Mary Jones, â??After the Small Poxâ?•

Description

MARY JONES

â??After the Small Poxâ?•

When skillful traders first set up,
To draw the people to their shop,
They strait hang out some gaudy sign,
Expressive of the goods within.
The Vintner has his boy and grapes,
The Haberdasher thread and tapes,
The Shoemaker exposes boots,
And Monmouth Street old tatterâ??d suits.

So fares it with the nymph divine;
For what is Beauty but a Sign?
A face hung out, throâ?? which is seen
The nature of the goods within.

Thus the coquet her beau ensnares
With studyâ??d smiles, and forward airs:
The graver prude hangs out a frown
To strike thâ?? audacious gazer down;
But she alone, whose tempâ??rate wit
Each nicer medium can hit,
Is still adornâ??d with evâ??ry grace,
And wears a sample in her face.

What thoâ?? some envious folks have said,
That *Stella* now must hide her head,
That all her stock of beautyâ??s gone,
And evâ??n the very sign took down:
Yet grieve not at the fatal blow;
For if you break a while, we know,
â??Tis bankrupt like, more rich to grow.
A fairer sign youâ??ll soon hang up,
And with fresh credit open shop:
For natureâ??s pencil soon shall trace,
And once more finish off your face,
Which all your neighbours shall out-shine,
And of your Mind remain the Sign.

NOTES:

Title *Small Pox* A virulent disease. In eighteenth-century Europe, 400,000 people died annually of smallpox, and one third of the survivors went blind. Most survivors were left with disfiguring scars (Barquet, Nicolau, and Pere Domingo, â??Smallpox: The Triumph over the Most Terrible of the Ministers of Death,â?• pp. 635-642).

6 *Haberdasher* â??A dealer in small articles appertaining to dress, as thread, tape, ribbons, etc.â?• (*OED*).

8 *Monmouth Street old tatterâ??d suits* Monmouth Street was famous for its old clothes shops (Weinreb, et al, *The London* Encyclopaedia, 3rd edition, p. 557).

9 *nymph divine* â??Any of a class of semi-divine spirits, imagined as taking the form of a maiden inhabiting the sea, rivers, mountainsâ?• (*OED*).

13 *coquet* â??A woman who trifles with menâ??s affections; a woman given to flirting or coquetryâ?• (*OED*).

22 *Stella* Name used by Jones to refer to her friend, Charlot Clayton, in several of her poems (Kennedy, *Poetic Sisters*, p. 170).

Source: *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse* (Oxford, 1750), pp. 79-80. [Google Books]

Edited by Elizabeth Holt