

An Unhappy View of the Whole Behaviour of My Lord Duke of Buckingham at the French Island Secretly Discovered (1627)

William Fleetwood

Transcript

British Library, Additional MS 22591, ff. 312r–314v

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An vnhappye veiwe of the whole be-hauour of my lord
Duke of Bucking[ham]e at the Frenche Islande of Rees

Secreetlye discovered by W: F: an vnfortunate comau[n]der in that vntoward Service

At A priuie Assemblie, at the Councill table, by the kinge, and the Lordes. And to extinguish [th]e ignominie of the Former Service of Cailles, an attempt into France was concluded on, and the duke designed for generall, whoe tooke [th]e hono[u]r indifferent gladlie, pr[e]suming to recover his Creditt, by his owne prowesse in this exploite. heere vpon, began A Strong presse of Soldiers, w[i]th soe larg[e] A Provison of victualls, and other maintenance for them, as could not but in comon reason promise A boone voyage to come, if the intent were closelye carryed, But before any Soldier was imbarqued, the duke out of an old ill will to the weale publike, divulged the Plott at Courte very freelye, w[i]thout either Feare or witt, whereby the worst of our ill willers where soever, (taking but the paines to adredresse themselves thither) might knowe all for an easie attention, w[hi]ch must needes be halfe A pr[e]vention of the hopes in question.

Vpon the pointe of our first setting to See, the duke as well as out of A distrust, of some miserable deathe that might befall him in the voyage, as out of a considerac[i]on of being (for A tyme) estra[n]ged from his effeminate pleasures heere hat some (from which noe warlike service can ever drawe him) would willinglye haue relin-quished his charge, w[i]thout anye allegac[i]on, either of his weakenes in his experience, or insufficiencie of his owne person, but he was prickt, and spurred on to it a fresh by the onlye p[er]swation of his Ma[jes]ty[] for [tha]t the Eyes of all the troopes were fixed on him for [thei]ur cheiftayne.

Vpon this wee put forthe to sea, and inclined our Course (by the dukes direction) to the Island of Rhee or St Martins, where aswell everye mecanicke Comon soldier, as captaine and Colonell in our Compaynye knewe our Journye was to ende, But (Lord) the dukes carriage, at sea, was most obstinate and rediculous, & alltogether backward to his Faithe and creditt laid at pawne here at home, in his absence, for whatsoever the circumspect com[m]anders vnder him, had propounded as behoofull, he would be sure to gaine saye, and vnder a vile penaltie to commaund [tha]t noe invention, should be soe much as sett on Foote, but what p[ro]ceeded from his owne Studye & app[ro]bac[i]on, soe by that meanes endeavoring to be whollye enriched and dignified w[i]th the attribute of compassing all the good fortune [tha]t could any

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waye attend the enterprise, as he now contrariwise surfeites of the disgrace, The Islanders, (th^rough [th]e largnes of the duks tounge being too inquisitive after their fortificac[i]ons of

divers plaugue passengers at Sea) were acquainted w[i]th our meaning long before they sawe vs, and soe wee arrived not there w[i]thout an vnluckye expectac[i]on and entertainem[en]t

After wee had reviewed the Forte and scituac[i]on thereof, wee demaunded of the duke, wherein our Countrey could bee advantaged by surprising such A vast Stronge savored place, seeing [th]e maintenanc[e] thereof after our Conquest, would yearelye expend, verye neere as much, as [th]e profitt could amount vnto

To this he replyed that throughe his owne intreatie vpo[n] his ma[jes]t[y]s signing of his Commission, he was onely put vpon this Island, which if he but recover his retourne, it would redeeme all his lost hono[u]r at home, and soe comaunded vs to entrench our selves.

Wee all being confident [tha]t this expression could but p[ro]ceed from an vndaunted hart, some of vs pr[e]sentlye in desp[er]ate manner went on shore (expecting the duke, and his retinewe at our heeles) where wee were sodainelye vnawares, encountred very sharpelye, by some troopes of French horsemen, (w[hi]ch by meanes [tha]t [th]e duke kept of at Sea, and came not into our Succor) soe opprest vs with their multitudes, that manye of our companie in our retourne to our Shippes, were either hewen to peeces or drowned in [th]e Water, as S[i]r Will[i]am Hayden, and Mr Temple of Lincolnes Inne and many others of good Parentage. The third daye after this repulse, wee renewed our Strength, and went all againe on shore, and there fortified our selves, for our most advantage, and in shorte time after soe furiouslye sum[m]oned the Island, that the inhabitantes were constrained to returne to their Fort, as their last refuge, to the gates whereof, wee pursued them, w[i]th great terror, and tooke some fewe Prisoners/

