

A letter on the necessity of a public inquiry into the cause of the death of ... the Princess Charlotte and her infant / [Jesse Foot].

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A
LETTER
ON THE
Necessity
OF A
PUBLIC INQUIRY
INTO THE
CAUSE OF THE DEATH
OF
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE
PRINCESS CHARLOTTE
AND
HER INFANT,

As it appeared in the Sun Newspaper, Nov. 13th, together with some
Additions.

BY JESSE FOOT, ESQ.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. WALKER, 44, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1817.

J. E. T. E. R.

MISSISSIPPI

PUBLIC INQUIRY

CAUSE OF THE DEATH

H. R. ROYAL HIGHNESS

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE

HER ANCESTRY



BY JESSE T. E. R.

SECOND EDITION

1857

PRINTED FOR J. WATKINS, 44, WATERLOO STREET, LONDON

1857

A

LETTER.

THE shock which the whole nation has felt by the death of her Royal Highness the Princess CHARLOTTE and her INFANT, has thrown the people of England into a deplorable state of melancholy, perhaps never so universally and so extensively experienced before under any calamitous circumstance whatsoever.

We are called upon as a coroner is upon an inquest, to ascertain how the particular and unfortunate visitation hath fallen so heavily upon the whole nation, and at a time too when its hopes were elevated to the highest pitch of expectation; when, looking forward, in the transports of joy, with "sure and certain hope" that the offspring of a branch so promising would tend to perpetuate the descent of so valuable, so religious, and so endearing a mother. I repeat it, the shock cannot but be felt, from the sudden change of so high an expectation, without exciting an extraordinary alarm in every breast. It cannot but be so felt, not only in England, but over all Europe. The general conversation that has passed, up to the period of my writing this paper (for I would not sit down to write till I had heard all that

has been publicly printed upon the subject), embraces nothing but what is about this uncommon and fatal catastrophè.

The newspapers are perused with the most eager and close attention, in order to discover the figure of Truth, to lead the reader through the labyrinth of contradiction, yet notwithstanding, we cannot discern, from a combination of all the relations, the true cause which produced so sudden and so fatal an effect—all that we really know is—that we lost the concentrated hopes of England on Thursday morning at half-past two o'clock.

In the *Times* newspaper of Thursday we were prepared, by the following paragraph, to understand, that on the Monday the labour had scarcely commenced. It runs thus: “We hope that her Royal Highness’s labour may appear in some degree longer, because recourse was had to professional skill earlier than is the case with persons in an humbler situation.”—On Friday morning there appeared, in all the papers, one only authenticated letter, shewing that it was drawn up at Claremont by one hand, with an intention of informing the public at once of all the circumstances that had occurred during this eventful process; so that if we were to sit down contented with that relation, and had no other resource left us, we must surrender ourselves up to that knowledge only. Two out of the three bulletins (as they

call them) flattered our prospects; the last deadened them: and, upon the whole, it appears, that on the Monday there was no labour at all; that it was only a day of, what is called by nurses, *grumbling*. Then comes forth a bulletin to shew at what time her Royal Highness was first taken in labour, and which bulletin is dated “Wednesday morning, 8 o’clock.”—

“The labour of her Royal Highness the Princess CHARLOTTE is going on very slowly, but we trust favourably.

“M. BAILLIE, R. CROFT, J. SIMS.”

Then this was followed by a second bulletin, viz.—

“Wednesday Evening, Half-past 5 o’clock.

“The labour of her Royal Highness the Princess CHARLOTTE has, within the last three or four hours, considerably advanced, and will, it is hoped, within a few hours be happily completed.

“M. BAILLIE, R. CROFT, J. SIMS.”

And then comes the third and last, dated

“Wednesday, 10 o’clock.

“At nine o’clock this evening, her Royal Highness the Princess CHARLOTTE was delivered of a still-born male child; her Royal Highness is doing extremely well.

“M. BAILLIE, R. CROFT, J. SIMS.”

