

, to all intents and purposes

who shall refuse to take the  
of his present Majesty and  
*oaths of supremacy and allegi-*  
to subscribe the declaration  
in the said first year of the  
*An Act for exempting their*  
*England from the penalties*  
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may be lawful to detain in  
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the crown in such manner as  
William and Queen Mary,  
*and settling the succession of*  
enacted . . . that no commis-  
void by reason of the death  
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y the next and immediate  
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remain or descend.

## C. LIMITATION OF THE PREROGATIVE

### (a) DISPENSING AND SUSPENDING POWERS

#### 13. Speech of Charles II in support of his declaration of indulgence, the Commons' addresses on the subject, and the king's replies, 1673

(*Journals of the House of Commons*, ix, pp. 246-266)

(i) 5 February 1673

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I am glad to see you here this day. I would have called you together sooner, but that I am willing to ease you and the country till there were an absolute necessity.

Since you were last here I have been forced to a most important, necessary and expensive war, and I make no doubt but you will give me suitable and effectual assistance to go through with it. I refer you to my declaration for the causes, and indeed the necessity, of this war, and shall now only tell you that I might have digested the indignities to my own person rather than have brought it to this extremity, if the interest as well as the honour of the whole kingdom had not been at stake. And if I had omitted this conjuncture perhaps I had not again ever met with the like advantage.

You will find that the last supply you gave me did not answer expectation for the ends you gave it, the payment of our debts. Therefore I must in the next place recommend them again to your special care.

Some few days before I declared the war I put forth my declaration for indulgence to dissenters,<sup>1</sup> and have hitherto found a good effect of it by securing peace at home when I had war abroad. There is one part of it that hath been subject to misconstruction, which is that concerning the papists, as if more liberty were granted them than to the other recusants, when it is plain there is less, for the others have public places allowed them, and I never intended that they should have any, but only have the freedom of their religion in their own houses, without any concern of others. And I could not grant them less than this when I had extended so much more grace to others, most of them having been loyal and in the service of me and of the king my father. And in the whole course of this indulgence I do not intend that it shall any way prejudice the Church; but I will support its rights and it in its full power. Having said this, I shall take it very, very ill to receive contradiction in what I have done. And I will deal plainly with you: I am resolved to stick to my declaration.

There is one jealousy more that is maliciously spread abroad, and yet so weak and frivolous that I once thought it not of moment enough to mention, but it may have gotten some ground with some well-minded people; and that is that the forces I have raised in this war were designed to control law and property. I wish I had had more forces the last summer. The want of them then convinces me I must raise more against this next spring, and I do not doubt but you will consider the charge of them in your supplies.

<sup>1</sup> No. 140.

I will conclude with this assurance to you, that I will preserve the true reformed Protestant religion and the Church as it is now established in this kingdom, and that no man's property or liberty shall ever be invaded.

(ii) 14 February 1673

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

We, your Majesty's most loyal and faithful subjects, the Commons assembled in Parliament, do in the first place, as in all duty bound, return your Majesty our most humble and hearty thanks for the many gracious promises and assurances which your Majesty hath several times during this present Parliament given to us, that your Majesty would secure and maintain unto us the true reformed Protestant religion, our liberties and properties, which most gracious assurances your Majesty hath out of your great goodness been pleased to renew unto us more particularly at the opening of this present session of Parliament.

And further we crave leave humbly to represent that we have, with all duty and expedition, taken into our consideration several parts of your Majesty's last speech to us, and withal the declaration therein mentioned for indulgence to dissenters, dated the fifteenth of March last; and we find ourselves bound in duty to inform your Majesty that penal statutes in matters ecclesiastical cannot be suspended but by Act of Parliament.

We therefore, the knights, citizens and burgesses of your Majesty's House of Commons, do most humbly beseech your Majesty that the said laws may have their free course until it shall be otherwise provided for by Act of Parliament, and that your Majesty would graciously be pleased to give such directions herein that no apprehensions or jealousies may remain in the hearts of your Majesty's good and faithful subjects.

(iii) 24 February 1673

CHARLES R.