Then perceaving the Strengthe and Compasse of the Fort, and vnderstanding that it was well victualled for a lingring seage, wee recoyled Backe, and intrenched our selves our selves anew from the anoye of their como[n] shott, and by degrees we came at last to inviround it almost rounde, (as farr as it was anyway. needfull) and yet kept still out of [th]e daunger of their ordynance, and for a good while deprived them of all Succors, both by sea and land, & soe planted our batterye thus farr wee speed indifferentlye well (havinge (in recompence of our first overthrowe) gayned the Island, & put our selves in possession of it, The hono[u]r and applause whereof de-testeth the duke, and his best mirrits in the whole Action, & (next vnder God) reflects on the everliving Fame, and memorie of that night valiant and heroique gent[leman] S[i]r John Burrowes, by whose onelye reache it was compassed, and whose Act therein (since in a calme season he was afterwars treacherouslye slaine) deserves (if one maye soe saye, w[i]thout pr[e]sumption) to im[m]ortalize his Soule/

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The Forte nowe remayning vnyeilded, and standing betwixt vs and A reasonable Conquest (by the powerfull and searching perswasion of S[i]r John Burrowes) as well como[n] Soldier as Captaine, p[ro]tested to haue that too, or els to dye in the Feild, w[hi]ch p[ro]mise [th]e verye flower of all our Comanders there, were inforced in the end to make good, to the verye effusion of their dearest blouds, And thus we con-tinued our batterye for aboute two monthes space and yet in all [tha]t time, throughe the extraordinarye strength of the place (by meanes of the Rampiers and barracadoes) that the defendants had newlye erected w[i]thin) wee could make noe breache, nor to take [th]e oppertunitie to give as assaulte, wherevpon (for [tha]t our p[ro]vision held out well) it was determined by S[i]r John Burrowes (whose weakest

advice, at this time, the multitude were readye to followe, then the best of the dukes) [tha]t wee should beleager [th]e forte round still, as wee had begunn, and soe with out A surrender thereof, by A long seige we should starve vpp the defendants, and all thinges considered, this was the onlye waye, to surprise soe impregnable A Place/

The duke was infintelye incensed w[i]th this swaye of S[i] John Burrowes, and his owne neglect, and therefore by degrees hee endeavoured to allure the hartes of [th]e Soldiers from him, w[hi]ch bare wordes could not bringe to passe, till he pr[i]vatelye had distributed, to some of them assenting, the paye of the rest dissenting

Wherevpon such a murmuring and discontent arose betwixt the faction of S[i]r John Burrowes and the duke, that had not S[i]r John sodainelye quieted all by his wisdomes, wee had certainlye mutyned, amongst our selves to all our confusions, and soe haue given [th]e enemy an occasion to haue slaine vs outright, but by the midiatio[n] of frennds on either syde, they seemed to be reconciled, And nowe celebrated the Amitie the same night by A pr[i]vate supper in [th]e dukes tent/

But such is the reache of A malicious vindictive hart, that it is never at rest, till the intended plott be put to A pointe, be it nev[e]r be execrable and develishe; For the next morning S[i]r John (according to his dailye wont, surveying his owne Trenches, and being cleare out of all daunger of the Forte) was in all instant Strucken dead in the place w[i]th A muskett shott by an vnknowne hand, and soe gives vpp his speechlesse Soule, into the Joyes of heaven, that had never done but good on Earthe.

The newes and manner of this, bredd A new hurley burley in the Campe, and readye wee were to dye againe, vpo[n] each others sworde, but that throughe fresh rewardes from the duke to some, & lordlike menaces to other some, (that had bine formerly rewarded) all were once more quietted, and our p[ro]vision was much lessened wherevpo[n] my Lord of Holland, was to our releiffe, but came not

About this time there was newes, that the French King app[roa]ched vs w[i]th releiffe for the forte, and to raise our seige, wherevpo[n] the duke for [th]e safegard of his owne p[er]son (whereas his retinew was the strongest allreadye) w[i]thdrewe two of the regim[en]ts fro[m] the sure places S[i]r John Burrowes had formerlye allotted them to,

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for his wor[ship]s defence in p[ar]ticular, and soe left all manlesse, w[hi]ch [th]e Frenche Convoyes (lying of Watche) p[er]ceaving, entred there the same night, and releevd the Forte, in abundance both w[i]th Fresh Soldiers & p[ro]vision, and soe nightlye for A weeke together came vnder our noses, w[i]th [th]e like stuffe, and yet this duke would not suffer vs to encounter them, pr[e]tending [tha]t he feared the Frenche Kinge at his backe, when alas there was neither Kinge nor Frenche Armye there

