

Oi2 Oh honoured England how art thou disgracd

Notes. The occasion of this poem was one or more of the series of attempts by the Spanish ambassadors Coloma and Inijosa to bring down the Duke of Buckingham during the 1624 Parliament. In February 1624, the ambassadors complained to James that Buckingham had insulted the Spanish Crown in his speech to parliament on the 1623 negotiations in Madrid. After Buckingham had secured parliamentary exoneration on these charges, the Spanish presented James with charges accusing Buckingham of a wide variety of misconduct, including a plot to ease James from the throne. Later, they inflated the charge to allege that Buckingham planned to usurp the Stuart line by marrying his daughter to the son of the Elector Palatine. And on 24 April, the ambassadors formally charged that Buckingham and other peers had planned that in the event James blocked the breach with Spain, “they would give him a house of pleasure whither he might retire himself to his sports, in regard that the Prince had now years sufficient to, and parts answerable for the government of the Kingdom” (qtd. in Ruigh 283). The King seems initially to have been shaken by the information, but the Spanish failure to produce evidence, and Buckingham’s fortuitous affliction with illness, soon restored monarchical confidence in his favourite. The libel is a splendid example of the temporary transformation in Buckingham’s reputation following his return from Spain and his ardent adoption of a militarist anti-Spanish platform. No longer the corrupt, crypto-Catholic, hispanophile and Ganymedeian “parasite” of the 1618-1623 libels, Buckingham was now depicted as a Protestant patriot hero fit to be ranked alongside true military legends both of the recent past, like the anti-Spanish sea-dog Raleigh, and of the Ancient World, like Scipio, conqueror of Spain and hero of the Roman Republic. For a brief elaboration on this theme, see Bellany’s discussion of the poem (“‘Raylinge Rymes’” 300).

“Verses uppon the Complaynt of the Spanish Ambassador to his Majestie of the Duke of Buck: whose head he desired for the satisfacion of the Catholique Majestie his Master”

Oh honoured England how art thou disgracd

By Moorish¹ faces thus to bee outfac’d?

Where are those spirits? which in a womans² raigne

Sackt Cales,³ and with pale terror strooke all Spayne.

Harrowed their Indian fleete,⁴ drown’d their men

And made their twelve Apostles lesse by Ten.⁵

Durst they insult thus then? or else demande

the head of any subject in this land?
 No Raleighes⁶ blood did flesh their first desire
 And now they dare to higher heads aspire. 10
 So none that good must scape, but all must dy
 (as Envyous Traytors to Spaynes Monarchy)
 Ye Jesuited⁷ Englishe drunke with Popery
 What veiw your Country with a Spanish eye
 Let not their bloody damned pollicyes 15
 Maskt in faire shewes of formall fopperyes
 Sway your allegiance from your prince & land
 To wish the rule were in a Spanish hand
 Assure your selves and be of this opinion
 There hotte devotion hunts but for Dominion.⁸ 20
 And Thou Great James whom God hath made our Kinge
 Be no wayes guilty of so vilde a thinge
 Thy Children⁹ beare the Spanish Tyrannie
 The badge of bondage bayte of Infamy:
 Slacke not thy helpe releive the Palatine 25
 State him¹⁰ againe he is a Lymbe of thyne.
 And let not that head satisfy the thirst
 Of Morish pride? which was the very first
 of all thy favourites? Er'e undertooke
 His Countryes Cause and thus did overlooke 30
 Spanish Deceiveings. For he hath done more
 Then twenty of thy favourites before
 Give him but force his owne head to maintaine
 And like brave Scipio he will sacke proud Spayne.¹¹

Source. Bodleian MS Eng. Poet c.50, fol. 21r

Other known sources. PRO SP 14/118/104; TCD MS 806, fol. 469r; Beinecke MS Osborn b.197, p. 225

- ¹ *Moorish*: Spanish. The “Moors”, Muslims, had ruled large portions of Spain in the Middle Ages, but had been expelled in 1492. The “moriscos”, of Muslim stock but converted to Christianity, were expelled in the early seventeenth century.
- ² *womans*: i.e. Elizabeth I’s.
- ³ *Cales*: Cadiz.
- ⁴ *Indian fleete*: Spanish treasure ships sailing from South America and the West Indies.
- ⁵ *twelve Apostles lesse by Ten*: the “apostles” was the nickname given by the Spaniards to a group of twelve Spanish galleons.
- ⁶ *Raleighes*: reference to Sir Walter Raleigh, executed by James I in 1618 after considerable urging from the Spanish ambassador Gondomar (see Section I).
- ⁷ *Jesuited*: the Jesuits (Society of Jesus) were the most feared and hated Catholic order; English stereotypes represented them as the dangerously subtle spearhead of Counter Reformation.
- ⁸ *Dominion*: English anti-Spanish pamphleteers asserted that Spain aimed at nothing less than a “universal monarchy”.
- ⁹ *Thy Children*: James’s daughter Elizabeth and son-in-law Frederick V, Elector Palatine, who had lost the Palatinate to Spanish troops in 1620-21.
- ¹⁰ *State him*: i.e. restore him to his state as Elector Palatine.
- ¹¹ *like brave Scipio...sacke proud Spayne*: Scipio Africanus, the great Roman general, who conquered Spain from the Carthaginians, 210-207 BC.
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