

As You Like It

Act II, sc. 7

JAQUES

Jaq. A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool; a miserable world!
As I do live by food, I met a fool;
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms, and yet a motley fool.
'Good morrow, fool,' quoth I. 'No, sir,' quoth he,
'Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune.'
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, 'It is ten o'clock;
Thus may we see,' quoth he, 'how the world wags:
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine,
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven;
And so, from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And then from hour to hour we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.' When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools should be so deep-contemplative,
And I did laugh sans intermission

An hour by his dial. O noble fool! A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear.

Duke S. ~~What fool is this?~~

Jaq. O worthy fool! One that hath been a courtier,

And says, if ladies be but young and fair,

They have the gift to know it; and in his brain,

Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit

After a voyage, 'he hath strange places crammed'd

With observation, the which he vents

In mangled forms. O that I were a fool!

I am ambitious for a motley coat.

Duke S. ~~Thou shalt have one.~~

Jaq. It is my only suit;

Provided that you weed your better judgments

Of all opinion that grows rank in them

That I am wise. I must have liberty

Withal, as large a charter as the wind,

To blow on whom I please; for so fools have:

And they that are most galled with my folly,

They most must laugh. And why, sir, must they so?

The 'why' is plain as way to parish church:

He that a fool doth very wisely hit

Doth very foolishly, although he smart,

Not to seem senseless of the bob; if not,

The wise man's folly is anatomiz'd

Even by the squandering glances of the fool.

Invest me in my motley; give me leave

To speak my mind, and I will through and through

Cleanse the foul body of th' infected world,

If they will patiently receive my medicine.