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A Letter to a Person of Honour, concerning the  
 B L A C K B O X.

**Y**OU are pleas'd to command me to give you some account of the Foundation of that Report which hath arriv'd with you concerning a *Black Box*; and withall to let you know how Sir *Gilbert Gerard* acquitted himself at his appearance before the King and Council in reference to that affair. As to the first, I must crave leave to distinguish betwixt what is *material* in that business, and what is merely *circumstantial*, and serveth only by way of *parade*. Your Lordship, whose conversation hath given you great advantages of knowing the reports of the World in relation to the *King's Marriage* with the *Luke of Monmouth's Mother*, can easily recollect that there was never so much as a suggestion given out, till of late, of any such thing as a *Black Box*, nor of a Writing importing a Contract consign'd by the late *Lord of Durham* to the Custody of Sir *Gilbert Gerard*. And had there been any thing of that consequence committed to and entrusted with him, he is both a person of that Honour and Courage as to have dar'd to have own'd and justified it; and a Gentleman of that discretion and wisdom that he would ere this have acquainted the Parliament with it, to whom both the Cognisance and Decision of a matter of so grand importance do properly belong. But in truth, the whole referring to the *Black Box*, is a meer Romance, purposely invented to sham and ridicule the business of the Marriage, which indeed hath no relation to it. For they who judg'd it conducive to their present Interest to have the *D. of M's.* Title to the Crown not only discredit'd but expos'd, thought it necessary, instead of nakedly enquiring whether he be the *King's Legitimate* or only *Natural Son*; to bring up on the Stage a circumstance no way annex'd with it, supposing that this being found a Fable, the *Marriage* it self of the *K.* with the said *D's. Mother*, would have undergone the same Censure. But by what I do perceive they were mistaken in their measures; seeing most men know how to separate what they endeavour'd so artificially to have interwoven. And all that I can apprehend they are like to get by it is, the raising a Devil they will not easily lay.

For, *My Lord*, it is in the first place apparent, that the starting of this business is to be wholly ascribed to the *Duke of York*, and those under whose Conduict he regulates himself and his concerns. Had any others been the first movers in it, you may be sure they would never have ventur'd it before the Council, as it is now influenced and moulded; but they would have waited till the sitting of the Parliament, where they might expose nothing but Impartiality and Justice.

In the second Place, The very intimation that any besides the D. of Y. do so much as pretend a Title to the Crown, will operate with many to a belief, that it is not without some and reason that they do so. For the only way to undermine men in a matter of vain and groundless credulity, is to neglect and despise them; whereas all endeavours to convince them, do but contribute to the strengthening them in their faith. What will the People say? But that if the D. of M. were not Legitimate Heir would the Papists, by whose Inspirations the D. of Y. governs himself, so effectually, bestir themselves as to desire an affair of so vast importance and wherein the whole Kingdom is concerned, should be judged of by twenty or thirty persons, who have neither Legislative nor Judicial power.

And in the third Place, Should they compass all that they can propose to themselves from the Board, yet it would no way advantage the D. of Y nor give the least prejudice to the D. of M. providing his Claim be just, and can be evidenced so before the great Representative of the Nation. For beyond all peradventure, these things howsoever resolved upon and determined at the Council, will be called over again by the Parliament. Nor will the Opinion of the Table ballance that great wise Body to judge otherwise, than as their Consciences, upon a hearing of the whole matter, shall oblige them. And of what little significancy the Resolves of the Council, though stamped and enforced with the Authority of a King, are to the imposing a Supream Ruler upon the Nation. when a Legal Claim yes in Opposition, we are sufficiently instructed by the Instance of Jane Gray, though a Lady of those Endowments which few of either sex ever parallel'd and recommended at that time to the Nation by many Enducements and Motives.