When the Fort was everye waye as well manned as victualled, the defendants began divers times, to confront and brave vs before their mayne sallye out, yett this our generall, would neither p[er]mitt vs to encou[n]ter them, nor (at last) to continue our batterye, soe that in everye discontented manner we laye idle, rioteously co[n]sumed the remainder of his ma[jes]t[y]s allowance, w[i]thout attempting anye thing or worthe the while, in soe much [tha]t I my selfe impatiently demaun:ding of the duke, what he would doe w[i]th vs,

whether long[e]r enthrall vs, to his owne ignoble pleasure, or sterue vs vp instead of [th]e def[endan]ts, but I could drawe noe other answer fro[m] him, but as he was our generall, soe wee should knowe it by the strict hand he would carry over vs, and for our further p[ro]ceedings against the Forte, we should goe on, in our idleness till wee learne further fro[m] him

Wee that were Colonells and prime officers under him, could as hardlye brooke this his vntoward carriage, as rawe meate in our stomakes, yett for quietnesse sake, and to repell mutynies in the campe, wee smothered our grudes, w[i]thout anye appearance of harte burning to the multitude, and soe laye expecting a miserable successe of all our vndertakings. Afterwards the duke told vs, [tha]t he had secrlye intelligence out of the Forte, [tha]t most of [th]ir best Soldiers had convoyed themselves awaye by night, for feare of a newe supplye, by my Lord of Holland, and [tha]t the remnant (if wee laye still intrenched) would shortlye become our vassalls, which newes (being confirmed w[i]th as larg[e] p[ro]testac[i]ons as could p[ro]ceed fro[m] the harte of A [Christ]ian man) made vs soe farre to creditt him, as to lye secure, and to pr[e]sume that this (once done) would make vs all as happie, as our confidence in his worde could any wayes make vs miserable by the contrarie. The verye next morning aft[e]r this consultac[i]on (w[hi]ch fell out to be the daye of doome to most of vs) the duke being sensible of his p[er]fidious dealing, and [tha]t, [tha]t was the daye the def[endan]ts would encou[n]ter vs to deathe, (not w[i]thstanding what his ingagem[en]t for our safeties had formerlye bine to the co[n]trarye) pr[i]vilie in his Tent by [th]e helpe of some of his Faction attyred on of his owne followers (everye way much resembling himselfe) in his Warlike habitt, and collo[u]rs w[i]th instructions suteable to the deceit and there disguised (as A fainte and impotent soladior, gott himselfe A Shippboard, and not onlye left vs ignorant, of the bloodye intent towards vs, but allsoe made vs vncapable to pr[e]vent it, when wee should

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Imediatlye vpon this (wee suspecting as litle this treacherie as that w[hi]ch came of it) the def[endan]ts numberlesse sallyed out, & w[i]th such violence & furye assayled vs, in our Trenches, [tha]t taking most of vs vnarmed, and daunted w[i]th the sight of the multitude, wee were gladd to flye for our lives, w[hi]ch retreat cost most of vs as dearelye as [th]e assau[l]t & both fell out in the end, to make vp a conquest to [th]e Frenche, and an absolute overthrowe to vs/

The wildnesse of my Lord Mountioyes horse, was the cause of his surprisall, as well as [th]e deathes of some of our owne men, for [tha]t he not onlye avoyded the Enemies charge, but confusedlye ran vpon and beate backe divers of our best horses w[hi]ch otherwise to [th]e verye deathe would haue trode it/ In our flight we aymed at a certaine narrowe bridge of A great River, w[hi]ch if wee could haue recovered and passed, we had bine able to haue resisted, and stopt the p[er]suite of our Enemies, but through their pollicies wee were pr[e]vented, by their ov[er]turning a loaden Carte thereon aforehand, w[hi]ch wee must either climbe, or leape into the River, or salt Pitts, w[hi]ch most of our compayne being vnable to doe were there hewen in Peeeces, as my Lord Cromwell S[i]r Charles Ritche, and others of great esteeme, whoe in the very deadlye extremitie, were offered quarter, but would not, chusing rath[e]r to dye honorablye, then longer to live w[i]th infamie and torm[en]t, I my selfe p[er]ceaving the follie of resisting anye longer, having one of the best horses in the compayne, was forced to take an Infirme salt Pitt, where both my selfe and my horse stucke

fast in [th]e grou[n]d and where I had suddenielye A gastelye wound in the Legg with a bullett, and soe I laye struggling for liffe, Lord, Lord me thought w[ha]t paine it was to dye soe, and divers of our Company and comaund[e]rs were in the like distresse, but in the end (the French horseme[n] wa[n]ting shott to reach vs in the water) by the valencie of the poore remainder of our Soldiers that were gotten over the Carte, wee were dragged a shore, and soe being at that time vnpursued, we were co[n]veied out of daunger

During the tyme of the conflict, our cou[n]terfeit Generall fought verye resolutelye and gott A gashe or two on his shoulder for his labour, w[hi]ch (before wee knewe the deceit) made vs (notwithstandding our losses) to comend him for A vallerous comaunder, but through the dukes backwardnes in rewarding some of those [tha]t were trusted w[i]th the knowledge of this villanye, wee vnderstood it all in two dayes after, in our comfortlesse Journeye homewards: and wee had therevpo[n] pr[e]sentlye mortatiized his carkasse for amends but that vpo[n] A more mature deliberac[i]on, wee thought it fitter to lett hom dye at home, by the inquestionable hand of [th]e p[ar]liam[en]t, soe he himselfe could not take this as his pr[e]servac[i]on to a more infamous ende.

