

Pi35 Mother / My humble dutie done, I crave

Notes. This poem is presented as the Duke's letter from hell to his mother, Mary Compton, Countess of Buckingham.

Mother

My humble dutie done, I crave
Your best constructions, in that yow have
Not heard of mee, since that I sawe yow last
When I to Portsmouth¹ went from yow in hast.
The voiage for Rochell,² which was then intended 5
Is stayd, another begun, which now is ended.
For at Don Plutos³ Court I am arrived
Where unexpected honors, I have atcheived
For when I first sett foote in Pluto's Hall
There was a strang Comotion, and with all 10
Ignatius⁴ to depose they readie were,
Who had sate there enthroniz'd manie a yeare
As Heire-apparant unto Pluto's Crowne.
But now the guiltie Ghostes will have him downe.
Soe soone as Hildebrand⁵ of this had heard 15
Hee makes all freinds; hee came to be prefer'd,
But John the two, and twentieth⁶ him withstood.
As Hildebrand, hee thinkes himself as good.
Then manie Turkes, and Emperors putt in
And all of these, did thinke the daie to winne. 20
Celsus, and Paracelsus⁷ both, they sweare
They were much wrongd that they were not the Heire.
But all theis hurli-burlies ended were
Soe soone as newes was brought that I was there.
Then all of them consult, and some resolve 25

On mee those hopefull honors to devolve.
 Soe that I was proclay'nd without debate
 As heire-apparant to th' infernall State.
 Therefore untill yow come, I doe reserve
 A place next to my self, which yow deserve. 30
 Our learned Doctor Lambe,⁸ and worthie freind
 To yow himselfe his service doth comend.
 It seemes, that I, and hee by his relation
 Came both one waie to Plutos habitacion.
 Hee is my Secretarie, and doth deale 35
 In all the actions, which I would conceale.
 Your presence heere, I greatlie doe desire,
 For to preferment straight yow maie aspire.
 Don Pluto long hath liv'd a single life
 Who knowes but hee may choose yow to his wife. 40
 If this twixt yow, and him proceed, wee maie
 Our kindred to preferre,⁹ have easie waie.
 Thus hoping of your health, begging the same
 I rest
 your loving Sonne
 Geo: Buckingham.
 Ab Inferis die proximo
 post obitum.¹⁰

Source. BL MS Egerton 2026, fol. 64r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Tanner 465, fol. 103v; CUL Add. MS 42, fol. 37r

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¹ *Portsmouth*: Buckingham was murdered in the south coast town of Portsmouth.

² *The voiage for Rochell*: Buckingham was preparing an English expedition to relieve the Huguenots

of La Rochelle at the time of his assassination.

³ *Don Plutos*: Pluto, ruler of the classical underworld realm of the dead, is here given the Spanish honorific of “Don”.

⁴ *Ignatius*: Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Catholic order of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, a group widely demonized in Protestant polemic as the most dangerous agents of Catholic Counter-Reformation.

⁵ *Hildebrand*: Pope Gregory VII, leader of the eleventh-century Gregorian Reform movement in the Church, and a fierce advocate of papal power against secular authority.

⁶ *John the two, and twentieth*: John XXII was a powerful early fourteenth-century pope.

⁷ *Celsus, and Paracelsus*: Celsus was an ancient Roman authority on medicine, Paracelsus (Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim) an iconoclastic sixteenth-century authority on medicine, magic, astrology and alchemy.

⁸ *Doctor Lambe*: John Lambe, astrologer-physician, convicted witch and alleged associate of the Duke, who was murdered in June 1628.

⁹ *Our kindred to preferre*: the excessive rewards—titles, offices, lucrative marriages—showered on the Villiers kindred were a common source of contemporary complaint against Buckingham (see Section L).

¹⁰ *Ab Inferis die proximo/ post obitum*: “From Hell, the day after his death”.