In the fourth Place, The method of manning this Affair gives us more surprize than all the rest, and seems wholly Calculated, to Intricate matters, rather than clear them. For your Lordship and all others, who are Masters of that sense which you possess, would be ready to conceive, that the main, if not the only thing inquired into, should be, Whether the King was really Married unto Madam Walters, and whether the D. of M. was Born in lawful Wedlock? But in stead of this, all the mighty Inquisition hath been, Whether this or that person had of a Black Box, or of a Contract referring to the Kings Marriage with that Lady, committed to the keeping of Sir Gilbert Gerard. Now what is all this to the reality of the Marriage, seeing it might be transacted, as most other Marriages are, In verbis de presenti, and of which no other Proof can be expected besides the Testimony of such as were personally present.

Fifthly, The persons whom they have in this whole matter summoned before them, and examined adds to the suspicion and encreaseth the astonishment. For People who think congruously to the subject before them, had conceived, That the

the main Scrutiny would have been either in reference to the Assurances given to the *Courtes* of *Weems* concerning the Legitimacy of the *D. of M.* before she disposed her Daughter in Marriage to him, or else that all the Examinations relating to this business would have been principally continued to those who were beyond Sea with the King when this Marriage is supposed to have happen'd. *But all this seems to have been industriously waved, for in the room of these, a few persons have been brought before, and Interrogated by the Counsel, who could never be supposed to have heard of it otherwise than by way of vulgar tattle. And as I dare boldly affirm, that there is no one person who is accustomed to the fellowship of the Town, who hath not heard of such a Marriage; so it is uncontrovertably known. That there was in Olivers time, a Letter intercepted from the King to the said Lady, then in the Tower, superscribed, to his Wife. Nor is it unknown with what fear and homage the Kings party in England, at that time paid their Devotion and testified their Obedience to her. For as they addressed her upon the Knee, so by that and many other Symbols, they declared that they esteemed her for no less than the lawful Wife of their King and Master.*

Sixthly, 'Tis of no great concernment, who is the immediate apparent Heir in the Regal Line, if we do but consider that the Parliament of England hath often provided a Successor to the Government, when the Interest of the Publick hath required it, without the least regard to such Purcellio's. They who preferred William Rufus, and Henry the 1st. to Robert, though Eldest Son of William the Conquerour, what can they not do when weighty Reasons and Causes influence them unto it? And they who advanced Stephen before Mand, and John before his Eldest Brothers Son, can they not, when the Safety of the Kingdom requireth it, put the Scepter into whose hands they please. Nor hath Bastardy it self been an Objection to the conferring of the Crown upon a person, provided all things else have corresponded with the desires and Humours of the People. For not only Atheistan, the Great Saxon King, was such, but Q. Mary or Q. Elizabeth, must be so Blazord, and yet all three were Exal'd to the Regal Throne. And two of them, not only approved themselves worthy of the Trust reposed in them, but have confined down that stock of Fame and Credit, which few attaining unto, hath left a Reproach upon most Princes who have succeeded them. Even Henry the 7th. (from whom our King derives his Title and Right of Succession) sprung from a Bastard, who had nothing to render him capable to convey a Claim to his Posterity, but that he was made Legitimate by Parliament.

Seventhly, The Council had done a thing grateful to the Nation, and consonant to their Oathes and Duty, if in stead of attempting to establish the Duke of York as Heir apparent, they had examined, Whether, notwithstanding his Affinity to the King, he hath not by manifold Treasons against

the Person of his Majesty, as well as against the Government, forfeited his Life to Justice, and made himself obnoxious to a Scaffold, while he is pretending to a Thorne. He is yet a Sub cēt, and accountable for the Breach of the Laws, and why his Crimes should find Shelter in his Greatness, I know not. 'Tis in vain to pretend to the Right of Succession, when his Treasons were a Self Deposition, were he actually Regnant. Whosoever Conspires against any one part of the Constitution, forfeits all he can Claim by any other branch of it. To be accessory to a Plot for the destruction of the People, is to abdicate himself from all Legal pretences of Reigning over them. Now the seducing so many of his Majesties Subjects from the established Religion, the countenancing the Burning of London, the endeavouring to alter the limited Monarchy into a Despotick Rule, and the combining with the Papists in all the parts of the Late Plot, make him lyable to the AX, while he is aspiring to a Scepter.

