

Pi19 Had our great duke bene Joseph then might we

Notes. This slightly opaque epitaph is difficult to date with precision. If the allusion to “his gaudie tombe” refers to the splendid monument to the Duke erected by his widow in the Henry VII chapel in Westminster Abbey, then this verse must date from the era of the tomb’s construction and completion in the early 1630s.

Had our great duke bene Joseph then might we
have left a roll to our posteritye
Like the Dynasties old:¹ but now that roome
must empty stand, only his gaudie tombe
Shall keep that epithet & title still
Duke in opposing goodnes great in ill.

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Source. Houghton MS Eng. 1278, item 8

Pi19

¹ *Had our great duke...Dynasties old:* Joseph, the son of Jacob, was the progenitor of one of the twelve tribes of Israel (Genesis 49.22-26). These lines appear to imply that Buckingham’s early death prevented him from establishing a sizeable tribe of his own, unlike Joseph, who was described as “a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall” (Genesis 49.22). At his death, Buckingham left two children, and a son was born posthumously in 1629. Statues of his children appear on Buckingham’s funeral monument in Westminster Abbey.
