

Mi Attacks on Monopolists

Mi1 You Justices & men of myghte

Notes. This is the only known libel entirely devoted to the monopolist Sir Francis Michell. The poem's form—an admonitory lament in the voice of a fallen sinner—was popular in contemporary ballad literature. Like many libels written in song or ballad form, it is possible that this was sung, though evidence of performance is impossible to trace.

“A lamentable newe Ballade expressing the Complaynte of Sir Frances Michell Knighte dwellinge in Pickthatche¹ lately Justice of Peace. To a scurveye tune.”

You Justices & men of myghte

You Constables that walke by nyghte

And all you officers more lowe

But marke my sudden overthrowe

And then by mee Example make

5

How you get goods, how bribes you take

For that has bine my discontente

And for like Acts you shall be shente²

Before this Parlamente I myghte

Have done all this, & yet no knighte³

10

But they are nowe so busy growne

Alas ouer Faults must all be knowne

No place nor hower can preserve

theyer lives from them that ill deserve

and this my storey may asseuer yee

15

If you bee badde theyle not endeuer yee

For though the kinge mee knyghthood gave

yet they presumed, to call me knave

and sayd that I deserved to dye
For begginge a monopolie 20

Sir Giles Mompessone though hee were
a kinsman to the Marques neere⁴
was for this cause thrust out and chide
Sum say shall hange but god forbidd⁵

For if yee should bee trussed upp⁶ 25
I am certeyne I shall tast that Cupe
For I alas that discord bredde
I put this sute into his heade

when firste this course was scand & tried
and my faulte could not be denied 30
with Lord have merceye on mee they
did to the Tower mee streighte convey⁷

On Foote I then adjudged was
alonge the streets with shame to passe⁸
moore favor they the Serjeants⁹ did 35
For whilst I walkt, those Rascalls ridd

In this sorte as I walkte a longe
those people all, which I did wronge
Came laughing oute at my disgrace
and yet I must not hide my face 40

A Fatt Alewife that had beefore
in full 7 yeares not stired to doer
with kitchin curtse¹⁰ did mee Followe
as if like ale shee would mee swallowe

An Inkeeper that solde his haye 45

the fine I call for for to paye¹¹
with a pitchforke did at mee thruste
as if my harte hee would have burste

Twoe caryers nexte with yawlinge throtes
raylde at mee for the price of oats¹²
and sayd aloude through my deceyte
Theyer horses travell withoute bayte¹³

50

When through those scornes at laste I came
unto the Tower with spite & shame
my Judgmente yet beeould was more
And Fare worse followed then beefore

55

That place they esteemed to good
Both for my cause & for my blood
and unto Newgate I must goe
a stinkinge prisone, God doth knowe¹⁴

60

A Baude in seethinge Lane¹⁵ mee spied
One that for 10 yeares space mee bribd¹⁶
that for herselfe & all her whoores
no warrant entred att her doores

Shee ruthfull woman oneley wept
To see my fall such coyle¹⁷ was kept
with her and hers since I departed
Herselfe att leste had twise bene carted¹⁸

65

Not farre from her a younge whore stands
sighinge and wringinge of her hands
Pickthatch (quoth shee) can nowe no more
bee a proteccion for a whoore¹⁹

70

But that which greives & vext mee worse
the nexte I sawe was a cutpurse
whome I as Hickes his Hall can tell²⁰ 75
both saved from newgate & Bridewell²¹

And yet this Rouge amongeste the rest
did laugh att mee & make a jeste
and swore my worship tooke a Fee
to set his heeles at libertey 80
The bauds and whoores of Turball²² all
cam laughinge by to see my fall
and followinge by mee 3 whoores tripte
whome I had caused to bee whipte

Another did a halter shake 85
of hempe & Flaxe herselfe did make
when I in newe bridewell did putte
For juste ofence that rampant slutt

Nor is this end of all my payne
from worse I feare theyle not refrayne 90
my cause alas is come to that
They meane to do the Lord knows what

Yet still I wish health to the Kinge
whoe gracious is in everey thinge
and ene on the howses highe & lowe²³ 95
I pray to God his grace bestowe

For they are like if they goe on
to leave noe faulte unthaught uppon
and then Ime suer howere I bee
I shall have still more companey. 100

Source. Bodleian MS Tanner 306, fols. 247r-248v

Mi1

¹ *Pickthatche*: i.e. Picket-Hatch, a resort of thieves and prostitutes in London; “picked-hatch” was also a contemporary term for a brothel.

² *shente*: disgraced; ruined.

³ *& yet no knighte*: Michell was knighted in December 1620.

⁴ *Sir Giles...Marques neere*: Mompesson, accused as a monopolist alongside Michell, was related by marriage to George Villiers, who was at this time Marquis of Buckingham.

⁵ *Sum say...forbidd*: other evidence in the poem indicates that it was written after Mompesson’s flight from England, in March 1621; however, his whereabouts may well have been unclear to the poet.

⁶ *trussed upp*: strung up; hanged.

⁷ *did to the Tower...convey*: Michell was committed to the Tower in February 1621.

⁸ *On Foote...to passe*: Michell travelled to the Tower on foot and bare-headed.

⁹ *Serjeants*: judicial officers (escorting Michell).

¹⁰ *kitchin curtses*: unclear; possibly read “kitchen curses”, but possibly “kitchen curtsies” (the latter to be taken ironically).

¹¹ *An Inkeeper...to paye*: Michell was accused of abusing his powers in administering the patent for alehouses, which involved the extortion of fines from alehouse-keepers; however, it is not clear whether he had a role in the separate patent for inns.

¹² *price of oats*: patents did not directly affect the price of oats; however, the costs of fines borne by innkeepers were inevitably passed on to customers (such as carriers), and the poem perhaps acknowledges this fact here.

¹³ *bayte*: feed; refreshment.

¹⁴ *That place...God doth knowe*: though initially committed to the Tower, Michell was subsequently moved, because the Tower was considered to be too good for him. Although the *DNB* states that he was moved to Finsbury jail, there is some evidence to support the claims of libellers that his destination was

in fact Newgate, a prison from which he had previously received a salary, as a Middlesex Justice of the Peace, on condition of sending all his prisoners there.

¹⁵ *seething Lane*: Seething Lane, near the corn market in Fenchurch Street.

¹⁶ *One...mee bribd*: presumably a reference to Michell's activities as Justice of the Peace for Middlesex.

¹⁷ *coyle*: tumult.

¹⁸ *carted*: i.e. carried in a cart through the streets; traditional punishment for a whore.

¹⁹ *Pickthatch...whoore*: i.e. Picket-Hatch, a resort of thieves and prostitutes in London, may now be exposed to the law (since its protector has been removed from power).

²⁰ *as Hickes...tell*: although the specific reference is unclear, the meaning is obvious (i.e. "I can see this as clearly as I can recognize Hicks's hall").

²¹ *newgate & Bridewell*: prisons for common offenders.

²² *Turball*: i.e. Turnball Street, perhaps the most disreputable street in London.

²³ *the howses highe &...lowe*: i.e. the high and low houses of parliament (the Lords and the Commons).