In addition to these bulletins, which I should rather call well-authenticated dispatches, the account to which I alluded, and which gave a general information to the public, appeared in all the papers. This account may be easily referred to, every newspaper on the same day having had a similar copy, word for word. It must, therefore, be taken for granted, that such a paper contained all that is intended for the information of the public, upon this afflicting, melancholy, and unparalleled event. If, then, the public cannot procure any further information from any other authority, they must be satisfied with what is thus told them; or, if the agitation of the public mind has raised an anxious disposition to know every relative occurrence which passed during the short, but lacerating interval of time, embracing only about forty-seven hours, that anxious disposition will naturally continue unabated. Until the truth be obtained, there will be a strong propensity to seek, through every channel possible, for more information; and with the hopes of obtaining it, truth and falsehood will be so jumbled together, for want of more particular and well-authenticated documents, that it will be impossible for the public mind to be put to rest until the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, be placed before them.

Forty-seven hours embraced the time of suffering, and the time for inquiry into that suffer-

ing, and there are during that time but three bulletins; so that we are apprized only of three periods of that which furnished, minute by minute, the slow and unchecked progress of death; every minute of which time acted as if human art had nothing to do with the catastrophe! A blast from lightning could not have been more decisive!

I have said, that truth and falsehood in the public papers will be jumbled together, and as a proof of it, if the papers be searched, and if information be obtained that did not come directly from authenticated dispatches, there will be shewn contradictions to those authenticated dispatches. And I shall not only shew contradictions, but I shall also shew apparently designed omissions of very great importance, and such omissions as clearly prove, to my mind, that they ought not to have been kept back from the public knowledge: I might say for myself, that had I been in such a situation, I should have felt a self-accusation in having thus concealed what I could have told.

It will be curious for the public to know that the *Morning Chronicle* only, although the *Times*, the *Post*, the *Courier*, and the *Sun*, seem to be furnished from the fountain head, has the important information to convey to us, *that Dr. SIMS was not in the chamber of the Princess, neither before nor at the delivery*, and yet his name is annexed to three authenticated dis-

patches! There is nobody, there is not a woman in this country, that has experienced the *Tactus eruditus* in the practice of midwifery, but who must know that nothing less than what that proof demonstrates can justify a signature to a situation so conditioned; so that it appears, as far as we can thread that maze in which the authenticated dispatches have entangled us, that there is yet much, too much, to be explained. Perhaps it might be said that the high reputations for skill of DR. BAILLIE, and Sir RICHARD CROFT, must not be disputed; and it might be very easily inferred that, as they married two sisters, the daughters of the late DR. DENMAN, there was, in all probability, a consonancy of opinion between them, which could not be shaken by a third person; for if DR. SIMS signed the authenticated dispatches, from their report to him of the situation of the Princess, he must have signed the bulletins from their report, for he could know nothing else but what they told him, or what MRS. GRIFFITHS (the nurse) might have told him.

If it be true that DR. SIMS never was in the chamber of the Princess, during the labour and the delivery, I cannot anticipate in my imagination more than one reason for his absence, namely, that it might be feared, as the Princess had never seen DR. SIMS before, his person would alarm her, and consequently act upon her, to her prejudice. This consideration might

be well founded, but such a risk argues a great want of foresight. Common precaution, without any extraordinary exertion of the mind, should have instructed those who had the charge of the Princess, to have introduced DR. SIMS to her ROYAL HIGHNESS some time before, that his person might be as familiar to her as that of DR. CROFT. This measure would have been in reality a double security against danger, if one or the other of them had failed from sickness; and that consideration might have been assigned to her ROYAL HIGHNESS as the reason why it was prudent to introduce him, for if Sir RICHARD CROFT had fallen ill her ROYAL HIGHNESS must then have had a stranger! *Sed humanum est errare.*

Quere. Was DR. SIMS ever in the chamber of the Princess before her delivery, or at her delivery?

