

"To Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York"

By Katherine Philips

*Transcription, correction, editorial commentary, and markup
by Staff and Research Assistants at The University of Virginia*

To Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York,^{York}, on her commanding me to send her some things that I had written.

1 To you whose Dignity strikes us with aw,
2 And whose far greater Judgment gives us law,
3 (Your Mind b'ing more transcendent then your State,
4 For while but Knees to this, Hearts bow to that,)
5 These humble Papers never durst, ^{durst} come near,
6 Had not your pow'rful Word bid them appear;
7 In which such majesty, such sweetness dwells,
8 As in one act obliges, and compels.
9 None can dispute commands vouchsaf'd, ^{vouchsafed} by you.
10 What shall my fears then and confusion doe?
11 They must resign, and by their just pretence
12 Some value set on my obedience.
13 For in religious Duties, 'tis confest,
14 The most Implicite are accepted best.

15 If on that score your Highness will excuse
16 This blushing tribute of an artless Muse,
17 She may (encourag'd by your least regard,
18 Which first did worth create, and then reward)
19 At modest distance with improved strains
20 That Mercy celebrate which now she gains.
21 But should you that severer justice use,
22 Which these too prompt Approches may produce,
23 As the swift Doe which hath escaped long,
24 Believes a Vulgar shot would be a wrong;
25 But wounded by a Prince falls without shame,
26 And what in life she loses, gains in fame:
27 So if a Ray from you chance to be sent,
28 Which to consume, and not to warm, is meant;
29 My trembling Muse at least more nobly dies,
30 And falls by that a truer sacrifice.

Footnotes

York The Duchess of York was Anne Hyde, wife of the future King James II of England.

durst The simple past of dare.

vouchsafed To grant by graciousness or condescension (Oxford English Dictionary).