

Oi The Patriot Hero (1624-25)

Oi1 The Parliament sitts with a Synod of Witts

Notes. This ballad on events in the 1624 Parliament and the collapse of the Spanish Match was probably written in late April. In one source—a copy from the Ripon archives—the song is assigned the popular contemporary ballad tune “To drive the cold winter away” (Smurthwaite; Simpson 197-99). Also, adding to Smurthwaite’s commentary on the poem, has written a useful note explicating the significance of the language of “Jubile” and the myth of Astraea in the ballad’s first eight lines.

“A Song”

The Parliament sitts¹ with a Synod of Witts,
Knight, Gentlemen, Burghesse² & Peere,
God grante³ they agree, and then you shall see
A Jubile⁴ crowning this yeare.

Astræa,⁵ that swore to see Earth noe more,
Shall visitt us once againe;
And Saturne⁶ shalbee as merry as wee,
And in this ould Kingdome shall raigne.

The Catholique King⁷ hath a litle younge thing
Calld Donna Maria, his Sister;⁸
Our Prince went to Spaine⁹ her love to obtaine,
But yet by good happ hee hath mist her

I am gladd it is ended what e’re was pretended,
For Spaniards did never keepe word
But great Brittaines King a peale will then ring,¹⁰
If once he unsheath his sword.¹¹

The Protestants are gladd, and the Papists sadd

5

10

15

To see this strange alteration,
It is nowe but begun, but when more is done
You shall have a more perfect relation. 20

When Digbie¹² comes o're, and landes on our shoare
The state of all things wilbee better,
But all my care is that Cond' Olivare¹³
Wilbee shent¹⁴ for shewing the Letter.¹⁵

The Treasurer stinkes,¹⁶ and the upper house¹⁷ winks 25
At some are as badd as hee,
The lower howse¹⁸ swears that all at full yeare
And Cooke¹⁹ all their cases shall see.

Report of his owne²⁰ hath made him soe knowne
That all the world need not admire him, 30
'Twas once his own case, and now to displace
All others you need not desire him.

Theres naught can asswage Spaines Ambassadors rage
But the great Duke of Buckingham's head,²¹
For the barbarous Don knowes whilst it is on 35
'Twill bee to their terror and dread.

But why laugh you tho' hee doe wish it soe
Perhaps twas his Masters²² request,
If such a condition bee in his commission,
I'le swears twas a capitall Jest. 40

But yet who but fooles will jest with edge tooles,
though hee lack both his time and his place,
'Twas wisdom noe doubt that you see all come out
More plaine then the Nose of his face.²³

The vaile of the night that muffled our sight 45
 Is drawne from our credulous Eyes,
 Then bee not soe hott, but invent some new plott
 For this smells of most damnable lies,
 Then hoise²⁴ up your sayle, you cannot prevaile,
 Knowne Mischiefs are voyd of all fearee, 50
 Wee need not your beads,²⁵ nor your villainous heads,
 Would those were at home that are heere.
 Your Infanta may goe to the Cloyster,²⁶ and tho
 Shee was not disposed to wedd,
 Yet put up your drumme, for Mansfeild²⁷ is come 55
 And receiv'd in her Ladyshipps steade.

Source. BL MS Sloane 826, fols. 159r-160v

Other known sources. Smurthwaite; Bodleian MS Malone 19, p. 14; Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 24; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet 172, fol. 79r; BL Add. MS 5956, fol. 28r; BL Add. MS 28640, fol. 149r; BL Add. MS 29492, fol. 26r; BL Add. MS 72368, fol. 31r; BL Add. MS 72479, fol. 6r; BL MS Harley 1221, fol. 90r; BL MS Harley 6038, fol. 27v; BL MS Harley 7316, fol. 6r; BL MS Lans. 498, fol. 140r; CUL MS Gg.4.13, p. 47; St. John's MS K.56, no. 23; TCD MS 806, fol. 560v; Beinecke MS Osborn b.197, p. 201; Folger MS V.a.162, fol. 53v; Rosenbach MS 1083/15, p. 175; Rosenbach MS 1083/16, p. 8

Oil

¹ *The Parliament sittings*: the 1624 Parliament met from 19 February to 29 May 1624.

² *Burghesse*: MPs for towns and cities.

