

#### A14 England men say of late is bankrupt growne

*Notes.* This is accepted as the work of Sir John Harington. It was copied by Harington at the end of his Tract on the Succession of the Crown, where it is dated 18 December 1602. It depends on the pun in the final line (steward/Stuart): a point not seized by all those who transcribed the poem. The general charge here that the victors in the late-Elizabethan power struggle were corrupt and interested only in personal gain reflects the widespread belief (zealously encouraged by Essexians) that those in positions of authority during the closing years of the reign were bent upon feathering their own nests in anticipation of the Queen's death, when all royal offices held "during pleasure" would fall vacant and be liable to redistribution by her successor. (For their part, Essex's enemies claimed that the chief ambition of the Earl's followers was to "carve for themselves" (James 427n.)) Harington had been a follower of Essex and served in the Earl's Irish campaign of 1599, but subsequently distanced himself from Essex during the latter's slow-motion fall into political catastrophe during 1599-1600.

England (Men say) of late is bankrupt grown:

Th'effect is manifest, the Cause unknown.

Rich Treasurers it hath had, and wary Keepers,<sup>1</sup>

Fat Judges, Counsellors in Gain no-sleepers,

Auditors, & Surveyors, Receivers many,

Pillers, & pollers too,<sup>2</sup> All for the penny.

As for the Church, that must both pray, & pay:

For Solvat Ecclesia, the Courtiers say.<sup>3</sup>

Can Any tell, how to help this Disorder?

Faith, one good STEWARD<sup>4</sup> would putt All in Order.

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**Source.** Bodleian MS Sancroft 53, p. 47

**Other known sources.** Harington, *Tract* 123; Harington, *Letters and Epigrams* 301; Bodleian MS Ashmole 781, p. 134; Bodleian MS CCC. 327, fol. 24r; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10, fol. 97r; Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 121; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 212, fol. 87v; Bodleian MS Sancroft 53, p. 57; BL Add. MS 10309, fol. 120r; BL Add. MS 22601, fol. 60v; BL Add. MS 39829, fol. 93r

<sup>1</sup> *Rich Treasurers...wary Keepers*: it is possible that “Rich Treasurers” is a specific allusion to the Lord Treasurer, Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, whose father had been nicknamed “Fill-Sack” while serving as a royal Treasurer. “Wary Keepers” may allude to Sir Thomas Egerton, the Lord Keeper, who sought to avoid factional entanglement and maintained good relations with both Cecil and Essex until the latter’s fall.

<sup>2</sup> *Pillers, & pollers too*: to pill is to pillage, plunder, extort; to poll is to fleece, despoil by excessive taxation.

<sup>3</sup> *As for...the Courtiers say*: the Church of England was not only the official state Church, but also a ready source of patronage for the Crown. Encouraged by cash-hungry courtiers, Elizabeth regularly used her authority as Supreme Head of the Church to force clerics to surrender Church lands to the Crown or lease them out to favoured courtiers as a condition of their appointment. The phrase “Solvat Ecclesia” means “let the Church pay”.

<sup>4</sup> *STEWARD*: the steward/Stuart pun looks forward to the succession of James VI of Scotland, whose accession as James I of England in March 1603 inaugurated the Stuart dynasty in England.

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