

Mi2 The tottering state of transitory things

Notes. This is one of three known libels entirely devoted to the monopolist Sir Giles Mompesson. In their final lines, there is some commonality between this poem and “Pervertinge of the lawes makes justice blind”.

“On Sir Giles Mumperson”

The tottering state of transitory things

Like to a Jade¹ mans fortune kicks and flings

That hee that now is Dominus-fac-totum²

May the next day be thought a man of Gotam³

Oprression hath like an impostume⁴ beene

5

With inward putrefaction, all unseen

Till ripenes burst it, and good time aplies

Good conscionable lawfull remedyes

It is not bands of men or regiments

Or troops or squadrons, that will finde contents,

10

Tis no small army, that doe share these joyes

Nor is it fabulous or frivilous toyes,

But real contemplations through our coasts

Not of an host of men, but of Man of Hosts⁵

You Host of Hosts⁶ that happy day is come

15

Person⁷ is not respected Giles is mum,

Drink healths, make bonfires, wash your merry throats

Mourne al in sack, and give your horse more oates.

Sir Giles did thinkt no wisdom, to abide

As fearing by St Giles’s church to ride⁸

20

Brave Hosts your general⁹

Who mighte have staid and took a hangman heare.

The Proverb of lame Giles,¹⁰ is prov’d a ly

For if Sir Giles were lame, how could hee fly.

Source. Folger MS V.a.345, p. 126

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Rawl. B. 151, fol. 102v; Nottingham MS Portland PW V 37, p. 151

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- ¹ *Jade*: worthless, ill-tempered horse.
 - ² *Dominus-fac-totum*: “one who controls everything”.
 - ³ *a man of Gotham*: a madman (a term based on the proverbial folly of the men of the village of Gotham).
 - ⁴ *impostume*: abscess or cyst.
 - ⁵ *Not...of Hosts*: this line is unclear (and the meaning is undermined by at least one probable scribal error); however, it appears to pun on a “man of hosts” (i.e. military man; man of valour) and the “host” of an inn (hence an allusion to Mompesson’s patent for inns). A variant text reads “Not of an host of men, but Man of hosts” (Bodleian MS Rawl. B. 151).
 - ⁶ *You Host of Hosts*: probably Christ (often referred to as “host”, in the word’s sense as a victim for sacrifice); however, a variant text is less specific, reading “So, gentle Hosts” (Bodleian MS Rawl. B. 151).
 - ⁷ *Person*: a variant text has “Michel” (i.e. Sir Francis Michell) (Bodleian MS Rawl. B. 151).
 - ⁸ *by St Giles’s...ride*: i.e. on the way to execution at Tyburn (cf. the final line of “Pervertinge of the lawes makes justice blind”).
 - ⁹ *general*: a variant text has “Lord of Hosts” (Bodleian MS Rawl. B. 151). is fled for feare
 - ¹⁰ *Proverb of lame Giles*: probably “lame Giles has played the man” (Tilley 115).
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