If DR. SIMS was not in the chamber of the Princess before or at the delivery, I think, in his reflecting moments, he might be led to exclaim, somewhat after a line from the noble-minded Lord BYRON,

“What business had I there at such a time!!”

And so may DR. BAILLIE perhaps also.

Another dilemma has been disclosed since the publication of my Letter in the *Sun* on the 13th instant, for every article in the deplorable transaction comes forth to the Public from some

untoward cause or other, bit by bit, as mortal essences chymically extracted from deleterious matter. The Letter to Dr. SIMS summoning him to Claremont is said to be written on Tuesday morning, and Dr. SIMS is said not to have arrived at Claremont until Wednesday morning, 3 o'clock. What is the history of that Letter? When was the Letter sent? Who carried it? When and to whom was it delivered? And what reason has been assigned why Dr. SIMS did not arrive at Claremont sooner?

We have all seen in the Public Prints the copy of a Letter from Sir BENJAMIN BLOOMFIELD, by command of his Royal Highness the PRINCE REGENT, to Sir RICHARD CROFT. As this Letter is dated the 8th of November, and as it is a Letter in consequence of a Medical Report of the parties directly concerned in all that passed in the fatal chamber of her late Royal Highness the PRINCESS CHARLOTTE, *the Public are notwithstanding still left in the same unexplanatory dilemma they were before.* The information which his Royal Highness the PRINCE REGENT received from the learned Doctor, and which induced his Royal Highness to give that command, could not have been given *after* the 8th, which is the date of the Letter, but might have been given, and most probably it was, on the 7th, the day after the deplorable catastrophe.

This must have been a period in grief of the highest affliction, when the heart of his Royal Highness was in its extremest fulness. Every one must know that his Royal Highness the PRINCE REGENT must be content to receive that Report which was given him from a gentleman or gentlemen only who had been present in the fatal chamber, and every one must be satisfied that the Report was made to his Royal Highness in the most consoling manner possible.

As I know not how to express what I feel on the condition of his Royal Highness's state of mind when the dismal tidings were imparted to him better than by what follows, let these words from CASIMIR speak for me:—

*Vires amicis perdit in auribus
Minorque semper dividitur dolor
Per multa permissus vagari
Pectora——*

Now we come to another disputed *dilemma* whether or not the faculty did retire to rest, as we were told in the authenticated dispatches: or whether, as we have been told since, Sir RICHARD CROFT remained in the chamber from the time of the labour to the death?—*That is the question.*

All the newspapers on Friday morning told us, from one authenticated dispatch, that Mrs. GRIFFITHS discovered that the Princess could not swallow her gruel, and that she was so rest-

less, that Mrs. GRIFFITHS was prompted to give the alarm, by calling up the faculty out of their beds.—Here is another *dilemma* in which the public are left, and which they are particularly anxious to have cleared up to their satisfaction; for, if Sir R. CROFT *did sit up*, and *was in the chamber*, there was no occasion to *call him*, and Mrs. GRIFFITH's name is used to no purpose. I, as well as the public, want very much to know what support the Princess had after her delivery, *when she could have swallowed*, and before the fatal hour had drawn so near *that she could not swallow*.—I might be permitted here to say that the late Doctor THYNNE, than whom this city never experienced a more enlightened practitioner, always, after a severe protracted birth, gently revived the mother by giving her tea-spoons-full, from time to time, of wine, beaten up with egg, &c. &c.—As to what are called SPASMS, in the authenticated dispatch, I consider the term purely to belong to the late JOHN HUNTER, and to the Lecture-Rooms in Windmill-street; it is a term that is used to express something which *is not understood*, as well as to express something *well understood* and which *is not wished to be explained*. The symptoms of not being able to swallow, and the convulsive action of the body, plainly indicate tokens of a dying patient,—*but not the cause of the patient's dying*.

