

Oi15 Rex & grex are both of a sound

Notes. This poem is an early example of what would become a common theme in the libels of 1627-28: the belief that only the (perhaps violent) removal of Buckingham (“Dux”—Duke) from power can reunite Charles (“Rex”—king) with his subjects (“Grex”—the people) inside and outside parliament. Different sources date the poem at either 1627 or 1628, but both William Whiteway (CUL MS Dd.11.73) and William Davenport received their copies in 1627, Davenport noting by his transcription that the verse had been “pinned upon the Court gates Maye 1627” (CCRO MS CR 63/2/19, fol. 58r). The final two lines of the version selected here are unusual, if not unique; most versions are only eight lines in length.

“On the Duke”

Rex & grex are both of a sound,
But Dux doth Rex & Grex confound.
If Crux¹ of Dux might have his fill,
Then Rex with grex might worke his will:
Three Subsidies to five would turne,²
And grex would laugh, that now doth mourne.
O Rex, thy grex doth sore complaine,
That Dux hath Crux, and crux not Dux againe³
But now it is the praier of thy poore Grex,
That vivat Rex, on Dux may currat Lex.⁴

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Source. BL Add. MS 44963, fol. 40v

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Ashmole 36-37, fol. 62r; Bodleian MS Ashmole 38, p. 44; Bodleian MS Douce f.5, fol. 5r; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. c.50, fol. 24v; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. d.152, fol. 86r; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.14, fol. 13r; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. e.97, p. 31; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.10, fol. 117v; Bodleian MS Eng. Poet. f.16, fol. 1r; Bodleian MS Hearne’s Diaries 30, p. 228; Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 119; Bodleian MS Rawl. Poet. 246, fol. 16v; Bodleian MS Tanner 465, fol. 100r; BL MS Sloane 826, fol. 185r; CCRO MS CR 63/2/19, fol. 58r; CUL MS Dd.11.73, p. 69; St. John’s MS S.32, fol. 1r; Folger MS V.a.275, p. 175; Houghton MS Eng. 686, fol. 53r; Huntington MS HM 116, p. 65; Rosenbach MS 1083/16, p. 181

¹ *Crux*: literally “Cross”. The meaning here seems to be that if the duke (“Dux”) is punished/destroyed (put on the cross; made to suffer the cross or a cross/setback), then king and people (“Rex” and “GreX”) can work together again.

² *Three Subsidies to five would turne*: variant sources inflate the figures to five and ten, respectively. The essential point remains the same: with Buckingham gone, Charles can expect a more generous parliament.

³ *That Dux...again*: that the Duke has the power to punish but is not subject to punishment.

⁴ *on Dux may currat Lex*: that the law may take its course on the Duke; i.e. that Buckingham should be judicially punished (perhaps through the kind of parliamentary impeachment thwarted in 1626) for his crimes.
