

**POEMS AND SONGS RELATING  
TO GEORGE VILLIERS, DUKE OF  
BUCKINGHAM AND HIS  
ASSASSINATION BY JOHN  
FELTON, AUGUST 23, 1628**

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John Felton, August 23, 1628 by Frederick W. Fairholt

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**FREDERICK W. FAIRHOLT**

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POEMS AND SONGS

RELATING TO

GEORGE VILLIERS,

DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM;

AND HIS

Assassination by John Felton,

AUGUST 23, 1648.

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

BY

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HONORARY FELLOW OF THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQVARIARIES OF SCOTLAND.

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WHO RULES THE KINGDOM? THE KING!  
WHO RULES THE KING? THE DUKE!!  
WHO RULES THE DUKE? THE DEVIL!!!



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## INTRODUCTION.

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POLITICAL POEMS, like "straws thrown up to show which way the wind blows", are especially valuable for the insight they give us to the state of party or popular feeling at the period when they were written. In the early satires levelled against the excesses of the nobles and the unrighteousness of the clergy, we can trace fully that strong pent-up, never-varying desire for civil and religious liberty, which through the middle ages never slept, and ultimately triumphed. Again, what so vividly brings to the imagination of the student, the men and measures of the great civil war in England, as the plain outspoken biting satires and ballads of the time, with all their coarse vigour and unmistakable *vraisemblance*? The pages of the historian may gravely state facts more or less tinged by partizanship; but the ballads and satires of the day bring us personally acquainted with the men, in all their most minute peculiarity of habit and appearance, and furnish us with a clue



to the popular estimation they were held in, by giving us the motives for actions which were generally imputed to them.

Of this fact, the ensuing pages bear ample witness. The modern reader, who for the first time peruses the extravagant laudations of a murderer like Felton, laudations emanating not from the rabble, but from the educated and the poetic classes, would indeed feel great surprise, if he did not know how strongly popular opinion throughout the country had set against the murdered Duke of Buckingham; and how loudly, continuously, and bitterly he had been condemned, in prose and rhyme, as the unworthy favourite of sovereigns whose actions he ruled to the ruin of the country.

There was certainly no man against whom the shafts of satire fell more continuously than this celebrated favourite; while his death seemed to excite the general attention of all who could rhyme. As our published Collections of Political Poetry of an early kind close previous to this period, and the later ones begin with the civil war, the present will supply a *lacuna*, and help to make the series more complete. It is a contribution, however small, to the history of the age.

Buckingham's murder was the first great home event in one of the most eventful reigns recorded in English history. The prime favourite of two

sovereigns for many years, he had so conducted himself as to give great umbrage to the people; and the opinion generally held of him is expressed in the strong and coarse comment, current toward the end of his career, and which appears on our title-page.

George Villiers, (afterwards Duke of Buckingham), the youngest son of Sir Edward Villiers of Brookesby in Leicestershire, first made his appearance at the court of James I in 1614; and the political intriguers of the day set him up in opposition to the declining favourite Somerset. He was a man of attractive personal appearance, had been educated in the French court, and at once fascinated the weak monarch, and rapidly made way in his affections. He heaped honours on him\* and his family, and Villiers rose as fast as Somerset fell; ultimately becoming more powerful than the latter nobleman, and as great a favourite

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\* He was first installed as cup-bearer to the king, then made master of the horse, soon afterwards created Earl of Buckingham, ultimately marquis; the brave Howard, who had commanded the fleet against the Spanish Armada, being compelled to retire on a pension, his place was given to Villiers, who became lord high admiral; to which was afterwards added the posts of warden of the cinque ports, chief justice in eyre of all the parks and forests south of Trent, master of the King's-bench office, high steward of Westminster, and constable of Windsor Castle.

with the Prince Charles as he was with the king. He made use of his position to aggrandize himself and family with all rapidity, and bore himself with great hauteur even to such men as the Lord Chancellor Bacon, who was compelled to dance attendance for days together in his ante-chamber among his servants, "sitting upon an old wooden chest, with his purse and seal lying by him on that chest."\* His brothers and male relatives were married to heiresses, (sometimes compulsorily), and the female branches to the richest and noblest of the aristocracy; while all alike trafficked in titles and places, lodging about the court and making the most of their lucrative interest.

But though this excited the jealousy of the courtiers, the people in general were not thoroughly roused against the favorite, until he had fomented the Quixotic expedition of Prince Charles into Spain, and accompanied him thither. The popular dislike to the Spanish match was intense, and the fear of popish innovation excessive; the favourite was, therefore, loudly condemned by all; † at the

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\* So says Sir Anthony Weldon, who was an eye-witness of his degradation: "where trancer-scrapers and lackeys attended".

† James appears to have been as uneasy as the rest about Charles's safe return, and he ordered the clergy to pray earnestly for it, but "not to prejudicate the prince's journey