

## F6 Lady changed to Venus Dove

*Notes.* Lindley (116-17) correctly notes that this verse is a relatively sympathetic reflection on the marriage of Frances Howard and Robert Carr. At the very least, the poem appears to concede implicitly both Frances Howard's allegation that her first husband had in fact been impotent, and her claim that she had remained a virgin. One version of this poem (Folger MS V.a.103) consists of only the last four lines.

Lady changed<sup>1</sup> to Venus Dove<sup>2</sup>

Gently guid your Car of love<sup>3</sup>

Lett your sport both night, and day

Be to make your Carr<sup>4</sup> away

Make it knowne you meet at last

5

A christmas Car-all<sup>5</sup> that surpast.

Plants<sup>6</sup> anough may hence ensue

Some-are-sett<sup>7</sup> where none ere grewe

Some-are-sett, and some are layd

But if none stand, God morrowe Mayde.<sup>8</sup>

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**Source.** Bodleian MS Malone 23, pp. 10-65

**Other known sources.** "Poems from a Seventeenth-Century Manuscript" 58; Bodleian MS Don.c.54, fol. 23r; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.37, p. 62; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 18v; BL Add. MS 34218, fol. 162v; BL MS Egerton 2230, fol. 69r; Hatfield House, Salisbury MS 140, fol. 123r (transcribed in HMC Salisbury 24, Addenda 1605-1668, 231); Nottingham MS Portland PW V 37, p. 142; Folger MS V.a.103, fol. 68r; Rosenbach MS 1083/15, p. 139

F6

<sup>1</sup> *changed*: "chained" is a common variant.

<sup>2</sup> *Venus Dove*: the dove was the bird sacred to Venus, goddess of love.

<sup>3</sup> *guid...love*: emblems of Venus sometimes depicted her riding on a chariot (car) pulled by doves. Here

the poet imagines Frances Howard as a dove guiding the chariot of love, an image that, through the pun on car/Robert Carr, clearly refers to her relationship with her new husband.

<sup>4</sup> *Carr*: the pun on Robert Carr and car i.e. carriage or chariot, continues.

<sup>5</sup> *christmas Car-all*: a Christmas carol, and Robert Carr, whose marriage to Frances Howard was performed on 26 December 1613.

<sup>6</sup> *Plants*: the promise of fecundity stands in contrast to the barrenness of Frances Howard's unconsummated marriage with Essex, "where none ere grewe".

<sup>7</sup> *Some-are-sett*: "some are set" (i.e. some are ready) and Somerset. The point is that Somerset is ready to perform his sexual and procreative duties as a husband, again in stark implied contrast to Essex.

<sup>8</sup> *if none stand...Mayde*: clearly a bawdy allusion to the problem of male impotence—Carr's ability to consummate the marriage and to procreate depends on his ability to achieve an erection. If, like Essex, Carr cannot perform, then Frances Howard will awake from her wedding night still a "Mayde".

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