Eighthly, A more unaccountable thing yet than all the former is, to see the King so far concern himself in having the Succession declared and determined. For it is not usual to find a Prince appear in favour of a Brother; when so many are in the Belief, that he hath a Legitimate Son of his own. Many Kings have endeavoured the advancement of their Bastard Children, to the exclusion of their nearest Relations of the right Blood; Only Charles the 2d will be the first on the File of History, that when nothing but his bare Word was needful to the settling his Dominions on his Son as Legitimately born, He alone, and in the face of strong Suspitions to the contrary would insinuate him to be only his Natural Son, and for no other reason but that he would gratify his greatest Enemies. I'm sure we read of few Kings that ever gave any great Countenance to their Brethren, when they were their presumptive Heirs, though in the mean time they would not deprive them of their Legal Rights, providing they came to out-live them. Yea there are not many Ages past since the Heir apparent's being only attended by a greater Train than the King then reigning over these Kingdoms used to be accompanied with, is thought to have given that jealousy to the Father as cost the young Gentleman his Life. Surely considering the present posture of affairs, and the obnoxiousness of the Papists to the Law, for their many and continued Conspiracies against his Majesties Person, the Lives of the People, the Protestant Religion, and the Peace and Safety of the Government; it were the King and Kingdoms Interest to have the D. of Y's Title as to his Succeeding to the Crown, to be left undetermined and doubtful. Nor can any thing so effectually conduce both to the Kings own Security, and that of his Protestant Subjects, as to leave the D. of Y. under a Belief, that should the King be taken away, there is one still behind, that can dispute the Crown with him. Nor can the D. of Y. pursuing the having the Right of Successi-



on at this time settled, intimate less to considering persons, but that the Papists entertain new Designs against his Majesties Life, and that they want such a Declaration for the hastening of the Execution of them. Your Lordship knows that Q. Elizabeth would never positively name her Successour, though often importuned by Parliaments so to do; for she very well understood, that if this had been once done, she should afterwards Reign only by his courtisie, and owe the remain of her Life, and the Peace of the Government to his own Grace and Favour whom she had published for presumptive Heir. And truly the Kings falling so immediately ill after th. D. of Y. had so earnestly sollicitd for a formal Declaration of his being next Heir to the Crown, occasioned some mens grounds of Fear, that his dispatch is not only resolved, but the Springs and Causes of it disposed before, and that all things being ripe, this was merely contrived to facilitate the Dukes Entrance upon the Government.

In brief matters are arrived at that pass, that the Papists cannot suffer the King to continue, and the Duke and they long escape the demerit of their actions. For as his Majesty cannot sublist nor preserve the Reputation of his Crown and Government, many months longer without a Parliament, no more can they, through the number, quality and palpableness of their Crimes bear one. So that the necessity of their Affaires, as well as their Inclinations, seconded by their Principles, oblige them by one means or another to remove him. Wherein if they succeed, as I see no rational foundation of Judging but that they will, there is no hing remains towards the preserving our Religion, Lives and Liberties, but to endeavour according to the Vote and Resolve of the last Parliament, to revenge his Death upon the Papists. 'Tis true the King would not be prevailed upon by any Importunities, though frequently made by the D. at the Board on Wednesday last to order a Council-Table Declaration in favour of Torke right to Succeed in case His Majesty should dye before him, yet the business would appear to be so far gone, and all things so disposed already in prospect of what they intend, that they cannot without hazarding their whole concernements recal themselves from their purpose of murdering him. Yea the Kings not gratifying the Duke in his so often repeated suit, will now serve only to possess them with apprehensions of jealousy and make them accelerate rather than delay the wickedness. 'Tis possible they may foresee that it will be accompanied with greater hazards than it would have been, could they have compassed that Business. But they are gone past retreat, and must either perish by the Sword of Justice, or seek to protect themselves, by destroying the King. And though this failure give them greater apprehensions that they must seek their safety by recourse to force, than there would have been cause for, had the Duke obtained such a Declaration;

