

Mii5 The greate assemblie of the parliamente

Notes. This poem on Bacon takes the popular libellous punning on his name to an extreme, as it develops a narrative of the parliament's attack on him. Much of the humour depends on a correlation between political corruption and the physical corruption of a piece of bacon.

“On Sir Francis Bacons Lord Chanceler of Eng:”

The greate assemblie of the parliamente

Had thought farewell this fastinge time of Lente¹

All though it had bin sometimes to their coste

and to that end they gott the cheifest hoste.²

That might be founde, graund-senior of those hostes

5

which ar so many in our English coasts.

But he did feare he should not give contente

& therefore in greate policie he hence wente³

By wich they greatly disappointed were

& faine to fall unto their lenten fare.

10

'till att the laste one speake, what naught but fish?

methinks this time we might have some choise dish

What say you to a daintie bitt of bacon

which if I be not suerly mistaken

It's stately, fine, & most franke & free

15

By a kind Freind lately bestowd on me.

Where is't quoth all? We would we had it here

For sure good bacon now is daintie cheare.

They all desir'd it & was brought in hast

But when it came it greatly did distast

20

Theire palletts & disliked much their minde

The reason was some thought 'thad taken winde⁴

Others did say 'thad hunge too neere the pinn⁵

And was corrupte & putrified within

'tould never smell so else in each mans nose 25
 The Cooke⁶ was bidd the reason to disclose
 Who tould them that he thought the faulte
 Had bin especially for wante of salte⁷
 But that I knew quoth he it had greate store
 I seldome knew that any flesh had more 30
 this is the cause as I have heard it sayd
 Some cankerd mettall⁸ was upon it laid
 which stayned it, besides twas hunge so high⁹
 & that so soone before 'twas through drie
 yett great men in nae there faulte was none 35
 I meddled not but made lett all alone
 now how to remedy this rustie¹⁰ bacon
 I doe not know unless it be downe taken.

Source. Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10, fols. 95v-96r

Mii5

- ¹ *Lente*: some of the proceedings against Bacon took place in the period of Lent.
- ² *the cheifest hoste*: i.e. Mompesson, holder of the patent for licensing inns.
- ³ *in greate...wente*: reference to Sir Giles Mompesson's flight from England, in March 1621.
- ⁴ *taken winde*: to "take wind" is to be divulged; here there is a pun on meat that has decayed.
- ⁵ *hunge...pinn*: unclear; presumably punning on meat corroded by the metal on which it is hung, and a statesman corrupted by his proximity to a source of power.
- ⁶ *Cooke*: i.e. Sir Edward Coke, a leading figure in the Commons and long-time rival of Bacon.
- ⁷ *for wante of salte*: possibly punning on "salt" in the figurative sense, meaning that which gives freshness to a person's character.
- ⁸ *cankerd mettall*: punning reference to the bribes Bacon accepted.

⁹ *hunge so high*: punning reference to Bacon's political and judicial elevation.

¹⁰ *rustie*: rancid.