His Majesty hath received an address from you; and he hath seriously considered of it, and returneth you this answer:

That he is very much troubled that that declaration, which he put out for ends so necessary to the quiet of his kingdom, and especially in that conjuncture, should have proved the cause of disquiet in his House of Commons, and give occasion to the questioning of his power in ecclesiastics, which he finds not done in the reigns of any of his ancestors. He is sure he never had thoughts of using it otherwise than as it hath been intrusted in him, to the peace and establishment of the Church of England and the ease of all his subjects in general. Neither doth he pretend to the right of suspending any laws wherein the properties, rights or liberties of any of his subjects are concerned, nor to alter anything in the established doctrine or discipline of the Church of England. But his only design in this was to take off the penalties the statutes inflict upon dissenters, and which he believes, when well considered of, you yourselves would not wish executed according to the rigour and letter of the law.

Neither hath he done this with any thought of avoiding or precluding the advice of

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his Parliament; and if any bill shall be offered him which shall appear more proper to attain the aforesaid ends, and secure the peace of the Church and kingdom, when tendered in due manner to him, he will show how readily he will concur in all ways that shall appear good for the kingdom.

Given at the Court at Whitehall,  
the 24th of February 1672/3.

(iv) 26 February 1673

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

We, your Majesty's most humble and loyal subjects, the knights, citizens and burgesses in this present Parliament assembled, do render to your sacred Majesty our most dutiful thanks for that, to our unspeakable comfort, your Majesty hath been pleased so often to reiterate unto us those gracious promises and assurances of maintaining the religion now established, and the liberties and properties of your people. And we do not in the least measure doubt but that your Majesty had the same gracious intentions in giving satisfaction to your subjects by your answer to our last petition and address. Yet upon a serious consideration thereof we find that the said answer is not sufficient to clear the apprehensions that may justly remain in the minds of your people, by your Majesty's having claimed a power to suspend penal statutes in matters ecclesiastical, and which your Majesty does still seem to assert in the said answer to be intrusted in the Crown, and never questioned in the reigns of any your ancestors; wherein we humbly conceive your Majesty hath been very much misinformed, since no such power was ever claimed or exercised by any of your Majesty's predecessors, and if it should be admitted might tend to the interrupting of the free course of the laws, and altering the legislative power, which hath always been acknowledged to reside in your Majesty and your two Houses of Parliament.

We do therefore with an unanimous consent become again most humble suitors unto your sacred Majesty, that you would be pleased to give us a full and satisfactory answer to our said petition and address, and that your Majesty would take such effectual order that the proceedings in this matter may not for the future be drawn into consequence or example.

(v) 3 March 1673<sup>1</sup>

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN,

We, your Majesty's most loyal subjects, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons in this present Parliament assembled, being very sensible of the great dangers and mischiefs that may arise within this your Majesty's realm by the increase of popish recusants amongst us; and considering the great resort of priests and Jesuits into this kingdom, who daily endeavour to seduce your Majesty's subjects from their religion and allegiance, and how desirous your loyal subjects are that no popish recusants be admitted into employments of trust and profit; and especially into military commands over the forces now in your Majesty's service; and having a tender regard

<sup>1</sup> This address was adopted by the Commons on 3 March, approved by the Lords with some amendments on 7 March, and presented to the king by both Houses the same day.

to the preservation of your Majesty's person and the peace and tranquillity of this kingdom, do in all humility desire that your Majesty would be pleased to issue out your royal proclamation to command all priests and Jesuits (other than such as, not being natural-born subjects to your Majesty, are obliged to attend upon your royal consort the queen) to depart within thirty days out of this your Majesty's kingdom: and that if any priest or Jesuit shall happen to be taken in England after the expiration of the said time, that the laws be put in due execution against them; and that your Majesty would please in the said proclamation to command all judges, justices of the peace, mayors, bailiffs and other officers to put the said laws in execution accordingly.

That your Majesty would likewise be pleased that the Lord Chancellor of England shall, on or before the five and twentieth day of March instant, issue out commissions of *dedimus potestatem* to the judge advocate and commissaries of the musters and such other persons as he shall think fit (not being officers commanding soldiers) to tender the oaths of allegiance and supremacy to all officers and soldiers now in your Majesty's service and pay; and that such as refuse the said oaths may be immediately disbanded, and not allowed or continued in any pay or pension: and that the Chancellor shall require due returns to be made thereof within some convenient time after the issuing out of the said commissions.

That the said commissaries of the musters be commanded and enjoined by your Majesty's warrant, upon the penalty of losing their places, not to permit any officer to be mustered in the service and pay of your Majesty until he shall have taken the oaths of allegiance and supremacy and received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper according to the laws and usage of the Church of England; and that every soldier serving at land shall take the said oaths before his first muster, and receive the sacrament in such manner before his second muster.

