

Nii3 The famous Ambassador, brother to the French Favored

Notes. In one source this poem is titled “Upon the French Embassadors entertainment in England at Westminster Hall, Decem. 30. 1620” (Bodleian MS Malone 19). The French ambassador Cadenet, with a large train of followers, arrived in England late in December 1620, and left in mid-January 1621 after a series of negotiations and a succession of lavish feasts and entertainments during the Christmas season, the festive apex of the English court year. Although Chamberlain (2.334) reports widespread speculation that Cadenet had come to discuss a possible French marriage for Prince Charles, and to talk with James about the situation in the Palatinate, this relatively light-hearted libel is far more concerned with the riot of conspicuous consumption surrounding the ambassador’s visit.

The famous Ambassador, brother to the French Favored¹

Is traveild to Spayne againe.

Hee was a great guest heere, & had such a feast heere,

Was able to begger halfe Spayne.

All fish were turnd Salmon, all wild foules were common

5

Each had what his hart could wish

Besides other presents, there were 24 Pheasantes

Twelve in a pye, & twelve in a dish.

And then god be thanked, there was a good banquet

Which through the citty did sound

10

That of certayne report, both of citty & court

It cost half a thousand pound.

Brave Doncaster vicount,² a man of high count

Did feast him 2 or three dayes

All the citty did singe, God save our good Kinge

15

And blesse the right honorable L. Hayes³

The healthes they went roundly, some pates were paid soundly

For wine was as free as a well:
 Besides these contents, they had French Complementes
 Wherein my Lord Hayes did excell 20

The Kinge & the states, open Westmister gates,
 And filld the hall with good cheere
 That all men spake playne, since K. Stephens⁴ raigne
 Such a table was never seene theare.

Lawyers⁵ wise wordes, were turnd to longe boardes 25
 To dishes the budgetts & Cookes⁶
 The seates of their benchers, to napkins & trenchers
 And clientes transformed to Cookes.

There was such a Confusion, causd through intrusion
 To view this brave Westmister guest 30
 That most men affirm'd, all the fees of this terme⁷
 Cannot buy such another feast.

In Denmark's great pallace,⁸ as big as halfe Callice⁹
 Hee lodg'd for a fortnight & more
 Abroad his men scatterd, with lackquies halfe tatter'd, 35
 I never saw footmen soe poore.

They thought to make common,¹⁰ each well favoured woman
 The stone was to small for their stewes¹¹
 Some purchasd enough, of such pocky-fied¹² stuffe
 That they curst plague of their Carleques.¹³ 40

But now all their forces, uppon english horses,
 Are ridd to the Cinqe port of Dover¹⁴
 The wind that was Easteward, is now turnd Westward
 And god send them good shippinge over.

Source. Folger MS V.a.162, fols. 54v-55r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Malone 19, p. 78

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¹ *The famous Ambassador, brother to the French Favourer:* the French ambassador was the Marquis de Cadenet, brother of Louis XIII's favourite, the Duc de Luynes.

² *Doncaster vicount:* James Hay, Viscount Doncaster (and later Earl of Carlisle). Doncaster—James's frequent ambassador to France, and a notorious profligate—feasted the French ambassador at Essex House with what Chamberlain reported was "that sumptuous superfluitie, that the like hath not ben seene nor heard in these parts" (2.333).

³ *L. Hayes:* i.e. James Hay, Viscount Doncaster.

⁴ *K. Stephens:* reference to the twelfth-century King of England.

⁵ *Lawyers:* Westminster Hall was the site of several major law courts. The gist of this stanza is that a space typically reserved for the practice of the law was turned into a space for cooking and feasting.

⁶ *Cookes:* probable scribal error; read "Bookes".

⁷ *fees of this terme:* fees paid to lawyers during one the three terms for conducting legal business.

⁸ *Denmark's great pallace:* Denmark (formerly Somerset) House in London, formerly a residence of James I's late queen, Anne of Denmark.

⁹ *Callice:* Calais.

¹⁰ *make common:* turn into whores.

¹¹ *stewes:* brothel.

¹² *pocky-fied:* syphilis-ridden.

¹³ *Carleques:* probably curlicues, or fantastic curls; however, the *OED*'s earliest example of English usage of "curlicue" is from the mid-nineteenth century.

¹⁴ *Cinqe port of Dover:* the French took ship at Dover, one of the ancient Cinque Ports.
