

Piii15 When Poets use to write men use to say

Notes. Like many posthumous defences of Buckingham, this poem represents libels on the Duke as the work of the socially base and the intellectually credulous. At the same time, the poem (like “What! shall I say now George is dead”) alludes to Buckingham’s actions in Spain in 1623 and the popular credit they (temporarily) earned him. Our chosen source ascribes the poem to “ T. Aliff”.

“On the Duke of Buckinghams death”

When Poets use to write men use to say

tis for preferment or some other pay

They sell their witts which basely flatters those

Whome they themselves but for base¹ people knowes

Or els for som affection or some kine²

5

Against ther conscience thus doe sinne

Perhaps the same they will impute to me

Though for a gloss I pleade integritie

But let them know these by base respects I scorne

Or to inslave my Muse which free was borne

10

I was a stranger to this noble peere

No kiff,³ nor kinn, nor followers name did beare

whose worth (I must confess) needs not my praise

Yet who loves vertue must the vertuouse raise

Lest base detraction to the future age

15

Should cloude ther glory: wisemen did presage

That these (who weary of him) would repent

A second worse; a fortune incident

To discontented folke. But why dost

Blurr these my leines with ther inconstancy

20

And leave the sacred subject whose deere fame

Merits the palme of an eternall name

Nature herselfe to shew her workemanship
 Blushs, having seene her self, her self outstript:
 Which to perfection that it might be brought 25
 Fortune begann to add what could be thought
 Art lik't the frame, which to adorne throughout
 Indew'd⁴ it with her riches rounde aboute
 These heavenly powers when they had given boone⁵
 Presents it to erthly, which as soone 30
 Enthral'd themselves under his brave commande
 Soe, did the sea that both together stand
 And at his becke,⁶ yet proud that they might beare
 A burthen of such worth, fell out & sware
 Eternall enmitie, least each might have him 35
 But heaven (the umpire) to the earth it gave him,
 Which swelling with the glory of that prize
 Scornd his old levell, doth on tiptoes rise;
 Which Neptune⁷ grev'd, & yet desir'd to kiss
 The hallowed earth which shrind him; Thamisis⁸ 40
 Each winter, spring he sends to visit him
 & pay the tribute of his eies (waxt dim
 with weeping) then takes leave yet comes againe
 To take new farwell, but tis in vaine
 He must returne, thus doth his greef appeare 45
 He groans & murmers then he dropps a teare
 As witness of his losse. And shall all these
 Teach us to know his worth, & we not please
 Once to behold what heaven & earth admired?
 How many nations weare ther him desir'd 50
 To crowne his years with adoration? we
 what we possesse dispise, but eagerly
 Hunt after trash, & guesaw⁹ novelty

Some may object he hath us all undonne
 wee've cause to curse him every mothers sonne, 55
 Peac wretches peace, can peasants comprehend
 Statlik actions? if ther lords commende
 (Land lords I meane) the basest groome that lives
 Calling him noble, whoe's he that straight gives
 Not addition to his words? the period 60
 Of your conceipts then rests on him (the god)
 To whome I leave you, But the graver sort
 I dare presume, contemne there base report
 who well conceive the slander they have mad
 to kepe theyr tongs inure,¹⁰ tis envies trade 65
 which yet despight ther malice must confess
 He brought from Spaine our Englands happiness,
 A worke of meritt, then they cried blest peere
 our lives, and all is thine we hold most deare¹¹
 But what good deeds we doe ar writt in sande, 70
 What bad (though donne by chance) in Marble stande
 Men now oure actions judge, by ther event
 But will heare nor see our good intent
 Could these detractors thy designes upbraid
 For want of ground? had not ther sinnes betrayd 75
 Thy prosperouse fate & glory every way
 But sure they could not what so ere they say
 Which makes them rave insteade of argument
 And when they most complaine, most inocent
 They prove thy actions, which thou bee'st dead 80
 Good men approve, and wise have hallowed,
 Whose judgments all men judge most worthy thee
 Applauding them adore thy memorie.

Source. BL MS Sloane 542, fols. 15r-16r

Other known sources. Rosenbach MS 239/27, p. 384

Piii15

¹ *base*: low-born; immoral.

² *kine*: i.e. kin; tie of kinship.

³ *kiff*: i.e. kith; friend or acquaintance.

⁴ *Indew'd*: i.e. endued; covered, dressed.

⁵ *boone*: benefit.

⁶ *becke*: command.

⁷ *Neptune*: god of the sea.

⁸ *Thamisis*: the River Thames.

⁹ *guesaw*: i.e. gewgaw, a showy trifle (Rosenbach MS 239/27 reads “guegaw”).

¹⁰ *inure*: i.e. inured; practised.

¹¹ *He brought from Spaine...most deare*: allusion to the popular celebration of Buckingham after he had brought Prince Charles (safely unmarried) from Spain in 1623 (for which, see Sections N and O).