And trulye should the revenge of the Parlyam[en]t allmost exceed extreemitie, it would bee but Correspondent to his meritts [tha]t could finde in his harte, to lye secure himselfe, and all the while see vs (that were his charge) knockt downe and slaughtered like dogges w[i]th out mercye. O lett him goe to the grave and lett noe

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man stay him, for it is A Sinne to pittie him in his woest estate.

My Lord Mou[n]tioye was the onlye man of noate of our p[ar]tie that excepted quarter, and was since verye honorablye, and Ransomelesse sent home againe, w[hi]ch p[ro]ceeded more fro[m] the heroyque clemencye of [th]e French Kinge, then for anye deserte either of his owne or ours

One of our French prisoners [tha]t we had taken, at our first encou[n]ter) confessed to mee in our returne homewards, that had S[i]r John Burrowes lived but one two dayes longer, the def[endan]ts were concluded to haue given vpp the Forte, and all the treasure in it to our disposalls, in respect they had such miserable experie[n]ce of his vigilant intercepting their convoyes & Stopping of their passages, & therefore [tha]t his reach could not but redowne to [the]ir vtter confusion in [th]e end they well foresawe vnlesse they submitted themselves betimes; but newes of his death was as ioyfull to them as it was grevous to vs, And made them then re-{}solve to dye in their owne defences, but [th]e mistake at [th]e last cost most of vs o[u]r lives/

And this is [th]e whole discription of o[u]r misfortunes, w[hi]ch vpo[n] A due consideration I thinke must needs provoke [th]e poorest affected of our nation, to endeavo[u]r A reveng vpo[n] the Instrum[en]t all they can, but till that be done, in all our future viages he must and will bee still our Generall and then to thrive (at least) after the old fashio[n] wee must assure our selves.

Wee haue not beene A litle Famous in Frances for co[n]quest heretofore, w[i]th a fewe/ but God allmightie is omnipotent and iust and wee nowe see it is his pleasure to make vs all suffer for the sinne and lacivious liffe of this owne men his will be done in all. And if we

can wee must be content, besides this he hath not onely bine the deathe of divers of [th]e Nobillitye/ but he hath alsoe bine the Cause of the vnluckie overthrowe of all our late voyges, the vnknowne consumer of the treasurye, and the vtter confusion of the poore Pro[te]stants in France, nowe dalye massacred w[i]thout all pittie through the needlesse defence of their religion yet notw[i]thsta[n]ding it is the kings pleasure still to afford him his wonted grace, and connivencie for all this, & Treason it is apparantlie to denounce him faultie in anye thinge, But let his ma[jes]ty looke to it, for his long[e]r shiltering of this rich Traytor and false harted man, both to God and his Cou[n]trye will be [th]e Ruyne Both of himselfe & this Kingdome/

But at last I hope (out of the integritie of his harte, nowe whilst it was called to daye and before the evill daye come) hee will give him over to the Parlyam[en]t whylest it is of Strength to punish him/ and [tha]t they for their p[ar]ts will send him to hell w[i]thout any more adoe

If any one hereafter shall maligne or goe about to disprove mee in anye one of these Points, (Soe I may be vnquestionable for this pr[e]su[m]ption) I will not w[i]thstanding my lamenesse, mainetaine all ~~to his face~~ (vpo[n] notice) to his face, to [th]e expence of my dearest blood. In [th]e interin, I expect good newes fro[m] [th]e Parlyam[en]t, by [th]e next fayre winde

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Other manuscript witnesses

- British Library, Hargrave MS 226, ff. 216r–228r
- British Library, Harley MS 6255, pp.239–261
- British Library, Sloane MS 363, ff. 56x–71x
- British Library, Harley MS 4264, ff. 257r–265v
- Beinecke Library, Osborn File 19139
- Bodleian Library, MS Eng. hist. d. 89, ff. 110–120
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson A 488, ff. 1r–9v
- Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D 671, ff1–10
- Cambridge University Library, MS Ll.3.11, ff. 69r–83r
- Houghton Library, fMS Eng 1266, volume II, ff.274r–279x
- Houghton Library, fMS Eng 1278, Folder 9
- Huntington Library, HM 213, pp509–???
- Senate House, University of London, MS 308, ff. 260r–272x
- Senate House, University of London, MS 309, ff. 163r–177x
- Woburn Abbey, MS 4E-60, ff. 265–259

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