³ *God grante*: the copy published by Smurthwaite reads “Toe grant”, which Smurthwaite takes as an allusion to the March 1624 grant of taxation to the Crown of three subsidies and three fifteenths.

⁴ *Jubile*: Alsop argues that the “Jubile[e]” should be read not only as the popular celebration at the collapse of the Spanish Match, but also as an allusion to the fiftieth anniversary of the collapse in 1574

of the plans to marry Elizabeth I to the French Catholic Alençon. The Elizabethan allusion of line 4, *Alsop* suggests, thus connects to the allusions to *Astraea*—one of Elizabeth’s cultic identities—in the lines that follow.

⁵ *Astræa*: goddess of justice. *Astraea* had left earth in response to the proliferation of vice and criminality that ensued upon the end of the Golden Age. Virgil’s fourth eclogue prophesied the return of *Astraea* to earth at the dawn of a new Golden Age. Elizabethan poets and painters appropriated the Virgilian myth in their depictions of the Queen as the returned *Astraea*, agent of justice, purity, true religion and English empire.

⁶ *Saturne*: god of the Golden Age.

⁷ *The Catholique King*: Philip IV of Spain.

⁸ *Donna Maria, his Sister*: the Spanish Infanta Maria, sister of Philip IV.

⁹ *Our Prince went to Spaine*: Prince Charles journeyed to Madrid in February 1623 (see Section Nv).

¹⁰ *But great...then ring*: a variant of this line is less decorous: “James of greate Britten will make them beshitten” (BL Add. MS 28640).

¹¹ *unsheath his sword*: led by Charles and Buckingham, and with significant parliamentary support, James was under pressure not only to break off the Spanish Match but also to declare war on Spain.

¹² *Digbie*: John Digby, Earl of Bristol, and English ambassador to Madrid. Digby was recalled in January 1624, and arrived in England early in May.

¹³ *Cond’ Olivare*: Gaspar de Guzmán, Count of Olivares, Philip IV’s chief minister, and the head of negotiations with Charles and Buckingham in Madrid in 1623.

¹⁴ *shent*: disgraced.

¹⁵ *shewing the Letter*: alluding to “an incident on an unknown date in the summer of 1623, when Olivares...showed Charles and Buckingham a secret letter in which Philip expressed his determined opposition to the marriage” (Smurthwaite 322).

¹⁶ *The Treasurer stinkes*: the Lord Treasurer Lionel Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, was impeached by the 1624 Parliament on charges of bribery and corruption.

¹⁷ *upper house*: House of Lords.

¹⁸ *lower howse*: House of Commons.

¹⁹ *Cooke*: Sir Edward Coke, who led the prosecution of Cranfield.

²⁰ *Report of his owne*: there may be a pun here on Coke's legal *Reports*, published in Latin and French between 1600 and 1617, and reports of Coke's own fall from office in 1616, his unseemly attempts to win office back through a marriage alliance with the Buckingham clan, and his more turbulent oppositional behaviour in the 1621 and 1624 parliaments. Coke had also harboured ambitions for the Treasurership given to Cranfield late in 1621.

²¹ *Theres naught...Buckingham's head*: in February 1624, the Spanish ambassadors Don Carlos Coloma and Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, Marquis of Inijosa, had complained to James that Buckingham's address to parliament on the Spanish negotiations had defamed the Spanish crown. In April 1624, in a further attempt to destroy Buckingham, the Spanish ambassadors presented James I with a series of extremely serious charges against the duke, including some that alleged the favourite had been conspiring to depose James in favour of his son, Prince Charles.

²² *his Masters*: i.e. Philip IV's.

²³ *the Nose of his face*: Inijosa was apparently afflicted by advanced syphilis. Simonds D'Ewes noted that the ambassador's "nose had been eaten away with whooring" (*Diary* 141).

²⁴ *hoise*: i.e. hoist.

²⁵ *Beads*: i.e. rosary beads.

²⁶ *Your Infanta...Cloyster*: Olivares had proposed at one point that the Infanta be cloistered—sent to a nunnery—if that was necessary to avoid a marriage to Charles. On his departure from Madrid, Charles became convinced that that was what the Spaniards planned to do.

²⁷ *Mansfeild*: Ernst von Mansfelt, German mercenary and erstwhile commander of the Elector Palatine's forces, arrived in London on 14 April 1624, where he was greeted with great popular enthusiasm and considerable political manoeuvring in Whitehall and Westminster.
