

Jane Cave, "Written by Desire of a Lady, on an angry, petulant Kitchen-Maid"

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JANE CAVE

“Written by Desire of a Lady, on an angry, petulant Kitchen-Maid”

Good Mistress Dishclout, what's the matter?
Why here—the spoon, and there—the platter?
What demon causes all this low'ring,
Black as the pot you oft are scow'ring?
Hot as the fire you daily light, 5
Your speech with low invectives blight,
While rage impregnates ev'ry vein,
And dies the face *one crimson stain*.
Sure some one has a word misplac'd,
Or look'd not equal to your taste, 10
Or, is this just the time you've chose,
Your great acquirements to disclose,
Display the graces of your tongue,
Shew with what eloquence 'tis hung,
As dog, rogue, scoundrel, scrub, what not, 15
And twenty more, I've quite forgot;
Which prove to a demonstration
You've had a lib'ral education;
Such titles must enchant the ear,
And make the bounteous donor dear; 20
But while these bounties are dispensing,
I wish I'd learn'd the art of fencing,
Least while at John you aim to throw,
My nob should chance to catch the blow;
Then I should get a broken pate, 25
And marks of violence I hate.
Good Mistress Dishclout condescend
To hear the counsel of a friend;
When next you are dispos'd to brawl,
Pray let the scull'ry hear it all, 30
And learn to know, your fittest place

Is with the dishes and the grease,
And when you are inclin'd to battle,
Engage the skimmer, spit, or kettle,
Or any other kitchen guest, 35
Which you in wisdom might think best.

NOTES:

1 *Mistress Dishclout* Proverbial for a kitchen-maid; a dishclout is a "cloth used for washing dishes" (*OED*).

3 *low'ring* "Frowning, scowling, sullenness" (*OED*).

6 *invectives* "A violent attack in words" (*OED*).

14 *Shew* Show. Johnson notes that the word is "frequently written *shew*; but since it is always pronounced and often written *show*...[he has] adjusted the orthography to the pronunciation" (Johnson).

15 *rogue* "A dishonest, unprincipled person" (*OED*); *scrub* Of low birth, base, "a mean fellow" (Johnson).

20 *dear* "Beloved" (*OED*).

24 *nob* Colloquially, "the head" (*OED*).

25 *pate* "The head. Now commonly used in contempt or ridicule" (Johnson).

30 *scull'ry* "The place where common utensils, as kettles or dishes, are cleaned and kept" (Johnson).

34 *skimmer* "A shallow vessel with which the scum is taken off" (Johnson); *spit* "Long prong on which meat is driven to be turned before the fire" (Johnson); *kettle* "A pot or caldron" (*OED*).

SOURCE: *Poems on Various Subjects, Entertaining, Elegiac, and Religious*, (Winchester, 1783), pp. 49-51. [Hathi Trust]

Edited by Kristine Van Dusen