

### F3 Were itt nott a brutish crueltye

*Notes.* This is one of several attacks on Frances Howard, made both in 1613-14 and 1615, which depict the Countess as a wandering ship. The metaphor allowed the libeller not only to play with crude nautical innuendoes (the “straight and long” masts, etc.), but also to pun on the Countess’s sexual wanderings between titled men as voyages to different parts of the English country. Bellany (*Politics 155*) briefly analyzes the political implications of this poem’s depiction of female sexual insatiability.

Were itt nott a brutish crueltye

To barr a ladye of Anullitye

That can gett nothing of her man<sup>1</sup>

Yet craves as much as two men can

There is a ladye in this land

5

Because shee was nott truely mand

Would over all the countryes range

To seeke her selfe a better change

When Essex<sup>2</sup> could not give content

To Rochester<sup>3</sup> her course was bent

10

When shee lett no occasion slipp

To gett a mast<sup>4</sup> unto her shipp

A mast she had both straight and long

Butt when itt prov’d not fully strong

To Sommersett<sup>5</sup> she quicklye hide

15

To trye what fortune would betyde.

**Source.** BL MS Egerton 2230, fol. 69v

F3

<sup>1</sup> *That can...man:* allusion to the alleged sexual impotence of Frances Howard’s first husband, Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex.

<sup>2</sup> *Essex*: Robert Devereux, 3rd Earl of Essex; the pun alludes to the English county of Essex.

<sup>3</sup> *Rochester*: Robert Carr was made Viscount Rochester in 1611; the pun alludes to the town of Rochester in Kent.

<sup>4</sup> *mast*: clearly here and in the following line a bawdy pun—the question of erection had been central to the nullity commissioners' discussion of Essex's impotence.

<sup>5</sup> *Sommerset*: Robert Carr was elevated to the Earldom of Somerset the month before he married Frances Howard; the pun alludes to the English county of Somerset.

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