

DECLARATION OF BREDA

Charles II (1630–1685)

Breda, 14 April 1660

Charles, by the grace of God, King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. To all Our loving subjects, of what degree or quality soever, greeting.

If the general distraction and confusion which is spread over the whole kingdom does not awaken all men to a desire and longing that those wounds which have so many years together been kept bleeding may be bound up, all We can say will be to no purpose; however, after this long silence, We have thought it Our duty to declare how much We desire to contribute thereunto; and that as We can never give over the hope in good time to obtain the possession of that right which God and nature has made Our due, so We do make it Our daily suit to the divine Providence that He will, in compassion to Us and Our subjects, after so long misery and sufferings, remit and put Us into a quiet and peaceable possession of that, Our right, with as little blood and damage to Our people as is possible. Nor do We desire more to enjoy what is Ours than that all Our subjects may enjoy what by law is theirs, by a full and entire administration of justice throughout the land, and by extending Our mercy where it is wanted and deserved. And to the end that the fear of punishment may not engage any, conscious to themselves of what is past, to a perseverance in guilt for the future, by opposing the quiet and happiness of their country, in the restoration of king, peers, and people to their just, ancient, and fundamental rights, We do, by these presents, declare that We do grant a free and general pardon, which We are ready, upon demand, to pass under Our Great Seal of England, to all Our subjects, of what degree or quality soever, who, within forty days after the publishing hereof, shall lay hold upon this Our grace and favor, and shall, by any public act, declare their doing so, and that they return to the loyalty and obedience of good subjects; excepting only such persons as shall hereafter be excepted by Parliament, those only to be excepted.

Let all Our subjects, how faulty soever, rely upon the word of a king, solemnly given by this present declaration, that no crime whatsoever, committed against Us or Our royal father before the publication of this, shall ever rise in judgment, or be brought in question against any of them, to the least endamage of them, either in their lives, liberties, or estates, or (as far forth as lies in Our power) so much as to the prejudice of their reputations, by any reproach or term of distinction from the rest of Our best subjects; We desiring and ordaining that henceforth all notes of discord, separation, and difference of parties be utterly abolished among all Our subjects, whom We invite and conjure to a perfect union among themselves, under Our protection, for the resettlement of Our just rights and theirs in a free Parliament, by which, upon the word of a king, We will be advised. And because the passion and uncharitableness of the times have produced several opinions in religion by which men are engaged in parties and animosities against each other (which when they shall hereafter unite in a freedom of conversation, will be composed or better understood), We do declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matter of religion which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom; and that We shall be ready to consent to such an act of Parliament as, upon mature deliberation, shall be offered to Us for the full granting that indulgence.

And because, in the continued distractions of so many years and so many and great revolutions, many grants and purchases of estates have been made to and by many officers, soldiers, and others, who are now possessed of the same and who may be liable to actions at law upon several titles, We are likewise willing that all such differences, and all things relating to such grants, sales, and purchases, shall be determined in Parliament, which can best provide for the just satisfaction of all men who are concerned.

And We do further declare that We will be ready to consent to any act or acts of Parliament to the purposes aforesaid and for the full satisfaction of all arrears due to the officers and soldiers of the army under the command of General Monk; and that they shall be received into our service upon as good pay and conditions as they now enjoy.

Edward P. Cheyney, ed. *Readings in English History Drawn from the Original Sources: Intended to Illustrate a Short History of England* (1908):505–507.