And this we present, in all dutifulness, to your Majesty's princely wisdom and consideration, as the best means for the satisfying and composing the minds of your loyal subjects, humbly desiring your Majesty graciously to accept of this our petition, as proceeding from hearts and affections entirely devoted to your Majesty's service, and to give it your royal approbation.

(vi) 8 March 1673

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

Yesterday you presented me an address as the best means for the satisfying and composing the minds of my subjects; to which I freely and readily agreed, and shall take care to see it performed accordingly. I hope, on the other side, you gentlemen of the House of Commons will do your part, for I must put you in mind it is near five weeks since I demanded a supply, and what you voted unanimously upon it did both give life to my affairs at home and disheartened my enemies abroad. But the seeming delay it hath met with since has made them take new courage, and they are now preparing for this next summer a greater fleet (as they say) than ever they had yet, so that if the supply be not speedily dispatched it will be altogether ineffectual, and the safety, honour and interest of England must of necessity be exposed. Pray lay this to heart, and let not the fears and jealousies of some draw an inevitable ruin upon us all.

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 inevitable ruin upon us all.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

If there be any scruple remain yet with you concerning the suspension of penal laws,<sup>1</sup> I here faithfully promise you that what hath been done in that particular shall not for the future be drawn into consequence or example. And as I daily expect from you a bill for my supply, so I assure you I shall as willingly receive and pass any other you shall offer me that may tend to the giving you satisfaction in all your just grievances.

14. Speech of James II in support of the standing army and the Catholic officers, and the address of the Commons in reply, 1685

(*Journals of the House of Commons*, IX, pp. 756, 758)

(i) 9 November 1685

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

After the storm that seemed to be coming upon us when we parted last, I am glad to meet you all again in so great peace and quietness. God Almighty be praised, by whose blessing that rebellion was suppressed. But when we reflect what an inconsiderable number of men began it, and how long they carried it on without any opposition, I hope everybody will be convinced that the militia, which hath hitherto been so much depended on, is not sufficient for such occasions, and that there is nothing but a good force of well-disciplined troops in constant pay that can defend us from such as, either at home or abroad, are disposed to disturb us. And in truth, my concern for the peace and quiet of my subjects, as well as for the safety of the government, made me think it necessary to increase the number to the proportion I have done. This I owed as well to the honour as the security of the nation, whose reputation was so infinitely exposed to all our neighbours, by having so evidently lain open to this late wretched attempt, that it is not to be repaired without keeping such a body of men on foot that none may ever have the thought again of finding us so miserably unprovided.

It is for the support of this great charge, which is now more than double to what it was, that I ask your assistance in giving me a supply answerable to the expense it brings along with it. And I cannot doubt but what I have begun, so much for the honour and defence of the government, will be continued by you with all the cheerfulness that is requisite for a work of so great importance.

Let no man take exception that there are some officers in the army not qualified, according to the late Tests, for their employments. The gentlemen, I must tell you, are most of them well known to me, and having formerly served with me in several occasions, and always approved the loyalty of their principles by their practice, I think fit now to be employed under me. And I will deal plainly with you, that after having had the benefit of their service in such time of need and danger, I will neither expose them to disgrace, nor myself to want of them, if there should be another rebellion to make them necessary for me.

<sup>1</sup> The king had cancelled his declaration of indulgence on the previous evening.

ment. We are not upon equal officers charge as it were in while the country gentlemen

I am confident expects our pensions are too great, what public calamities. His Majesty tables, coaches and six horses want and misery of the rest is but a young king, encom-courtiers (to say no more of some 11,000. I am told the

been formerly, are much too where else, and it is a general look so well in the face. We afraid our work is too big for imaginable. When the people ere are no exorbitant pensions which it was given, we shall esty can want to secure the and King James too, whom, urther out of fear, respect or s save the king what we can,

## E. DETERMINATION OF THE SUCCESSION

### 33. Anonymous account of the Popish Plot, 1678

(Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Kenyon MSS.*, pp. 105-109)

31 October, 1678

Since my last, wherein I discovered to you the first account of this horrible plot, great hath been the diligence both of the Council and Parliament in bringing the same to light, wherein their endeavours have been so happy that they are now arrived to the bottom of it, and it lies now before both Houses in its own monstrous shape, it being no less than the murder of the king, the subversion of our religion, laws and properties, the introducing of popery and a tyrannical arbitrary government by an army, our common and statute laws to be abolished and annihilated, and a mixture of military and civil law introduced, where council of war should supply this place of our courts of justice, and the rank for the jury, with many such differences too tedious to express here. But I hope by this timely and miraculous discovery we may be able to destroy this cockatrice in the egg, which will yet certainly devour us if he be hatched.

