

ORIGINAL LETTER, GIVING A CONTEMPORARY
RELATION OF THE DEATH OF CHARLES II.

*Communicated by Lieut.-Gen. the Hon. Sir Edward Cust,
President.*

(READ 13TH MARCH, 1862.)*

THE very interesting picture on this subject, by the Royal Academician, Ward, that has been exhibited during the past season in London and Liverpool, has brought the circumstances attending the death of Charles II so prominently before us, that an original letter found in the library of Simon Yorke, Esq., of Erddigg Park, may be an inducement to the Historic Society to enter into the subject, although the manuscript is no more than an account of the king's death, as current in the capital the day afterwards.

“No transactions in history ought to be more accurately known to us than those which took place round the death-bed of this sovereign. We have several relations extant, written by persons who were actually in the room; we have several relations written by persons who, though not eye-witnesses themselves, had the best opportunities of obtaining information from eye-witnesses; yet whosoever attempts to digest this vast mass of materials into a consistent narrative, will find the task a difficult one.”

These are Macaulay's words; but he has executed the task himself in his own eloquent and concise language, and we have besides the narrative of Rapin, Hume, Bishop Burnet, Lingard and Miss Strickland, all which nearly agree together in the main; and the letter of John Edisbury to his brother, the squire of Erddigg, is also corroborative of the principal circumstances. The manuscript runs thus:—

Dear Brother,

Upon Friday a quarter before 12 the king resigned his soul to Almighty God. A little before he dyed the room was cleared

only the Duke the E. of Bath and another lord What was said I cannot hear, only the king gave him the Duke his breeches and told him there were papers that concerned him in his pocket and gave him the key of his closet. Some while before he mentioned his 2 sons that were unprovided for. I cannot hear that he mentioned the D. of Monmouth in all his sickness to the Duke or any that waited upon him. The king altered about 2 on Thursday and since that time there was little hopes. Blessed be God he kept his understanding all the while till 3 hours before death, and most of those 3 hours at intervals. The queen is in great perplexity and all her servants. A little before the k's death the queen sent to ask him pardon for all her faults the k. said he knew only his own for which he asked her pardon.

All things God be praised in a great calm the Duke proclaimed about 4 o'clock : there first went a troop of grenadiers, then all the heralds and the principall gave my Lord Mayor the reason of this attendance there was read the enclosed proclamation subscribed by the Council and lords after the heralds came the queen's coach, then the Archbps, Ld Keepers, Presidents Privy Seal, Dukes, Earls, &c. But I am much mistaken for after the troop of grenadiers came a full troop of the guards, abt 200, then before the heralds came the messengers [*sic*. in original] and so on as I said before. After the king's death the Duke came to the counsell and spoke to them after this sort. My lords now the crown is descended upon me. I do declare I will never alter the government as it is now established in Church and State and I will sacrifice the last drop of my blood to maintain the protestant religion and as far as in me lyes I will follow my late brother's example.

I hear this is to be at large in a declaration which my Ld Keper and Privy Seal are to draw this up for the people. I have enclosed 2 proclamations, and I will send you the other as soon as I can get it. The words are sent by Harrison. I have nothing more as I remember, I am

Your loving brother,

Feby 7

JOHN EDISBURY.

I forgot to tell you the king expressed a great deal of kindness toward the Duke.

Addressed—

These
for Josua Edisbury, Esq.,
Erthigg near
Wrexham,

Endorsed—

Denbighshire.

K. Charles dyed
Feb 1684.