

To Stella, Visiting Me In My Sickness

Jonathan Swift

Table of Contents

To Stella, Visiting Me In My Sickness.....1
Jonathan Swift.....2

To Stella, Visiting Me In My Sickness

Jonathan Swift

This page copyright © 2001 Blackmask Online.
<http://www.blackmask.com>

OCTOBER, 1727.

PALLAS, observing Stella's wit
Was more than for her sex was fit;
And that her beauty, soon or late,
Might breed confusion in the state;
In high concern for human kind,
Fixed honour in her infant mind.
But (not in wranglings to engage
With such a stupid vicious age),
If honour I would here define,
It answers faith in things divine.
As natural life the body warms,
And, scholars teach, the soul informs;
So honour animates the whole,
And is the spirit of the soul.
Those numerous virtues which the tribe
Of tedious moralists describe,
And by such various titles call,
True honour comprehends them all.
Let melancholy rule supreme,
Choler preside, or blood, or phlegm.
It makes no difference in the case.
Nor is complexion honour's place.
But, lest we should for honour take
The drunken quarrels of a rake,
Or think it seated in a scar,
Or on a proud triumphal car,
Or in the payment of a debt,
We lose with sharpers at piquet;
Or, when a whore in her vocation,
Keeps punctual to an assignation;
Or that on which his lordship swears,
When vulgar knaves would lose their ears:
Let Stella's fair example preach
A lesson she alone can teach.
In points of honour to be tried,
All passions must be laid aside;
Ask no advice, but think alone,
Suppose the question not your own;
How shall I act? is not the case,

To Stella, Visiting Me In My Sickness

But how would Brutus in my place;
In such a cause would Cato bleed;
And how would Socrates proceed?
Drive all objections from your mind,
Else you relapse to human kind;
Ambition, avarice, and lust,
And factious rage, and breach of trust,
And flattery tipped with nauseous fleer,
And guilt and shame, and servile fear,
Envy, and cruelty, and pride,
Will in your tainted heart preside.
Heroes and heroines of old,
By honour only were enrolled
Among their brethren in the skies,
To which (though late) shall Stella rise.
Ten thousand oaths upon record
Are not so sacred as her word;
The world shall in its atoms end
Ere Stella can deceive a friend.
By honour seated in her breast,
She still determines what is best;
What indignation in her mind,
Against enslavers of mankind!
Base kings and ministers of state,
Eternal objects of her hate.
She thinks that Nature ne'er designed,
Courage to man alone confined;
Can cowardice her sex adorn,
Which most exposes ours to scorn;
She wonders where the charm appears
In Florimel's affected fears;
For Stella never learned the art
At proper times to scream and start;
Nor calls up all the house at night,
And swears she saw a thing in white.
Doll never flies to cut her lace,
Or throw cold water in her face,
Because she heard a sudden drum,
Or found an earwig in a plum.
Her hearers are amazed from whence
Proceeds that fund of wit and sense;
Which, though her modesty would shroud,
Breaks like the sun behind a cloud,
While gracefulness its art conceals,
And yet through every motion steals.
Say, Stella, was Prometheus blind,
And forming you, mistook your kind?
No; 'twas for you alone he stole
The fire that forms a manly soul;
Then, to complete it every way,
He moulded it with female clay,

To Stella, Visiting Me In My Sickness

To that you owe the nobler flame,
To this, the beauty of your frame.
How would ingratitude delight?
And how would censure glut her spite?
If I should Stella's kindness hide
In silence, or forget with pride,
When on my sickly couch I lay,
Impatient both of night and day,
Lamenting in unmanly strains,
Called every power to ease my pains,
Then Stella ran to my relief
With cheerful face and inward grief;
And though by Heaven's severe decree
She suffers hourly more than me,
No cruel master could require,
From slaves employed for daily hire,
What Stella by her friendship warmed,
With vigour and delight performed.
My sinking spirits now supplies
With cordials in her hands and eyes,
Now with a soft and silent tread,
Unheard she moves about my bed.
I see her taste each nauseous draught,
And so obligingly am caught:
I bless the hand from whence they came,
Nor dare distort my face for shame.
Best pattern of true friends beware,
You pay too dearly for your care;
If while your tenderness secures
My life, it must endanger yours.
For such a fool was never found,
Who pulled a palace to the ground,
Only to have the ruins made
Materials for a house decayed.