The manner of proceedings have been thus. One Mr. Oates being a minister in Sussex, by reason of some lawsuits with persons which were too powerful for him he was forced to quit his parish, and, coming into London, fell into acquaintance with Mr. Tonge, a minister who hath been many years a diligent inquirer into the practices and principles of the Jesuits, and had published several books against them. This man, finding Oates by reason of poverty inclined to travel to seek a livelihood amongst the papists abroad, endeavoured to divert him by giving him full information of their wicked principles and practices. Whereupon Oates resolves to try the truth, and promised, if he found it to be as Tonge informed, he would renounce that religion and return again to the Protestant Church.

Oates thereupon, some years since, goes and enters himself a novice in the college of the Jesuits in St. Omer, where, behaving himself with great zeal, diligence, and demonstrating his abilities, he was soon taken notice of and thought a fit instrument to convey the intelligence and correspondency of this hellish plot to most of the courts in Christendom. In acting whereof, by opening letters and packets intrusted with him and thereby gaining some light, he so insinuated himself wherever he came that in time he came to the depth and counsels of the design. Whereby, about April last, understanding the execution of this horrid villainy to be at hand, and that commissions were signed by the Pope for all bishops and other clergy, for the officers of state and of their armies, he began to fear it would be executed before he should find means to discover it.

And being ready to lay hold of all opportunities to come for England to do it, it fell out that a book called *The Jesuits' Morals*, which Tonge had translated, came to their hands, for which upon consultation it was agreed Tonge should be killed; but a fit person was wanting to do it. Whereupon Oates offered to undertake it, and had a note given him to receive £50 here when it was done; and in the meantime he was

directed to one Ireland, a priest in the Savoy, to accommodate him with lodging and necessaries. Whereupon Oates prepares for the journey, the college loads him with packets and commissions for all sorts of conspirators, which he brings over and with his own hand delivers; but in the interim underhand resorts to Tonge and acquaints him with the whole design, of which having drawn a short relation he desires Tonge to give it privately to the king, and offer to make it good, if his Majesty would conceal the thing and appoint a council to sit and hear it.

Tonge, not being willing to undertake it alone, took one Kirkby, a merchant, and went to the king upon the 13th of August, where they acquainted him with the substance of it; but the papers being several sheets, and the king not caring for trouble, gave leave to acquaint and employ the Treasurer to manage it. They were unwilling to consent, but the king saying he dare trust his life and crown in his hands they could not refuse. All this while Oates was concealed. The matter thus settled, Tonge several times presses the Treasurer, but nothing done in six weeks, though the 2nd of September, whereon the king was to be murdered, was past. Whereon Tonge, doubting some future trouble in case Oates should be killed or recant, causes Oates to draw an exact narrative containing fifteen or sixteen sheets, and to swear it before Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, who perused and took notes out of it, and, according to his custom keeping fair with both sides, he acquaints the Treasurer, Coleman and some others with the business, and finding Coleman so deep in the plot there was no possibility of avoiding of it he advises Coleman to impeach, which it is said he did, and swore something before Godfrey which he entered in a pocket-book; and that also he discovered to the Treasurer, and he to the duke of York.

I say no more; but Godfrey was chid and the matter fit to be concealed, and Godfrey was murdered soon after, being, as appeared plainly, strangled, and after carried and laid in a ditch near Primrose Hill, and his own sword run through him, nothing missing but his band and pocket-book wherein were his notes concerning this affair. His murder raised a great spirit in the people, which could not be outfaced by the party and their adherents that murdered him, though there wanted neither diligence nor impudence in that party in all places to make it appear he murdered himself. To-morrow he is to be buried from the hall of Bridewell, where I believe thousands will appear to attend his corpse to St. Martin's.

