

Oiii5 Avaunt you giddie-headed Multitude

Notes. Presented as Buckingham's riposte to the charges levelled at him by the House of Commons, this libel not only incorporates some of the complaints from the Remonstrance, but also adds to them allusions to other, even wilder, allegations against the Duke. The poet's impersonation of Buckingham's arrogant tone and assertions of invulnerable superiority nicely capture contemporary fears about the dangerously overmighty favourite (McRae, *Literature* 135-36). In one source this poem is attributed to I.S. (Bodleian MS Ashmole 38). This is possibly a reference to James Smith, the attributed author of a later libel on Buckingham, "You auntient Lawes of Right; Can you, for shame".

"The Copie of his Graces most excellent Rotomontados¹ sent by his Servant the Lord Grimes² in answere to the Lower house of Parliament. 1628."

Avaunt you giddie-headed Multitude,
And doe your worst of spight: I never su'd
To gaine your Votes, though well I know your ends
To ruin mee, my Fortunes, and my Friends;
Which had I fear'd, how easie had it been 5
By quick prevention to avoyde your teene,
And eas'd your tedious Journies, Speeches, Witts
At first, by once prohibiting the Writts
That calld you hither to a good intent,
Not cause a brabbling confus'd Parliament? 10
For in my power it was (maugre each Foe)
To say it should, or it should not bee soe.
Or fear'd I yet your Malice or your spight
(Too weake poore Men at once mee to affright)
Is not my Power as great, and eake the same 15
To send you home as wise as when you came?
Tis not your threat to take mee from the King
That on my passions worketh any thing;
Nor questioning my counsells or commaunds,

How with the honour of the State it stands, 20
 That I lost Ree,³ and with such losse of Men
 As scarcely Time can e'er repaire againe
 Shall aught affright mee; Or the care to see
 The Narrow Seas from Dunkirks cleere and free;⁴
 Or that you can inforce the King beleive 25
 I from the Pirats a third share receive;
 Or that I correspond with forreyne states
 (Whether the Kings Foes or confederates)
 To plott the Ruine of the King and State,
 As er'st you thought of the Palatinate;⁵ 30
 Or that 500 thousand pounds doe lye
 In Venice Banke to Spaine his Majestie;
 Or that 300 thousand more doe rest
 In Dunkirke for the Arch-duchesse⁶ to contest
 With England, whensoe're th'occasion offers; 35
 Or that by Rapine I fill up my coffers;
 Nor that an Office, in Church, State, or Court
 Is freelie given, but they must pay mee for't;
 Nor shall you ever prove I had a hand
 Ith poisoning of the Monarch of this land, 40
 Or the like hand by poison to intox
 Southampton, Oxford, Hamilton, Lenox;⁷
 Nor shall you ever prove, by Magick charmes
 I wrought the Kings Affection, or his harmes,
 Or that I need Lambes Philters⁸ to incite 45
 Chast Ladies to give my fowle lust delight;
 Nor feare I if tenn Vitrii⁹ were heere,
 Since I have thrice tenn Ravillacks¹⁰ as neere.
 My power shalbee unbounded in each thing,
 If once I use these words: I, and the King. 50

Seeme wise, and cease then to perturb the Realme,
 Or strive with him that sits and guides the helme,
 I know your Reading will informe you soone
 What creatures 'twere that barkt against the Moone,¹¹
 I'le give you better counsell, as a Frend, 55
 Coblers their latches¹² ought not to transcend.
 Meddle with common matters, common Wrongs,
 To th' howse of Commons common things belongs,
 Th'are extra sphæram¹³ that you treat of now,
 And Ruine to yourselves will bring, I vowe, 60
 Except you doe desist, and learne to beare
 What Wisdome ought to teach you, or your Feare,
 Leave him the Oare that best knowes how to rowe,
 And State to him that best the State doth knowe.
 If I, by Industry, deepe Reache, or Grace, 65
 Am now arriv'd at this or that great place,
 Must I, to please your inconsiderate Rage,
 Throwe downe my Honours? Will naught ells asswage
 Your furious Wisdomes? True shall the Verse bee yet,
 There's noe lesse Witt requir'd to keepe then gett. 70
 Though Lambe bee dead,¹⁴ I'le stand, and you shall see
 I'le smile at them that can but barke at mee.