Declaration; yet men in their circumstances, and where there is no *Medi-*  
*um*, will choose rather to venture the being slain in the field, than hang'd  
 on a Gibbet, or to have their Heads cut off upon a Block.

My Lord, having endeavour'd to obey you in one of your Commands, I shall in the  
 next place apply my self to the consideration of your second. And to ease your *Lordship* of  
 all unnecessary and superfluous trouble, I shall not entertain with any long Character of  
 Sir *Gilbert Gerrard*, as presuming that that Gentleman is fully known unto you. All I shall  
 therefore say concerning him is, That he is still the same, and of the same Principles he  
 was when he suffer'd so much for the King in the late Times. That is, *He is a Loyal Sub-*  
*ject, a good Protestant, and a true Englishman; one who will Obey his Prince as far as Consci-*  
*ence, Law, and Honour will allow him, but will sacrifice none of these, neither upon Mercenary*  
*terms, nor to avoid impending dangers.* And as it were happy for the King, were all his  
 Subjects of that Figure; 't would greatly redound to the Honour of the Church of  
 England to have all her Members of that Complexion and Temper. Nor ought his being  
 put out of the Commission of the Peace be construed as any Reflection upon him, seeing  
 he hath so many worthy and deserving Persons, in all the Counties of England sharers  
 with him in the same Fortune. What the occasion of that treatment was, your *Lordship*  
 fully understand, tho' you were no way interested in the Affair; and it is to be hoped  
 that the King may in Time discover the perniciousness of those Counsels which both pre-  
 vented his hearkening to the humble Entreaties of many of his People, and have influ-  
 enc'd him to disoblige a great number of his best Subjects. I'm sure, both his *Majesty* and the  
 Kingdom do already sensibly suffer by it, while the Gentlemen themselves, are only dis-  
 charged from a burthen. There may be possible some mean souls who covet being in the  
 Commission, to obtain a respect in their Country, or to make a gain by their Office and  
 Employment, but Sir *Gilbert* with those other Gentlemen who are in the same predicam-  
 ent with him, are persons, who in their greatest privacies, can command a deference  
 from all about them, and whom God hath blessed both with Estates and Minds which ex-  
 alt them above the temptations of fees for Warrants, or Gratuities for connivance at  
 the breach of his *Majesty's* Lawes.

But my Lord that I may give you the better the History of this Transaction, or rather  
*fairce* concerning Sir *Gilbert Gerrard's* appearing before the Council; you may be pleas-  
 ed to know that he was sent for by a letter under the hand of my Lord *Sunderland* requir-  
 ing him to come immediately up. And because a *Missive* by the Post might have too  
 much preserv'd the Priviledg of a Member of Parliament, and intimated too great a respect  
 to a Gentleman whose Brother had lost his life for owning his *Majesty's* interest under  
*Oliver Cromwell*, and himself undergone costly and severe imprisonments; there was a  
*Creature* stiled a Gentleman Usher order'd to carry the Letter and to bring him to Whit-  
 Hall.

