

Pi Mocking Buckingham

Pi1 lett Charles & george doe what they can

Notes. Our chosen version of this widely circulated prophetic couplet was discovered among the papers of George Willoughby, a London scrivener who had business dealings with Buckingham's assassin John Felton. The copy, scrawled onto a petition by one of Willoughby's clients, included the note that the poem was "made presently uppon the death of Doctor Lambe" (died 13 June 1628), indicating that the verse was—or at least was believed to be—in circulation before Buckingham's murder, even if some, like John Rous, did not get a copy until after the event. The authorities' investigations into how Willoughby obtained the couplet reveal some of the ways short libels of this type could circulate orally and in script across social and literacy boundaries in London (PRO SP 16/114/32, 119/25, 119/30).

lett Charles & george doe what they can

yet george shall dye like Doctor Lambe¹

Source. PRO SP 16/114/32

Other known sources. Rous 26; Bodleian MS Tanner 465, fol. 100r; BL Add. MS 22959, fol. 25v; BL MS Sloane 1489, fol. 22r; CUL MS Gg.4.13, p. 106; PRO SP 16/119/25; PRO SP 16/119/30

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¹ *Doctor Lambe:* John Lambe, astrologer-physician, convicted witch and presumed associate of Buckingham, was murdered by a London mob on 13 June 1628.
