

[GOVERNMENT OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, 1820] [1]

[1 George 4]

**[Proclamation for encouraging virtue and punishing immorality]**

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**By the KING.**

**A PROCLAMATION,**

**For the Encouragement of Piety and Virtue, and for the preventing and punishing of Vice, Prophaneness, and Immorality.**

*GEORGE, R.*

**W**E, most seriously and religiously considering, that it is an indispensable duty on us to be careful, above all other things, to preserve and advance the honour and service of Almighty God, and to discourage and suppress all vice, prophaneness, debauchery, and immorality, which are so highly displeasing to God, so great a reproach to our religion and government, and (by means of the frequent ill examples of the practices thereof) have so fatal a tendency to the corruption of many of our loving subjects, otherwise religiously and virtuously disposed, and which (if not timely remedied) may justly draw down the divine vengeance on us and our kingdoms;

we also humbly acknowledging that we cannot expect the blessing and goodness of Almighty God (by whom kings reign, and on which we entirely rely) to make our reign happy and prosperous to ourself and our people, without a religious observance of God's holy laws:

to the intent, therefore, that religion, piety, and good manners may (according to our most hearty desire) flourish and increase under our administration and government, we have thought fit, by the advice of our privy council, to issue this our royal proclamation, and do hereby declare our royal purpose and resolution to discountenance and punish all manner of vice, pro[p]haneness, and immorality, in all persons of whatsoever degree or quality within this our realm, and particularly in such as are employed near our royal person;

and that, for the encouragement of religion and morality, we will upon all occasions distinguish persons of piety and virtue, by marks of our royal favour;

and we do expect and require, that all persons of honour or in place of authority will give good example by their own virtue and piety, and to their utmost contribute to the discountenancing persons of dissolute and debauched lives, that they being reduced by that means to shame and contempt for their loose and evil actions and behaviour, may be thereby also enforced the sooner to reform their ill habits and practices, and that the visible displeasure of good men towards them may (as far as it is possible) supply what the laws (probably) cannot altogether prevent:

And we do hereby strictly enjoin and prohibit all our loving subjects of what degree or quality soever from playing on the Lord's Day at dice, cards, or any other game whatsoever, either in public or private houses, or other place or places whatsoever;

and We do hereby require and command them and every of them decently and reverently to attend the worship of God, on every Lord's Day, on pain of our highest displeasure, and of being proceeded against, with the utmost rigour that may be by Law:

and for the more effectual reforming all such persons who by reason of their dissolute lives and conversations are a scandal to our kingdom, our further pleasure is, and we do hereby strictly charge and command all our judges, mayors, sheriffs, justices of the peace, and all other our officers and ministers, both ecclesiastical and civil, and all other our subjects whom it may concern, to be very vigilant and strict in the discovery and the effectual prosecution and punishment of all persons who shall be guilty of excessive drinking, blasphemy, profane swearing and cursing, lewdness,

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[1] *Edinburgh Gazette*, no. 2782, 25 February to 29 February 1820, p 57.

prophanation of the Lord's Day, or other dissolute, immoral, or disorderly practices;

and that they take care also effectually

to suppress all public gaming houses and places, and other lewd and disorderly houses;

and to put in execution

the statute made in the twenty-ninth year of the reign of the late King Charles the Second, intituled, "*An Act for the better observation of the Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday;*" and

also so much of an act of parliament made in the ninth year of the reign of the late King William the Third, intituled, "*An Act for the more effectual suppressing of blasphemy and prophaneness,*" as is now in force, and

all other laws now in force for the punishing and suppressing any of the vices aforesaid; and

also to suppress and prevent all gaming whatsoever in public or private houses on the Lord's Day;

and likewise that they take effectual care to prevent all persons keeping taverns, chocolate-houses, coffee-houses, or other public houses whatsoever, from selling wine chocolate, coffee, ale, beer, or other Liquors, or receiving or permitting guests to be or remain in such their houses, in the time of divine service on the Lord's Day, as they will answer it to Almighty God, and upon pain of our highest displeasure.

And for the more effectual proceeding herein, we do hereby direct and command all our judges of assize and justices of the peace, to give strict charges at their respective assizes and sessions for the due prosecution and punishment

of all persons that shall presume to offend in any of the kinds aforesaid, and

also of all persons that, contrary to their duty, shall be remiss or negligent in putting the said laws in execution;

and that they do, at their respective assizes and quarter-sessions of the peace, cause this our royal proclamation to be publicly read in open court, immediately before the charge is given:

and we do hereby further charge and command every minister in his respective parish-church or chapel to read, or cause to be read, this our proclamation, at least four times in every Year, immediately after divine service, and to incite and stir up their respective auditories to the practice of piety and virtue, and the avoiding of all immorality and prophaneness.

And to the end that all vice and debauchery may be prevented, and religion and virtue practised by all officers, private soldiers, mariners, and others who are employed in our service by sea and land, we do hereby strictly charge and command all our commanders and officers whatsoever, that they do take care to avoid all prophaneness, debauchery, and other immoralities, and that by their own good and virtuous lives and conversations, they do set good examples to all such as are under their care and authority; and likewise take care of and inspect the behaviour of all such as are under them, and punish all those who shall be guilty of any the offences aforesaid, as they will be answerable for the ill consequences of their neglect herein.

Given at our Court, at Carlton-House, this twelfth day of February one thousand eight hundred and twenty, and in the first year of our reign.

**GOD save the KING.**

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