

Mi5 Oyes

Notes. This poem, which adapts the conventions of official news distribution (via royal proclamation), targets in turn four of the monopolists pursued in the 1621 Parliament. One version (BL Add. MS 33998) names them in marginal notes: Mompesson, Michell, Sir Robert Flood, and Bacon. The stanza on Bacon was occasionally transcribed as a separate poem, and was in some cases extended into a longer version (see “Stand fast thou shaking quaking keeper”). The poem is discussed in McRae, Literature 38-40.

“A Proclamation”

Oyes,

Can any tell true tideings

of a Monopolist

Knight of the Post for rideing¹

’cause hee wist,²

5

It argue’d no small cunning

To make his leggs the instruments

To save his necke by running.

Come forth

Thou bawdy house Protector³

10

Pattentee of froth⁴

Of signe posts the Erector⁵

Our true worth,

Thy Quorum shall not checke,⁶

For thou shalt unto Newgate⁷ ryde,

15

With Canns about thy necke.

Stand by

Thou faire ingross’d transcription

Your Fludd is very high⁸

But sluces of reversion

20

drawe it dry,⁹

So crost by just opinions
Our Cossen must be forc't to walke
To Walls to feed on Onyons.¹⁰

Sitt sure,

25

Thou quakeing quivering Keeper,¹¹
A tent¹² thou must indure,
Least thy wounds grow deeper,
and past the cure,

For if thy faults prove common

30

Thou soone shalt feele a Nimble Coke¹³
Slice collops¹⁴ from thy Gammon.

Source. BL MS Harley 4955, fol. 86r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Ashmole 38, p. 124; BL Add. MS 33998, fol. 65r

Known sources of the shorter version. BL Add. MS 22118, fol. 38v; Beinecke MS Osborn b.197, p. 182

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¹ *Knight...for rideing*: unclear; possibly describing Mompesson as a “Knight of the Post” (i.e. notorious perjurer) because he has cheated justice by “rideing” (i.e. fleeing).

² *wist*: knew.

³ *bawdy house Protector*: Francis Michell; the impropriety alleged in his capacity as a Justice of the Peace for Middlesex.

⁴ *Pattentee of froth*: allusion to Michell’s patent for alehouses.

⁵ *signe posts the Erector*: unclear; perhaps also linked to the patent for licensing alehouses (which would lead to the erection of alehouse signs).

⁶ *Thy Quorum...checke*: unclear; perhaps a reference to Michell’s position as one of the justices of the peace whose presence was necessary to constitute a bench (literally, the “quorum”).

⁷ *Newgate*: i.e. Newgate prison.

⁸ *Thou...high*: heavily punning allusion to Sir Robert Flood, clerk of the office of the patent for wills. The patent involved charge for the engrossing (i.e. formal legal preparation) of all wills and inventories.

⁹ *But sluces...dry*: the patent of sole engrossing of wills and inventories was suspended 18 July 1621

¹⁰ *Our Cossen...Onyons*: unclear; presumably referring to Flood's lack of income after the suspension of the patent, and/or his expulsion from the House of Commons, 21 March 1621.

¹¹ *Thou...Keeper*: i.e. Francis Bacon, Lord Keeper.

¹² *tent*: surgical probe.

¹³ *Coke*: i.e. Sir Edward Coke, a leading figure in the Commons and long-time rival of Bacon.

¹⁴ *collops*: slices, rashers.
