

PROCLAMATION

Scottish Jacobites

13 November 1745 [NS]

Our enemies have represented us as men of low birth and of desperate fortunes. We who are now in arms are, for the greatest part, of the most ancient families of this island, whose forefathers asserted the liberties of their country long, long before the names of many of our declaimers were ever heard of. Our blood is good, and that our actions shall make appear. If our fortunes be not great, our virtue has kept them low; and desperate we may be truly called, for we are determined to conquer or die. The justice, therefore, of the cause we now appear for, the interest of the nation which we support and pursue, and the glorious character of our royal leader may each by itself, or all together, abundantly convince the nation that now at last there appears an happy and unforeseen opportunity of acquiring all these blessings which a distressed nation has been so long wishing for in vain.

This golden opportunity we have laid hold of, and in justice to ourselves and fellow-subjects are obliged thus to apprise them of the uprightness of our intentions in carrying into execution a scheme calculated and adapted to those principles of liberty which the true lovers of their country have been polishing and refining for these many years past.

Perhaps you may find fault that you were not apprised of this undertaking. No more were we. God has conducted, the Prince of Wales has executed, and we thereby in possession of Scotland and victorious over one of the Elector's¹ armies, which nothing could have saved from total destruction but the authority and mercy of a young conqueror, possessed of all the shining virtues which can adorn a throne and who may challenge the keenest enemy of his royal family to impute to him a vice which can blacken the character of a prince. Compare his clemency towards all the prisoners and wounded at the Battle of Gladsmuir² with the executions, imprisonments, and banishments exercised by the German family after their success at Preston in the year 1715 and your affections will tell you who is the true father of the people.

We have hitherto only spoke to your interests; when His Royal Highness comes himself amongst you, let his appearance, his moderation, his affability, his tenderness, and his affection for those he can truly call his countrymen speak to your passions. Then you who, at the instigation of your enemies, are now arming for the defence—as you imagine—of your respective communities will be able to judge from whom you will have the best reason to expect protection. Thus far we can take upon us to promise in His Highness' name that such as shall make no resistance to our troops, though before our arrival they may have been levying war against us, may nevertheless depend upon the most ample security for their persons and estates; provided, by a timely surrender of their arms, they put it in our power to protect them against the fury of the army. And how foolish will it be after this assurance for any city, corporation, or county to attempt to make head against the combined force of a whole nation, collected in a numerous army and flushed with success? If any misfortune therefore ensue from a disregard of this admonition, we of His Royal Highness' army declare ourselves free of all blame therein.

It is time for you now, O countrymen, to lay aside all animosities, all distinctions of families or names, and to confine your thoughts only to the interest of these kingdoms, connecting with them as you go along the sentiments you had a few years ago. What transport of joy would the bulk of the British nation have felt upon a certain remarkable and never-to-be-forgotten period in our political history (that great change of ministry which happened not long ago, when the cries of a distressed people, supported by the interest and influence of powerful, though designing, men accomplished the ruin of a mighty minister³)? How great would have been your joy had you then had from the Elector of Hanover such a declaration as that emitted the tenth of this month by His Royal

¹ Jacobites referred to George II only as the Elector of Hanover

² The Battle of Prestonpans (21 September 1745) took place near Gladsmuir (Scotland)

³ In 1742 the Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, lost a vote of no confidence after 21 years in power, in part because of his handling of the War of the Austrian Succession and in part because his 21 years of power had created a numerous and powerful opposition.

Highness, the heir and representative of our natural and only rightful sovereign? Is it possible to conceive the universal satisfaction which such a declaration would have occasioned, unless we judge of it by our fatal disappointment? We leave it to yourselves to make the application.

As it is not our intention here to set forth the domestic grievances of the nation, nor the scandalous preference shown upon all occasions to a pitiful foreign concern, for as we address ourselves chiefly to the friends of liberty and the Constitution, we suppose you all abundantly instructed in them. Nor would it serve but to lengthen this letter to enumerate the many promises contained in the King's and Prince's declarations and manifestoes to his subjects upon this occasion. We have abundantly explained our own motives for now appearing in arms, and would willingly use a little serious expostulation with you, gentlemen, who intend to oppose us.

What then, in the name of God, do you propose to yourselves? Is it also the interest of Great Britain and Ireland? Or is it the support of the Elector of Hanover's family in the succession to the Crown of these realms? If your armaments proceed from the first of these motives, tell us what a prince can do more to make you a free and a happy people? What security can you have more than his word and his army's guarantee until the nation shall have time abundantly to secure themselves by Parliament?

If you be satisfied with the promises made you and the security of the performance, do you disapprove of this method of bringing about the execution by force of arms? If you do, be so good as suggest another equally efficacious. That by Parliament indeed, would have been universally the most acceptable; but we cannot be so infatuated as to remain in eternal bondage unless a Parliament, composed of hirelings, should set us at liberty. Nor have we any hopes that the Elector will strip himself of that pecuniary influence by which alone he has carried, over the bellies of the nation, every destructive measure. On the other hand, if the dispute is to be whether the Stuart or Hanoverian family shall reign over Great Britain, without reference to the interest of the nation, we need use no other argument than the sword with such as shall oppose as upon those principles.

To conclude, we desire to lay this important question before you in a new light. Suppose, for it is only a supposition, that this dreadful and unnatural rebellion, as you are taught to call it, should be extinguished and quashed and every man concerned in it executed on a scaffold. Your joy no doubt would be very great upon so glorious an event; your address would then be turned into thanksgivings, your Parliament would meet and clothe your beloved sovereign with new powers; your standing army, which has hitherto been looked upon as the bane of the Constitution, would then be consecrated as your deliverers; and the reverend bishops of the Church of England would be hailed from the most distant corners of the island by the glorious appellation of patriots and protectors of British liberty. O happy—thrice happy—nation who have such an army and such a bench of bishops ready upon this occasion to rescue them from Popery, from slavery, tyranny, and arbitrary power!

When indeed the first transport of your joy would be over, for you are not to expect that these halcyon days are ever to remain, you might perhaps find to your fatal experience that the Constitution of your country was not in the least improved, and upon the return of the unavoidable consequences of those evils all along complained of, and which now you have so fair an opportunity of having redressed, you would at last be sensible that we were those who in truth deserved the appellation of deliverers, patriots, and protectors of the British liberty. But this last part of our letter is addressed only to such as we expect to meet with in a field of battle, and we are hopeful that those will prove but an inconsiderable part of the nations of Great Britain and Ireland; and that you, our countrymen and fellow-subjects, upon being advised and informed, as you have now been, of the whole plan of this glorious expedition will cheerfully join issue with us and share in the glory of restoring our King and in setting our country free, which by the strength of our arm, the assistance of our allies, and the blessing of Almighty God, we shortly expect to see accomplished.