But to return to the plot. Godfrey, having taken the information, was forced to bring it to Council about the end of September 1678, where Oates appeared and made it good beyond all scruple, and thereupon Coleman, one Langhorne a counsellor, and nine Jesuits were committed and their houses and lodgings searched, but the matter done so publicly and divers days given before the warrants issued, so that they generally had notice enough to remove what they had a mind should not be seen, and yet such papers and letters were found both in Coleman's and Langhorne's studies that give a full relation of the most horrid massacre and slaughter that ever was heard, which have been since sorted and produced both before the Council and Parliament. Since the sitting of the Parliament, Oates hath been every day examined before them, speaking five or six hours at a time, giving particular demonstration of the whole affair, wherein he hath clearly proved the manner and design of the fire of London,





on Saturday last that on Sunday in sermon time some attempt would be made upon the city, whereupon they ordered strong double watches to be set of house-keepers in person, and the lights to be renewed at 12 o'clock at night, the gates to be shut all Sunday and the watches to continue till relieved at night, which was performed. And Doctor Stillingfleet having been attempted by a fellow in a gentile habit, who brought a counterfeit letter as from the bishop of London to desire him to come to him in the evening, and brought a coach to carry him, intending to have served him as Sir Edmund Godfrey was, but was prevented; partly an extraordinary business would not permit him to go out, and partly jealousy, which made the doctor answer him if he could go he would make use of his own coach, which made the fellow vanish, and the doctor, waiting on the bishop the next day, found the letter and pretence wholly counterfeit. Thereupon on Sunday about forty persons a guard waited on the doctor to church and home.

On Sunday a committee of lords, viz., Winchester, Shaftesbury, the Treasurer, Halifax and Cornbury, being appointed by the Lords, went to Coleman to Newgate and examined him, who had been long a close prisoner and knew nothing of Godfrey's death, and upon his examination, finding persons of several interests, could not tell what to say, but to the main point referred himself to his examination taken by Sir Edmund Godfrey, which troubled some there, who began to hint that Godfrey was dead; but Shaftesbury managed it so wisely that he turned it off, and in the conclusion he confessed the letters, and that he had acted nothing in the business but by the duke's order, with the privity and advice of the Lord Arundell of Wardour, and seemed very desirous to have leave to speak with the king, and being demanded the reason, to know how far he might name the duke in the business, which was the next day reported to the Lords.

Whereupon high debates were tending to the impeachment of the duke, but the duke's party was so great and avoided the blow at that time. Whereupon the Commons ordered a committee to go to Newgate to examine Coleman; but when they came his note was changed. He would own nothing of the duke, but said what he had done was for religion sake. And the Lords refusing to send down the report to the Commons, and Coleman having turned his tale, things stand at present, and it is now doubted the matter will not be thoroughly canvassed, and, some money being well placed, we shall be contented with the hanging three or four inconsiderable fellows and some law against popery, which will keep our throats from being cut a month at least.

Sir, I fear I have been too tedious; but understanding from some friends you were much in the dark in this business made me enlarge. On Monday last the king sent for the lord mayor and aldermen, and thanked them for their care and loyalty, and desired them to raise their trained bands and keep guard for their better security, so that yesterday a regiment was upon the guard and to be relieved and so continue till further order. Whitehall is close shut up and no passage to it but through the wicket at the great gate, and a strict examination of all that are suffered to pass in or out.

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## 34. John Dryden on the Plot

*(Absalom and Achitophel, ll. 108-117)*

From hence began that Plot, the nation's curse,  
Bad in itself, but represented worse,  
Raised in extremes, and in extremes decried,  
With oaths affirmed, with dying vows denied,  
Not weighed or winnowed by the multitude,  
But swallowed in the mass, unchewed and crude.  
Some truth there was, but dashed and brewed with lies  
To please the fools and puzzle all the wise.  
Succeeding times did equal folly call  
Believing nothing or believing all.

## 35. Exclusion Bill, 1680

*(Manuscripts of the House of Lords, 1678-1688, pp. 195-197)*

AN ACT FOR SECURING OF THE PROTESTANT RELIGION  
BY DISABLING JAMES, DUKE OF YORK,  
TO INHERIT THE IMPERIAL CROWN OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND  
AND THE DOMINIONS AND TERRITORIES THEREUNTO BELONGING

Whereas James, duke of York, is notoriously known to have been perverted from the Protestant to the popish religion, whereby not only great encouragement hath been given to the popish party to enter into and carry on most devilish and horrid plots and conspiracies for the destruction of his Majesty's sacred person and government, and for the extirpation of the true Protestant religion, but also, if the said duke should succeed to the imperial crown of this realm, nothing is more manifest than that a total change of religion within these kingdoms would ensue, for the prevention whereof be it therefore enacted . . . that the said James, duke of York, shall be and is by authority of this present Parliament excluded and made for ever incapable to inherit, possess or enjoy the imperial crown of this realm and of the kingdom of Ireland and the dominions and territories to them or either of them belonging, or to have, exercise or enjoy any dominion, power, jurisdiction or authority within the same kingdoms, dominions or any of them.