From Non-such¹⁵ June 21. 1628.

Yours as you use him

Source. BL MS Sloane 826, fols. 157r-159r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Ashmole 36-37, fol. 57r; Bodleian MS Ashmole 38, p. 44; Bodleian MS Locke c. 32, fol. 1r; Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 113; BL Add. MS 47126, fol. 138v; BL MS Egerton 2725, fol. 80v; CUL Add. MS 79, fol. 47r; CCRO MS CR 63/2/19, fol. 69v; Hatfield House, Salisbury MS 140, fol. 126r; Huntington MS HM 198, 1.157

- ¹ *Rotomontados*: i.e. rodomontades; boastful speeches.
- ² *Lord Grimes*: probably Richard Graham, Buckingham's friend and master of the Duke's horse.
- ³ *Ree*: allusion to Buckingham's failed 1627 expedition to the Ile de Ré. The parliamentary Remonstrance noted the "miserable disasters and ill success that has accompanied all your late designs and actions", and asserted that, contrary to Buckingham's reports of only "a few hundreds" dead at Ré, the real number of casualties was "six or seven thousand" (*Proceedings in Parliament, 1628* 4.315).
- ⁴ *Or the care...cleere and free*: the Remonstrance blamed Buckingham for the failure to guard the Narrow Seas, allowing the Dunkirk pirates to raid English shipping with impunity (*Proceedings in Parliament, 1628* 4.316).
- ⁵ *As er'st you thought...Palatinate*: allusion to rumours that Buckingham had connived in the fall of the Palatinate to Catholic forces earlier in the decade.
- ⁶ *Arch-duchesse*: the Archduchess Isabella, ruler of the Spanish Netherlands.
- ⁷ *Nor shall you ever...Hamilton, Lenox*: allusion to the widely circulated charges, initially made in a 1626 pamphlet, *The Forerunner of Revenge*, by James I's former physician, George Eglisam, that Buckingham had poisoned the King and several courtiers. Eglisam accuses Buckingham directly of murdering the King and James Hamilton, Marquis of Hamilton. He also hints at evidence that Buckingham also poisoned Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton and Ludovick Stuart, Duke of Lennox. Eglisam does not explicitly allege Buckingham had killed Henry de Vere, Earl of Oxford, but the rumour could be connected to Eglisam's allusion to "the bruit" (i.e. rumour) that "went through London...that all the noblemen that were not of Buckingham's faction should be poisoned, and so removed out of his way" (C2r). In their 1626 attempt to impeach the Duke, the House of Commons had accused Buckingham of "transcendent presumption" in meddling with James I's medical treatment. The 1628 Parliament did not return to the charge.
- ⁸ *Lambes Philters*: love potions prepared by the astrologer-physician and convicted witch John Lambe, who was widely believed to be in Buckingham's employ.
- ⁹ *Vitrii*: a variant reading, "Vitryes" (Hatfield House MS Cecil Papers Cecil Papers 140), suggests that "Vitrii" is a corrupt (or confusingly latinized) form of the plural of Vitry, the name of a captain of the royal guard for Henri IV of France at the time of his assassination in 1610 (Mousnier 24).
- ¹⁰ *Ravillacks*: allusion to François Ravailac, the Catholic assassin who murdered King Henri IV of France in 1610.
- ¹¹ *barkt against the Moone*: to bark against the moon like a dog means "to rail uselessly, especially at those in high places" (Brewer 79).

¹² *latchetts*: lachets are thongs used to tie shoes. To “go beyond one’s latchet” is a proverbial phrase for meddling with matters that do not concern one (*OED*).

¹³ *extra sphæram*: beyond or outside the sphere; i.e. beyond parliament’s competence.

¹⁴ *Though Lambe bee dead*: John Lambe was murdered in the streets of London on 13 June 1628.

¹⁵ *Non-such*: the royal palace at Nonsuch, Surrey.
