

## Pi24 Thou that on topp of Fortunes wheelles did mount

*Notes. Like so many of the libellous epitaphs addressed to the Duke, this poem integrates a broad selection of the scandalous charges that had been circulating at least since the mid-1620s. These charges range from the sale of offices to the breaking of parliaments, from corruption and incompetence as Lord Admiral to the poisoning of his political enemies. The poet's pointed complaints about Buckingham's treatment of the City of London and its citizens suggest that this verse might be the work of a Londoner.*

### "On the death of Georg Duke of Buckingham"

Thou that on topp of Fortunes wheelles did mount

that on mens' shoulders wonted wast to rid<sup>1</sup>

art summond now to yeelde upp thyne account

& answer for thy treacherie & pride

Thou must appeare beefore a righteous Judge

5

( 'tis none of those that weere of thine owne makeing)<sup>2</sup>

to shew the cause why commons did so grudge

against thee with loude cries and hearts akeing

Thou must not hope for tryall at Kings bench<sup>3</sup>

nor at the barr of common pleas<sup>4</sup> appeare

10

the one doth say thou smelst too much of French

the other thinks hee bought his place too deare<sup>5</sup>

Thy selfe from judgment yet thou canst not hyde

thy case shall not bee seene by learned Cooke<sup>6</sup>

beefore the cheefest Judge<sup>7</sup> thou must be tryde

15

who will afright thee with his glorious looke

There thou must show an execrable thing

how thou so savage a wicked wretch could bee

to kill thy sacred soveraigne lord and king,

that had so honored & exalted thee

20

Bee sure there thou questioned must bee

for Richmond Oxford Marquesse Hambleton<sup>8</sup>  
 for thy false dealing at the Ile of Ree<sup>9</sup>  
 for brave Southampton & his noble sonne<sup>10</sup>  
 Thou must make answer for thy admiralls place 25  
 wherein from native place thou didst purloyne  
 to thyne owne mother Brittaines great'st disgrace  
 great store of shipps of ordinance and coyne<sup>11</sup>  
 Lett who will search all moderne histories  
 yet by his reading hee shall never finde 30  
 in anie man so manie treacheries  
 loyall to bee, whom Princes love should binde  
 Thou daily stood'st in feare of Parliaments  
 the lower house thou never could'st endure  
 which caus'd them broken upp in discontents<sup>12</sup> 35  
 but now the lowest house<sup>13</sup> will keepe thee sure  
 Faire London, ever to hir kings most kinde  
 at all times past theire wants for to releive<sup>14</sup>  
 could no tyme anie frendly favour finde  
 thy envymous mynde still stryveing her to greive 40  
 A citizen that cravd what thou didst owe him  
 if hee unto thy presence weere admitted  
 On him thou lookdst as if thou didst not know him  
 or for his boldness hee was straight committed.<sup>15</sup>

**Source.** Bodleian MS Dodsworth 79, fol. 158v

Pi24

<sup>1</sup> *rid*: i.e. ride.

<sup>2</sup> *none of those...thine owne makeing*: Buckingham wielded immense influence over all appointments to office during the 1620s.

<sup>3</sup> *Kings bench*: the court of King's Bench, located in Westminster Hall, was the chief court for Crown prosecutions at common law.

<sup>4</sup> *common pleas*: the court of Common Pleas, located in Westminster Hall, was “*par excellence* the court for civil actions between private parties, especially for cases which involved property” (Aylmer 45).

<sup>5</sup> *the one doth say...too deare*: presumably a reference to the two Lord Chief Justices of King's Bench and Common Pleas, Nicholas Hyde (appointed 1627) and Thomas Richardson (appointed 1626). The two lines incorporate a pair of charges against Buckingham: that he “smelst too much of French”, which puns on “French” as foreign and Catholic, and “the french”, slang for syphilis; and that he sold judicial offices. One contemporary noted that the “Lord Chief Justice's place of the Common Pleas lay void a term to see who would give most. It stood at £30,000 a great while. Serjeant Richardson gave 14 M (i.e. £14000) for it”. Other news reports stated that Richardson gave £7000 or £17000 (*Proceedings in Parliament, 1626*, 4.349 and n.64).

<sup>6</sup> *learned Cooke*: Sir Edward Coke, former Lord Chief Justice.

<sup>7</sup> *the cheefest Judge*: i.e. God.

<sup>8</sup> *There thou must show...Marquesse Hambleton*: allusion to the charges—first levelled in the 1626 pamphlet, *The Forerunner of Revenge*, by a former royal physician, George Eglisham—that Buckingham had poisoned James I and several rival courtiers. Eglisham accused Buckingham of murdering the King and James Hamilton, Marquis of Hamilton, and hinted also that he poisoned Ludovick Stuart, Duke of Lennox, who held the English title of Duke of Richmond. Eglisham did not explicitly allege that Buckingham had killed Henry de Vere, Earl of Oxford—as claimed in “Avaunt you giddie headed multitude”—but Eglisham had noted the rumour that all Buckingham's enemies were to be poisoned.

<sup>9</sup> *false dealing at the Ile of Ree*: allusion to charges of Buckingham's misconduct during the 1627 expedition to the Ile de Ré (see Section O).

<sup>10</sup> *brave Southampton & his noble sonne*: in 1624, Henry Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton, and his eldest son James, led a troop of English volunteers to assist the Dutch against the Spanish. Both father and son became ill in the Netherlands and died. Several verse libels and George Eglisham's 1626 pamphlet, *The Forerunner of Revenge*, alleged that Buckingham had poisoned Southampton.

<sup>11</sup> *Thou must make answer...ordinance and coyne*: reference to Buckingham's alleged corruption and misconduct as Lord Admiral, which formed part both of the impeachment charges and the Remonstrance against him in the 1626 and 1628 Parliaments, respectively.

<sup>12</sup> *Thou daily stood'st...discontents*: Buckingham was the subject of parliamentary attacks throughout

the 1620s, particularly in 1626 and 1628, and was frequently blamed for the Crown's decisions to dissolve or prorogue the assemblies.

<sup>13</sup> *the lowest house*: i.e. hell.

<sup>14</sup> *Faire London...for to releive*: the cash-strapped English Crown frequently received loans from London mercantile interests.

<sup>15</sup> *committed*: imprisoned.

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