And be it further enacted . . . that if the said James, duke of York, shall at any time hereafter challenge, claim or attempt to possess or enjoy, or shall take upon him to use or exercise any dominion, power, authority or jurisdiction within the said kingdoms, dominions or any of them as king or chief magistrate of the same, that then he the said James, duke of York, for every such offence shall be deemed and adjudged guilty of high treason, and shall suffer the pains, penalties and forfeitures as in cases of high treason.

And further, that if any person or persons whatsoever shall assist, aid, maintain, abet or willingly adhere unto the said James, duke of York, in such his challenge, claim or attempt, or shall of themselves attempt or endeavour to put or bring the

said James, duke of York, into the possession or exercise of any regal power, jurisdiction or authority within the kingdoms or dominions aforesaid, or shall by writing or preaching advisedly publish, maintain or declare that he hath any right, title or authority to exercise the office of king or chief magistrate of the kingdoms and dominions aforesaid, that then every such person shall be deemed and adjudged guilty of high treason, and shall suffer and undergo the pains, penalties and forfeitures aforesaid.

And be it further enacted . . . that if the said James, duke of York, shall at any time from and after the fifth day of November in the year of our Lord God one thousand six hundred and eighty return or come into or within any of the kingdoms or dominions aforesaid, that then he, the said James, duke of York, shall be deemed and adjudged guilty of high treason, and shall suffer the pains, penalties and forfeitures as in cases of high treason; and further, that if any person or persons whatsoever shall be aiding or assisting unto such return of the said James, duke of York, that then every such person shall be deemed and adjudged guilty of high treason, and shall suffer as in cases of high treason.

And be it further enacted . . . that the said James, duke of York, or any other person being guilty of any of the treasons aforesaid, shall not be capable of or receive benefit by any pardon otherwise than by Act of Parliament. . . .

And be it further enacted and declared, and it is hereby enacted and declared, that it shall and may be lawful to and for all magistrates, officers and other subjects whatsoever of the kingdoms and dominions aforesaid, and they are hereby enjoined and required, to apprehend and secure the said James, duke of York, and every other person offending in any of the premises, and with him or them in case of resistance to fight, and him or them by force to subdue, for all which actings and for so doing they are and shall be by virtue of this Act saved harmless and indemnified.

Provided, and be it hereby declared, that nothing in this Act contained shall be construed, deemed or adjudged to disable any person from inheriting or enjoying the imperial crown of the realms and dominions aforesaid (other than the said James, duke of York), but that in case the said James, duke of York, shall survive his now Majesty and the heirs of his Majesty's body, the said imperial crown shall descend to and be enjoyed by such person and persons successively during the lifetime of the said James, duke of York, as should have inherited and enjoyed the same in case the said James, duke of York, were naturally dead, anything in this Act contained to the contrary notwithstanding.

And be it enacted . . . that during the life of the said James, duke of York, this Act shall be given in charge at every assizes and general sessions of the peace within the kingdoms, dominions and territories aforesaid, and also shall be openly read in every cathedral, collegiate church, parish church and chapel within the aforesaid kingdoms, dominions and territories by the several and respective parsons, vicars, curates and readers thereof, who are hereby required, immediately after divine service in the forenoon, to read the same twice in every year, that is to say on the five and twentieth day of December and upon Easter Day, during the life of the said James, duke of York.

36. Letter from the duke of Ormonde to the earl of Arran on the Rye House Plot, 1683

(Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Ormonde MSS.*, N.S., VII, pp. 51-52)

St. James's Square,

22 June 1683

The king has appointed a Council to be held at Hampton Court to-morrow in the morning, and will hold another in the afternoon. The principal occasion is the discovery of a damnable conspiracy for killing the king and the duke as they came from Newmarket to London this last spring; and, though I am as slow as any man in my belief of such discoveries and attempts, yet I believe it highly probable that the thing would have been attempted, if the fire which burned a great part of Newmarket had not driven the king from thence eight or ten days sooner than he intended and prefixed for his stay there. The discoverer is a substantial citizen, zealously factious and active on the Whig party, and so bold that it was he that arrested the lord mayor when nobody else could be found hardy enough to undertake it. He says it was remorse of conscience and horror of so bloody a fact, and for prevention of the like villainy, that moved him to repent and discover, and we are charitably to believe him, though the fear of some of the conspirators being beforehand with him might have some share in his conversion.

