letters, p. 182).

Darcy. John D'Arcy (1659—89), a notorious wencher, was a grandson of the Earl of Holderness.

Cartwright. Grace, wife of George, Baron Carteret of Hawnes.


Young Cartwright so fine all along in a chair
From Island of Jersey came post to the court,
But she was sent back with a flea in her ear
For yielding to little Lord Ruthin the fort.

Whitmore. Frances, daughter of Sir Thomas Whitmore by Frances Brooke, was the widow of William Whitmore of Hackney. A great fortune, she was much sought after, and Edward Hyde, Lord Cornbury (son of Henry, Earl of Clarendon), was a favored suitor (Rutland MS, II, 97). The "sly wight," Sir Richard Middleton of Chirk, Denbigh, married her on April 19, 1686 (Herbert Correspondence, p. 320).

Miss Nancy. Anne Villiers. Probably her "peer" was Henry, Lord Grey of Ruthin; see above, line 63.

some Courty Nice. The comic fop in Crowne's Sir Courty Nice, 1685, a very popular comedy.

Warwick. Anne (Montague), widowed Countess of Warwick.


Hughes. Margaret ("Peg") Hughes, an actress, had been mistress to Prince Rupert, who died in 1682. By the Prince she had a daughter, Ruperta. Peg died October 1, 1719. Nelly. Nell Gwyn.