

H2 In England there lives a jolly Sire

Notes. This poem is one of two surviving libellous ballads on the Essex divorce and Overbury murder. The only known copy of this ballad survives in a manuscript compiled by Nicholas Oldisworth, Overbury's nephew, which is entirely devoted to the Overbury affair. Oldisworth's note claims he found his copy among the possessions of Overbury's father, Sir Nicholas Overbury, in 1640. The ballad is analyzed by Lindley (116), Bellany (Politics 103-06, 162-63, 169-170, 177, 237), and McRae (Literature 63-65).

“A ballad to the tune of O the wind, the winde, and the Raine”¹

In England there lives a jolly Sire,²

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare:

Hee made our King's³ good grace a fire

To serve's owne Turne for other guere.⁴

Hee made our king's, &c. To serve's own Turn, &c

5

Hee leapt from the chimney to the chamber,⁵

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare

How this jolly Sire began to clamber,

And serve his Turne for other geare.

How this jolly Sire, &c. And serve his Turne, &c

10

For a Viscountship⁶ hee hoysed saile:

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare

How the Cowe of fortune fill'd his paile,

To serve his Turne for other gueare.

How the cow of fortune, &c. To serve his &c

15

The chambelayn's Office⁷ breaking winde,

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare,

Hee had a Nose, the hole to finde,

To serve his Turne for other geare.

Hee had a nose, &c. To serve his Turne for &c 20

Somerset's earldom's⁸ ale drunke out,

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare,
Hee was the malt, that made newe Growt,⁹
To serve that Turne, and other geare.

Hee was a Round in St George's ladder,¹⁰ 25

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare,
Yea, hee helpt to blow the Councel's¹¹ bladder,
To serve's owne Turne for other guere.

When hee was at this Huffe of pride,

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare, 30
Hee wanted a hackney¹² for to ride,
And to serve his Turne for other geare.

Hee lighted upon a lusty filly,¹³

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare,
Shee had a Marke underneath her belly, 35
That serv'd his Turne with other geare.

This colt came of a kicking race,

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare,
A Cecillian ape taught her damme to pace¹⁴
And to serve his Turne for other guere. 40

A tougher Jade¹⁵ was n'er bestridden,

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare,
Sheel yerk and bound when shee is ridden,
And serve the Turne for other geare.

Yet ever gentle to her rider,

Come listen to mee, and you shall heare: 45

She was brought to the block¹⁶ before He tryd her,
And serv'd the Turne for other guere.

Speedy shee is, and of great force,

Come listen. &c.

50

Shee never mett so stoute a Horse,

As could serve her Turne for other geare.

But if dispos'd, devoyd of anger,

Come listen, &c

Shee could make him tame, & ride with a hanger,¹⁷

55

Her Turne unserv'd for other geare.

Though I have praisd Her, shee is faulty

Come.

Shee has some Tricks, are counted naughty,

Yet serve her Turne, &c.

60

In her foal-age shee began to wince.

Come, &c

And hath beene a striker¹⁸ ever since.

Which serves her Turne, &c.

Resty¹⁹ shee is. Her taile²⁰ was burn'd.

65

Come, &c.

With a hott iron cramm'd, as Butter's churnd.

To serve her Turne, &c.

Her dock²¹ and heeles have Mangie²² & scratches,

Come &c.

70

Her tinderbox is full of french matches²³

To serve to burne some other's geare.

Her rider, hee prickt her upp & downe.

Come, &c.
To city, sub-urbe, and country-towne, 75
And serv'd her Turne, &c

from Hammersmith to Pater noster,²⁴
Come, &c.
And fryers black²⁵ black deedes did foster,
To serve their Turnes, &c. 80

But now they both have caught the crampe.²⁶
Com.
And cannot bee currant till Tyburn²⁷ shall stampe
The print of justice under their Eare.
And cannot bee currant, &c. The print of &c. 85

This ballad was found in Sir Nic: Overbury's study, 1640

Source. BL Add. MS 15476, fols. 91r-92r

H2

¹ *O the winde...the Raine*: this tune is not as easy to identify as those for "There was an ould ladd rode on an ould padd". The refrain suggests that the tune might be the same one used for the song in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* with the refrain "with hey, ho, the wind and the rain" (5.1.376-395). Duffin (448-450) discusses the Shakespeare song and hazards an informed guess about the tune.

² *jolly Sire*: Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset.

³ *our King's*: James I's.

⁴ *guere*: gear; genitals.

⁵ *chimney to the chamber*: Carr's ascent from (supposed) social obscurity to a position as a Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber.

⁶ *Viscountship*: Carr was made Viscount Rochester in March 1611.

⁷ *The chambelayn's Office*: Carr was appointed Lord Chamberlain in the summer of 1614, succeeding his father-in-law, Thomas Howard, Earl of Suffolk.

⁸ *Somerset's earldom's*: Carr was made Earl of Somerset in December 1613.

⁹ *Growt*: grout ("The infusion of malt before it is fermented, and during the process of fermentation" (*OED*)).

¹⁰ *St George's ladder*: Carr was made a Knight of the Garter (the Order of St. George) in May 1611.

¹¹ *the Councel's*: Carr was made a Privy Councillor in April 1612.

¹² *hackney*: a horse; here, a woman.

¹³ *lusty filly*: i.e. Frances Howard.

¹⁴ *A Cecillian ape...pace*: alluding to the charge, widely repeated in libels on Robert Cecil's death (see Section D), that Frances Howard's mother, Catherine Howard, Countess of Suffolk, had been Cecil's lover.

¹⁵ *Jade*: a worn-out horse, or a lewd woman.

¹⁶ *brought to the block*: literally referring to the sale of horses, but here alluding to Frances Howard's alleged sexual adventures before she met Carr.

¹⁷ *hanger*: loop from which either a sword or riding crop could be hung.

¹⁸ *striker*: has a double meaning here; a horse that kicks, or a promiscuous woman.

¹⁹ *Resty*: restive.

²⁰ *taile*: the horse's tail, and Frances Howard's genitals or buttocks.

²¹ *dock*: rump.

²² *Mangie*: mange, a skin disease.

²³ *tinderbox...french matches*: she has syphilis ("the French pox").

²⁴ *Hammersmith to Pater noster*: alludes to locations either of Carr's and Frances Howard's sexual rendezvous or to their sites of plotting against Overbury. Anne Turner had a house on Paternoster Row in the City of London.

²⁵ *fryers black*: Blackfriars in London. Frances Howard had a residence there.

²⁶ *caught the crampe*: have been arrested.

²⁷ *Tyburn*: one of the major sites of public execution in early Stuart London.