The manner of effecting the execrable fact and the means of the actors' escape was thus laid. There is one Rumbold, heretofore an officer of Cromwell's, blind of an eye, who has a house near a gate in the road where toll is paid for permission to pass by a gravelled causeway over a large meadow. In this house and in the garden and yards belonging to it, which were hid from passengers' view by high ditches, trees and weeds, twelve of the actors were so planted, four of them were to shoot blunderbusses into the king's coach, three or four to let fly at the coachman and postillion, and the rest at the guards that ride behind the coach, which must come close by the ditch, and make some little stop at the gate; and the guards are not above six when the king makes but a day's journey from Newmarket to London. But to have time enough to do their work they had contrived to have a cart stand cross the causeway, which should seem to do so by the unskilfulness of the carters, who were to be disguised conspirators, or by the awkwardness of the horses. They were to have somewhere thereabouts about thirty horse more. With these and by their knowledge of by-ways they were to get to London, where they had prepared for a rising; and if they had not it is not to be doubted but that upon their effecting of such a design there would have been one.

The substance of all this is confessed by one that is apprehended, accused by the informer. The rest of those named by him are fled upon apprehension of being discovered, but how they came to have that apprehension is not clearly known. Besides those that were sought for many more have quit their houses and abscond. We are yet upon the track, but it is hoped every day will show us more light, and who were principal in the contrivance. This is what my memory serves me to write,

and therefore I will not answer for exactness in all particulars; but I am fully satisfied that there was a formed design to commit the treason, and I believe all men that are not given over to incredulity, or resolved to be rebels, will be convinced.

37. Report of the French ambassador to Louis XIV on the death of Charles II, 1685

(Sir John Dalrymple, *Memoirs of Great Britain and Ireland*, App., I, pp. 94-98)

18 February<sup>1</sup> 1685

The letter I do myself the honour to write to your Majesty to-day is only to give you an exact account of what happened, of most importance, at the death of the king of England. His illness, which began on Monday morning the 12th of February,<sup>2</sup> had divers changes the following days. Sometimes he was thought out of danger, and then something happened that made it judged his disorder was mortal. In fine, on Thursday, 15th February,<sup>3</sup> about noon, I was informed from a good quarter that there were no hopes, and that the physicians believed he could not hold out the night.

I went immediately to Whitehall. The duke of York had given orders to the officers who guarded the door of the ante-chamber to let me pass at any hour. He was continually in the king his brother's room. From time to time he came out to give orders upon what was passing in the town. The report was more than once spread that the king was dead. As soon as I arrived the duke of York said to me, "The physicians think the king in extreme danger; I desire you to assure your master that he shall always have in me a faithful and grateful servant." I was five hours in the king's ante-chamber. The duke of York made me come into the bedchamber several times, and spoke to me of what was passing without doors, and of the assurances given him from every quarter that all was very quiet in the town, and that he should be proclaimed king the moment the king his brother was dead.

I went out for some time to go to the duchess of Portsmouth's apartment. I found her overwhelmed with grief, the physicians having taken all hopes from her. However, instead of speaking to me of her affliction and the loss she was on the point of sustaining, she went into a small closet and said to me, "Monsieur the ambassador, I am going to tell you the greatest secret in the world, and my head would be in danger if it was known. The king of England at the bottom of his heart is a Catholic; but he is surrounded with Protestant bishops, and nobody tells him his condition nor speaks to him of God. I cannot with decency enter the room, besides that the queen is almost constantly there. The duke of York thinks of his own affairs, and has too many of them to take the care he ought of the king's conscience. Go and tell him I have conjured you to warn him to think of what can be done to save the king's soul. He commands the room, and can turn out whom he will. Lose no time, for if it is deferred ever so little it will be too late."

I returned instantly to find the duke of York, and begged him to make a pretence of going to the queen, who had left the king's room, and who, having fainted, was

<sup>1</sup> 8/18 February.

<sup>2</sup> 2/12 February.

<sup>3</sup> 5/15 February.