Now though Sir *Gilbert*, was hardly recover'd from a fit of the Stone, and remain'd  
 confin'd by weakness to his Chamber when the *Blades* arriv'd at his House; yet he im-  
 mediately comply'd with the message and address'd himself to his Journey with all the  
 expedition he could, thereby testifying at once his obedience to his *Majesty* and the secu-  
 rity he enjoy'd in his own mind as to his innocency though he knew not what he was sent  
 for. Being come to the Court, instead of meeting with my Lord *Sunderland*, there was an  
 order left for the conducting him to Sir *Coventry* who was then the other Secretary of  
 State, though he hath since resign'd to Sir *Lionel Jenkins*. But whereas every rati-  
 onal man would have apprehended that a Parliament man being seiz'd and brought so far  
 prisoner within the time of priviledg, could have been questioned concerning nothing less  
 than a Plot to assassinate the King, or a Conspiracy of Levying War against the Govern-  
 ment

ment; yet all he was interrogated about was if the late Lord of *Durham* had at any time entrusted him with a *Black Box* containing a Contract of Marriage between the King and the Duke of *Monmouths* Mother, or whether he had seen any such Contract. You may easily apprehend that he was not a little surpris'd after all the fatigue and expence they had put him unto, to find himself examined in relation to so ridiculous and Romantick a story. However being oblig'd to make a civil Answer, he told the Secretary, that he was neither entrusted with such a Box, nor had so much as heard of such a Contract, Which Reply of Sir *Gilberts* being recorded in writing, Mr. *Coventry* was pleas'd to tell him ( by what Warranty we may possibly know some other time ) that he was oblig'd both to subscribe it and to ratify it by an Oath Sir *Gilbert* being more amaz'd than before, reply'd, That as he little imagin'd that he had been sent for upon a business of that nature, seeing he knew no reason why his name should be interest'd in it, so he would neither set his Hand to the Answer he had given, nor take his Oath to confirm it. And indeed he had reason for what he said, for how could he know but that this might be a leading Question to something else, for whosoever had invent'd that fabulous story, might with as much truth and with more sense have charg'd him with some criminal matter. Accordingly in stead of contrasting it further with Mr. *Coventry*, he only ask'd whether he was sent for thither, and taken into Custody as a Criminal, To which the Secretary is reported to have return'd, That he had no other directions than to ask him the fore-going Question, which he endeavour'd by many Arguments to have obtain'd his Reply unto under Oath, But Sir *Gilbert* wholly declining to swear, and representing that he had come a long and tedious Journey whereof he was weary, desir'd to know how he should be disposed of. Whereupon he was told that he might go to his Lodging provided he would promise to attend the King and Counsel the *Monday* following. Where having at the time made his appearance, he was call'd in after that the Judges had been there a quarter of an hour before him. And then his Majesty was pleas'd to tell him that he was not sent for thither to be charg'd with any Crime, but only to make Oath whether the late Bishop of *Durham* had not consign'd to him a *Black Box*, wherein was contain'd a Contract of Marriage betwixt his Majesty and the D. of *M's*. Mother. To which having reply'd as before, and withall excus'd himself from taking any Oath in such cases wherein the Law had not prescribed. There were many Arguments us'd to perswade him, and long *Harangues* representing the mischievous consequences which a doubtful Title might occasion. But he insist'g upon the Rights of an *Englishman*, namely that he ought not be required to swear but in such Cases as the Law did appoint, all the Judges, and in conjunction with them, my Lord *Chancelour*, gave their Opinion, that he was oblig'd by the Law to take his Oath in a matter of this great moment which no le's threaten'd the Nation than what fell out between the Houses of *Tork* and *Lancaster*. Which accordingly he did, to the purport already intimated, viz, That he knew no such thing as a *Black Box* nor any thing relating to such a Contract of Marriage as he was then interrogated about. Now my Lord, I know not how a Gentleman could have carried it with more Truth Courage and Honour, than Sir *Gilbert* did. For, as the Opinion of the Judges were to over-rule him as to what was Law, so only a Parliament is capable of judging whether they acted consonantly to their Duty. And till that happy hour of *Deliverance* come, I commend your *Lordship* to the divine Protection. And am,

*My Lord, Your most*

London, *May*, 15.

*Bumble* Servant.

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This comes from no body but  
Suborned by Governall of Lithuania







