

D16 Heere sleepes in the Lorde beepepperde with pox

Notes. The sole extant copy of this libel was included in a newsletter sent in August 1612 by Benjamin Norton to Thomas More, the agent in Rome for the English Archpriest, George Birkhead. Norton reported that “there bee a multitude of Epitaphes” attacking Cecil, and claimed this one was “one of the cleaneste” (Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead 193).

Heere sleepes in the Lorde beepepperde with pox¹
a Ciciliane monster beegott of a fox²
some caulde him crookebacke & some litle Robbin³
hee bore on his backe a packe⁴ like ower Dobbin⁵
yett none coulde rule him, ride, or bestride him 5
butt he beestrid many or els they beelyde him
by crafte hee gott creditt, & honor by moneye
much hee delighted in huntinge the Cunniye⁶
but Rotten with ruttinge like sores in september
hee died as hee lived wth a faulte in one member.⁷ 10

Source. *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead* 193 (from Archives of the Archdiocese of Westminster, Series A, AAW A XI, no. 136, pp. 369-72)

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¹ *pox*: syphilis.

² *fox*: Robert Cecil’s father, William Cecil, Lord Burghley was also widely credited with the cunning of a fox—he was, for instance, the courtier Fox in Spenser’s *Mother Hubberds Tale*.

³ *Robbin*: diminutive of Robert.

⁴ *a packe*: Cecil’s hump on his back.

⁵ *Dobbin*: a horse, and also a diminutive nickname for Robin/Robert.

⁶ *huntin' the Cunniye*: a lewd pun, literally meaning rabbit (coney) hunting, but here clearly also meaning sexual pursuit of women.

⁷ *faul'te in one member*: presumably referring to the syphilitic infection of Cecil's genitals.