It is not the intention of the present Writer

to prejudge any man. The friends of Dr. BAILLIE and Sir R. CROFT say, very truly, that no man's reputation stands higher than theirs. Indeed they must have been selected from reputation alone, because this was the first child. All this I grant; but I have also seen it observed in the Newspapers, that their reputation is so high as to preclude Public Inquiry, and that consequently, we are to be left without any farther report than what has been hitherto given; but to that position I must beg leave, at once, as one of the Public, to object. It is enough that good fortune has so far followed the chariot-wheels of these gentlemen, as to advance them forward to so distinguished a practice, and I should conceive that their friends, in their zeal, must have gone too far when they say that professional reputation has placed them above Inquiry; I should be very apt to think that they themselves would, when the Public call for it, readily challenge Inquiry. The Public mind must, and will be satisfied, that what is now only known of a transaction of forty-seven hours, by three authenticated dispatches, must, by a critical Inquiry, be examined into from minute to minute. The result of the examination will, doubtless, be disappointing to the Public if these gentlemen be not, by such Inquiry, solidly confirmed in their high reputations; whereas, now, from contradictions in reports, and from

want of knowledge of more minute facts, their reputations and their skill cannot be seen clearly, on account of the mystery that stands between their high abilities and the truth of the case.

I remember once hearing Lord ASHBURTON say, upon an inquiry into character, "that reputation, like the sensitive plant, fadeth at the touch;" and I feel so much for the honour of these gentlemen, that I cannot help thinking it would be not only a duty, but an act of high professional pride in themselves, to ask for a Public Inquiry.—They mistake me very much who may think that a Public Inquiry would be, in my mind, a subtraction for a moment of any part of their reputation. No such thing,—it is *the circumstances of the case*, and not any reputed blame in them, that imperiously calls for Inquiry *with open doors*. Every day gives us an instance of Boards of Inquiry being called upon, for inquiring into the conduct of men, purely that their reputations shall not be blasted by calumny. A man cannot lose the substance of a little ship of war, without being brought to a Court-Martial. A hero cannot lose a battle by land, without being exposed to a Court-Martial, and shall we tacitly yield to the loss of these hopes of England, without authentically knowing how the dreadful event came to pass? Therefore I trust, that the Gentlemen of the

Faculty will accept the challenge, not forgetting what those who affect to differ from them might say; they might say, that death had made them his *stalking horse*, and that death by them has thus caught his prey in the net. That would not do; they have to defend themselves upon more exalted grounds.—The Public only want a more minute investigation from them, and they cannot have forgotten that the conduct of the business of Bethlem Hospital has been very recently inquired into, without the smallest intention, in the first instance, to fix any blame upon Mr. HASLAM, than whom there is not a man in the kingdom more skilled in his profession; or upon Dr. MONRO, who is not, and could not (notwithstanding the vote of censure upon him) be lessened in public estimation. The general voice dwells upon this melancholy theme, and feels the shock with more intensity than perhaps ever was experienced before in the history of Princes.

With respect to the much-lamented Princess, she is now out of the reach of all sorrow and suffering, and I might be permitted to hope, that not only her Royal Father, but her absent disconsolate Mother also, will find support and solid consolation in a submissive resignation to the ways of Providence; and I cannot help recommending to those females to bear themselves up with fortitude, who have

newly exchanged their conditions from a virgin state, and cherished in their imaginations the natural fruition of becoming matrons, not henceforth to tremble at the example that has passed, like timid doves when they hear the hawk's rustling wing.

I will now close this question, which I conceive to be too solidly founded in reason, and too strongly supported by light and reflection, to be denied a Public Inquiry. Names, in such a case, cannot supply the place of truth, and from such high authority as the moral ARCHDEACON PALEY, I come to his conclusion—"We appear astonished when we see the multitude carried away by sounds: if sounds work miracles, it is always upon ignorance; the influence of names is in exact proportion to the want of knowledge."

JESSE FOOT.

Nov. 18, 1817.

Dean-street, Soho.