

Pi17 Fortunes darling, Kings Content

Notes. In a mere fourteen lines, this libellous epitaph manages to allude to a diverse array of Buckingham's alleged transgressions, religious, administrative, fiscal, military and sexual. The poem is discussed by McRae (Literature 46-47).

"Epitaph"

Fortunes darling, Kings Content,

Vexation of the Parliament,

The Flatterers deitie of State,

Advancer of each money-mate,¹

The divells Factor² for the purse,

The Papists hope, the Commons Curse,

The Saylor's Crosse, the Soldiers greife,³

Commissions blanke,⁴ and Englands theife,

The Coward at the Ile of Ree,⁵

The bane⁶ of noble Chivalrie,

The night-worke of a painted dame,⁷

Confederate with Doctor Lambe.⁸

All this lies underneath this stone,

And yet (alas) heere lies but one.

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Source. BL MS Sloane 826, fol. 183r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 143

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¹ *money-mate*: this term is obscure, but presumably refers to men who would bribe Buckingham for office or advancement.

² *Factor*: agent.

³ *The Saylor's Crosse, the Soldiers greife*: Buckingham was frequently blamed for the miseries endured by English soldiers and sailors during the military mobilization of 1624-28. These included not only the sufferings experienced during the hapless military campaigns, but also a chronic shortage of pay and provisions.

⁴ *Commissions blanke*: perhaps “a nullifier of commissions”. The exact nature of the commissions in question is not clear, but they may be military (Buckingham’s appointments as officers were frequently controversial) or commissions to act in a judicial role, such as a Justice of the Peace.

⁵ *The Coward at the Ile of Ree*: allusion to Buckingham’s alleged cowardice as commander of the 1627 expedition to the Ile de Ré. Some of the rumoured acts of cowardice were aired by the libels on Ré collected in Section O.

⁶ *bane*: curse.

⁷ *The night-worke of a painted dame*: this line is somewhat obscure. “Night-work” is literally work done at night, but often with a sinister or immoral overtone; a “painted dame” is a woman wearing cosmetics, with cosmetics often symbolizing deceit, the sin of pride, and sexual corruption. We can suggest at least two possible readings: the first would treat the line as an allusion to Buckingham’s alleged sexual transgressions (i.e. he spends his nights with whores); the second would treat the line as an allusion to Buckingham’s mother—Mary Compton, Countess of Buckingham, frequently vilified as a witch, papist and whore—whose “night-worke” (i.e. sexual activity) produced the Duke.

⁸ *Doctor Lambe*: John Lambe, astrologer-physician, convicted witch and Buckingham’s alleged associate.
