

All's Well That Ends Well

2.2

Enter the Countess and Lavatch the clown

COUNTESS Come on, sir. I shall now put you to the height of your breeding.

LAVATCH I will show myself highly fed and lowly taught. I know my business is but to the court.

COUNTESS `To the court'? Why, what place make you 5
special, when you put off that with such contempt?
`But to the court'!

LAVATCH Truly, madam, if God have lent a man any
manners he may easily put it off at court. He that
cannot make a leg, put off's cap, kiss his hand, and 10
say nothing, has neither leg, hands, lip, nor cap, and
indeed such a fellow, to say precisely, were not for the
court. But for me, I have an answer will serve all men.

COUNTESS Marry, that's a bountiful answer that fits all
questions. 15

LAVATCH It is like a barber's chair that fits all buttocks:
the pin-buttock, the quatch-buttock, the brawn-
buttock, or any buttock.

COUNTESS Will your answer serve fit to all questions?

LAVATCH As fit as ten groats is for the hand of an attorney, 20
as your French crown for your taffeta punk, as Tib's
rush for Tom's forefinger, as a pancake for Shrove
Tuesday, a morris for May Day, as the nail to his hole,
the cuckold to his horn, as a scolding quean to a
wrangling knave, as the nun's lip to the friar's mouth, 25
nay as the pudding to his skin.

COUNTESS Have you, I say, an answer of such fitness for
all questions?

LAVATCH From beyond your duke to beneath your con-
stable, it will fit any question. 30

COUNTESS It must be an answer of most monstrous size
that must fit all demands.

LAVATCH But a trifle neither, in good faith, if the learned
should speak truth of it. Here it is, and all that belongs
to't. Ask me if I am a courtier. It shall do you no harm 35

to learn.

COUNTESS To be young again, if we could! I will be a fool
in question, hoping to be the wiser by your answer. I
pray you, sir, are you a courtier?

LAVATCH O Lord, sir!±±There's a simple putting off. More, 40
more, a hundred of them.

COUNTESS Sir, I am a poor friend of yours that loves you.

LAVATCH O Lord, sir!±±Thick, thick, spare not me.

COUNTESS I think, sir, you can eat none of this homely
meat. 45

LAVATCH O Lord, sir!±±Nay, put me to't, I warrant you.

COUNTESS You were lately whipped, sir, as I think.

LAVATCH O Lord, sir!±±Spare not me.

COUNTESS Do you cry `O Lord, sir!' at your whipping, and
`spare not me'? Indeed, your `O Lord, sir!' is very 50
sequent to your whipping. You would answer very well
to a whipping, if you were but bound to't.

LAVATCH I ne'er had worse luck in my life in my `O Lord,
sir!' I see things may serve long, but not serve ever.

COUNTESS I play the noble housewife with the time, to 55
entertain it so merrily with a fool.

LAVATCH O Lord, sir!±±Why, there't serves well again.

COUNTESS

An end, sir! To your business: give Helen this,

She gives him a letter

And urge her to a present answer back.

Commend me to my kinsmen and my son.

This is not much. 60

LAVATCH Not much commendation to them?

COUNTESS Not much employment for you. You understand
me.

LAVATCH Most fruitfully. I am there before my legs. 65

COUNTESS Haste you again.

Exeunt severally