

#### Oii4 In reading these my Lord youll see I've gott

*Notes.* This verse, written as a petitionary letter to an unnamed (and, perhaps, entirely notional) patron, from an inmate in one of London's debtors' prisons, is primarily a satirical evocation of the experience of imprisonment. However, the section following line 39 describes the political talk that takes place in the prisoners' "parliament", talk that includes gossip on the Duke's planned voyage to Ré, continuing resistance to the Forced Loan, the religion of Charles's French Queen, Henrietta Maria, and the promotion of Richard Neile, Bishop of Durham, to the Privy Council.

In reading these my Lord youll see I've gott

What Dives<sup>1</sup> in the Parable could not

Hee could not send abroad amongst his frends

The storie of his prison, and the feinds,

Or tell the yet free people what intent

Heaven had on him in his imprisonment<sup>2</sup>

In this full point wee differ too I thinke

Hee had the greatest fire I the most drinke<sup>3</sup>

Nor cann it be deny'd him damned wee knowe

For what the miser had, I what I owe

Hee but one debt, one reckoning had to pay

One creditor, one judge, one judgment day.

But I of all these have a tallie more

Then Lazarus had ulcers<sup>4</sup> at his doore.

Onely my blessing is I've leave to tell.

The storie and condition of my hell

The spiritts which confine, not guard mee heere

Whome wee call keepers, and the case is cleere,

They keep indeed our feet they should not stray

Yett wee keepe them and for our mischeifes pay<sup>5</sup>

These feed on the leane soules of captiv'd men

And what is left by Fortune must feast them,

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Of all sorts and conditions heere remaine  
 Soules by the Mercer and the Taylor slaine  
 The bankrupt Tradesman & the needy knight 25  
 The outlaw'd Lawyer, and whose damn'd outright  
 The thirstie Prodigall young gent, or hee  
 Who hath nought left of his last legacie  
 All ages, all degrees, all sorts heere lye  
 From Jew to Christian, truth to honestie 30  
 And as Saint Peter as the storie teach't  
 Unto the soules which weere in Lymbo preacht  
 Soe hither to bewaile our Martyrdomes  
 A travelling Apostle sometimes comes  
 Who for our Saboath, Turnips, Irish beefe 35  
 Gives to our Soules, as poore and thinne releife  
 Journinen<sup>6</sup> Levits,<sup>7</sup> who are more perplex  
 Where they shall dyne, then to devid there text  
 Heere a perpetuall parliament doth sitt  
 Which I doe not comend for speach or witt, 40  
 Att this wee all are speakers, and each brings  
 Affaires of state to light, closett of kings  
 Wee knewe at first the Duke<sup>8</sup> but mock't the people  
 And durst not goe from sight of old Powles<sup>9</sup> steeple  
 That the shipp beife would stincke & make him sicke 45  
 His wife and mother<sup>10</sup> would growe Luniticke  
 If hee departed, That the Queene<sup>11</sup> should pray  
 And kneele unto my soveraigne for his stay,  
 That the Northampton knights<sup>12</sup> when hee is gone  
 Will pay their mony doubly every one. 50  
 And in last session heere it was inserted  
 The Queene should nowe be crown'd shee was converted,<sup>13</sup>  
 When Durham preacht, for which with us 'tis sayd

His honor was one of the counsell made<sup>14</sup>  
 And though wee heere noe subsidies can give 55  
 Since more then halfe our court can hardly live,  
 But in the strength of hope, and such strang newes  
 As their invention, and tymes frailtie brewes.  
 Yet I could wish the king could find a tricke  
 Like what is done in our state polliticke 60  
 I meane for thrift, what food it would preserve  
 Within his store, yet not the soldiours sterue,  
 If all his fighting men could be content  
 As wee doe heere, to make the whole yeare lent  
 Wee have our femall spiritts heereto, but my lord 65  
 I must not of these creatures talke a word  
 For knewe the people of the world what sport  
 Wee have in hell, heere, with this wanton sort  
 They would confesse in this wee are divine  
 Where every Pluto has his Proserpine<sup>15</sup> 70  
 Heere is Elizium<sup>16</sup> too, a Garden where  
 The ground & trees noe grasse, noe fruit do beare,  
 And heere I could upon this barren plott  
 Discourse as freely as it wanted not  
 The blessings stored fruitfull Eden, noe 75  
 I will noe further in this story goe.  
 Lett it suffice Elizium comes to mee  
 When I your favour & your person see.

**Source.** Bodleian MS Malone 23, pp. 58-61

**Other known sources.** Folger MS V.a.276, part 2, fol. 33v

- <sup>1</sup> *Dives*: “The Rich Man”. The parable of Dives and Lazarus is told in Luke 16.19-31.
  - <sup>2</sup> *Hee could not send...his imprisonment*: tormented in hell, Dives was unable to send a message back to his brethren to warn them of the costs of their sinful living (Luke 16.27-31).
  - <sup>3</sup> *Hee had the greatest fire...drinke*: in Luke 16.24, Dives begs Abraham to send Lazarus, to him “that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame”.
  - <sup>4</sup> *Lazarus had ulcers*: Lazarus, lying at Dives’ gate, is described as “full of sores” (Luke 16.20).
  - <sup>5</sup> *wee keepe them...mischeifes pay*: early modern prisoners paid fees to their keepers.
  - <sup>6</sup> *Journinen*: probable scribal error; “Journeymen” is a better reading.
  - <sup>7</sup> *Levits*: preachers, priests.
  - <sup>8</sup> *Duke*: Buckingham.
  - <sup>9</sup> *Powles*: St. Paul’s Cathedral, London.
  - <sup>10</sup> *wife and mother*: Buckingham’s wife, Katherine Villiers, Duchess of Buckingham; and mother, Mary Villiers (subsequently married to Sir Thomas Compton), Countess of Buckingham. News reports circulating in this period claimed that Buckingham’s mother was convinced her son would be assassinated on the voyage to Ré.
  - <sup>11</sup> *Queene*: Henrietta Maria.
  - <sup>12</sup> *Northampton knights*: allusion to the group of Northamptonshire gentry, led by Richard Knightley, who refused to pay the extra-parliamentary tax (commonly known as the Forced Loan) levied by the King in the aftermath of the 1626 Parliament (Cust, *Forced Loan* 233-34).
  - <sup>13</sup> *The Queene...was converted*: Charles I was crowned in February 1626; his wife, the Catholic French princess Henrietta Maria, refused to be crowned alongside him because of her religious scruples at participating in a Protestant religious service. Henrietta Maria never converted to Protestantism.
  - <sup>14</sup> *When Durham preacht...one of the counsell made*: Richard Neile, Bishop of Durham, and a leading Arminian cleric, was appointed to the Privy Council in April 1627.
  - <sup>15</sup> *Pluto...Proserpine*: Pluto, the king of Hades, and Proserpina, the queen.
  - <sup>16</sup> *Elizium*: Elysium, the residence of the blessed in the land of the dead.
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