

G. The Addled Parliament and the Death of Northampton (1614)

The poems in this section all describe or react to the events of June 1614. On Friday 3 June, as a rancorous and unproductive meeting of Parliament drew to its close, John Hoskyns, the lawyer, poet and MP for Hereford, delivered a speech containing highly intemperate remarks against James I's Scottish courtiers. The speech suggested that a wise king would long since have expelled the Scots from England, and went on, in a reckless allusion to the thirteenth-century Sicilian Vespers revolt against the Angevins, implicitly to threaten an ethnic bloodbath if the Scots remained (Chamberlain 1.538; Jansson 422-23). The King dissolved Parliament on 7 June and, over the next few days, had Hoskyns and several other MPs arrested and imprisoned for this and other potentially seditious speeches made during the parliamentary session. Lionel Sharpe and Sir Charles Cornwallis, from whom Hoskyns claimed he had received his Sicilian Vespers speech, soon joined the MPs in the Tower. Most of the imprisoned were freed over the course of the next few weeks and months, but Hoskyns, Sharpe and Cornwallis remained incarcerated until June 1615. Hoskyns had already played a significant role in Jacobean libellous politics, presiding over the group composition of the infamous "Parliament Fart" libel of 1607 (see Section C); and he would later compose a six-line meditation on the dangers of hearing a "Princes Secrecy" (Colclough 385), and a libel on the fall of Francis Bacon ("Great Verulam is very lame, the gout of goe-out feeling"). During his imprisonment in the Tower, Hoskyns wrote six poems about his plight (Colclough 382). Most are conventionally petitionary or pious, but two contain a sharper political critique of the constraints on free speech in Jacobean England, and have been included in the current selection alongside a mocking verse on the rash of imprisonments in the aftermath of the parliamentary dissolution.

A week after Parliament was dissolved, the influential Privy Councillor and Lord Privy Seal, Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton, died. The one extant epitaph on Northampton repeats long-standing rumours of crypto-popery (see "The great Archpapist Learned Curio") that would be revived again in 1615-16 when the Earl was posthumously implicated in the scandal surrounding the murder of Sir Thomas Overbury.

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