

Ni4 If 88 be past then thrive

Notes. This prophetic poem, which sets the Spanish Match crisis within a longer historical context dating back to the English defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588, was probably composed in 1623.

“A prophecy found of late in the Abby of Saint Bennets in Norfolk”

If 88 be past then thrive

Thou maist till 44 or five¹

After the maid² is dead a Scott³

Shall govern them and if a plott⁴

Prevent him not then sure his sway

5

Continue shall full many a day

The nynth shall dy⁵ and then the first

Perhapes shall raigne⁶ but oh accurst

Shall be the tyme when as you see

To sixteen joynd twenty three.

10

For then the eagle shall have help

By craft to catch the Lyons whelp⁷

And hurt him sore unles the same

Be cured by one of the maidens name⁸

In July moneth of that same yeare

15

Saturne conjoynes with Jupiter⁹

Perhapes false prophets shall aris

And Mahomet¹⁰ shall shew his priz

But sure much Alteration

Shall be had in Religion¹¹

20

Believe this trew if then you see

A Spaniard protestant to bee.

Source. Folger MS V.a.275, p. 176

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Ashmole 47, fol. 40r; Bodleian MS Ashmole 423, fol. 265r; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 7v; Bodleian MS Rawl. D. 398, fol. 162r; Bodleian MS Rawl. D. 1092, fol. 23r; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 26, fol. 15v; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 117, fol. 169v; BL Add. MS 34217, fol. 41v; BL Add. MS 69883B, fol. 76r; BL MS Egerton 923, fol. 31v; BL MS Sloane 292, fol. 2v; BL MS Sloane 1479, fol. 8v; BL MS Sloane 1489, fol. 9v; BL MS Sloane 1492, fol. 9v; St. John's MS K.56, no. 72; Beinecke MS Osborn b.197, p. 189; Rosenbach MS 1083/16, p. 133

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¹ *44 or five*: forty-four or forty-five years after 1588; i.e. 1622-23.

² *the maid*: Elizabeth I, who died in March 1603.

³ *a Scott*: James I.

⁴ *a plott*: the Catholic Gunpowder Plot of 1605, which planned to blow up James I as he addressed Parliament.

⁵ *The nynth shall dy*: James's eldest son Prince Henry died in November 1612. If Henry had lived to succeed James, he would have ruled as Henry IX.

⁶ *the first...shall raigne*: Prince Charles was James's heir in 1623, and would rule as Charles I.

⁷ *the eagle...Lyons whelp*: this most likely alludes to Prince Charles's voyage to Spain in 1623. The eagle is Spain, the "Lyons whelp" (lion's cub) is Charles. Contemporaries believed that pro-Spanish agents at the English court had tricked Charles into making his reckless journey to woo the Infanta of Spain.

⁸ *one of the maidens name*: James I's daughter Elizabeth, who shared the name of the "maiden" Queen, Elizabeth I. Princess Elizabeth was married to Frederick V, Elector Palatine, whose failed assumption of the Crown of Bohemia had triggered the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War and the loss of the Palatinate to Spanish and Bavarian troops.

⁹ *In July...Jupiter*: the astrological conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter on 9 July 1623, which had provoked much anxiety and speculation in advance of the event.

¹⁰ *Mahomet*: the prophet Mohammed, founder of Islam. Presumably, the prophecy alludes to possible victories by the Ottoman Turks.

¹¹ *Alteration...in Religion*: 1623 saw widespread fears that English Protestantism, as a consequence of the Spanish Match, was to be undermined and displaced by Roman Catholicism.
