

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE LORD FAIRFAX
AND THE COUNSELL OF WARRE THE
BROTHERLY REQUEST OF THOSE THAT
ARE CALLED DIGGERS SHEWETH

THAT whereas wee have begun to digg upon the Commons for a livelihood, and have declared to your Excellency and the whole world our reasons, which are four. First, from the righteous law of Creation that gives the earth freely to one as well as to another without respect of persons. Secondly, by vertue of yours and our victory over the King, whereby the enslaved people of England have recovered themselves from under the Norman Conquest; though wee doe not as yet enjoy the benefitt of our victories, nor cannot soe long as the use of the Common land is held from the younger bretheren by the Lords of Mannours, that as yet sitte in the Norman chaire, and upholde that tyranny as if the kingly power were in force still; and a third reason that moved us to digg was the perswasion of our hartes that the Parliament and Army would make good their bargaine with us; for you promised that if wee would adventure person and purse to recover England from under that Norman oppression you would make us a free people, and you have obtained the victory by your owne and our assistance, and there is nothing wanting from you to us but making good your bargaine to us, for by the law of reason and contract wee have bought our freedom of the Parliament and Army, who have the power of the sword in your hands, by our blood, taxes, and free quarter. And wee are perswaded of your faithfullness to us for two reasons. First, your promises, which as you are Gospell professours wee expect you will make good, and soe give us our freedome, which wee have dearely paid for, and you have received our moneys the fruits of our labours. Secondly, your Covenant

to God, unto whome first wee kept fasting dayes, and praied him to help and deliver this oppressed Nation, and then after any victory over our oppressour Charles you apointed daies of thanks-giving unto God. Now in the third place, God expects from you and the Parliament to performe your Covenant in deede and worke as well as in words, and let the oppressed goe free unto whom you promised freedom; and though you have fought for it, yet wee have paid for it, and soe have purchased that same freedome with you, that is that wee may live in the earth without poverty; for (fourthly) wee digg upon the Common to make the earth a common treasury, because our necessity for food and rayment require it.

Now Sirs, divers repulses wee have had from some of the Lords of Mannours and their servants, with whome wee are patient and loving, not doubting but at last they will grant liberty quietly to live by them; and though your tenderness have moved us to bee requesting your protection against them, yet wee have forborne, and rather waited upon God with patience till hee quell their unruely spirits, and of prosecuting Sauls to make them righteous Pauls; and in regard likewise the souldiers did not molest us, for that you tould us when some of us were before you, that you had given command to your souldiers not to meddle with us, but resolved to leave us to the Gentlemen of the Cuntry and to the law of the Land to deale with us; which wee were satisfied with, and for this halfe year past your souldiers have not meddled with us.

But now Sirs, this last weeke upon the 28th of November, there came a party of souldiers commanded by a cornet, and some of them of your owne Regiment, and by their threatneing words forced 3 labouring men to helpe them to pull downe our 2 houses, and carried away the wood in a cart to a Gentleman's house who hath bin a Cavalier all our tyme of warrs, and cast 2 or 3 old people out who lived in those houses to lye in the open feild this cold weather, (an action more becoming the Turks to deale with Christians then for one Christian to deale with another); but if you inquire into the business you will finde that the Gentlemen that sette the souldyers on are enemies to you, for some of the cheife had hands in the Kentish rising against the Parliament, and wee know, and you will finde it true if you trust them so farr, that [they] love you but from the teeth outward.

Therefore our request to you is this, that you would call your souldiers to accompt for attempting to abuse us without your commission, that the Cuntry may know that you had noe hand in such an unrighteous and cruell act. Likewise wee desire that you would continue your former kindnesse and promise to give commission to your souldiers not to meddle with us without your order, and wee shalbee very thankfull to you and remayne

Yours and England true borne sonnes and frends.

John Heyman

An: Wrenn

Hen: Barton

Joⁿ Coulton

Robert Cosler

John Palmer

Jacob Heard

*in the behalfe of
others called the
Diggers.*

TO MY LORD GENERALL AND HIS COUNCELL OF WARR

SIR,

I UNDERSTAND that Mr. Parson Platt¹ with some other Gentlemen, have made report to you, and the Councell of State, that wee that are called Diggers are a riotous people, and that wee will not bee ruled by the Justices, and that wee hold a mans house by violence from him, and that wee have 4 guns in it, to secure ourselves, and that wee are drunkards, and Cavaleers waiteing an opportunity to helpe to bringe in the Prince, and such like.

Truely Sir, these are all untrue reports, and as false as those which Haman of old raised against sincere harted Mordecay to incense Kinge Ahasuerus against him. The conversacion of the diggers is not such as they report, wee are peaceable men, and walke in the light of righteousness to the utmost of our power. Our enemies have sent divers tymes to beate us, and to pull downe our houses, yet wee never gave them bad language, nor resisted againe, but tooke all their abuses patiently, waiteing upon God till hee make their harts quiett, that wee may live in peace by them; but truely the same things which they falsely report of us, wee and all the people round about us, can and would prove to their faces, if yow should call us face to face, some of them were alwayes Cavaleers, and had a hand in the Kentish rising, and were cheife promoters of the offensive Surry petition; but wee doe not speake this to ripp up old quarrells, neither doe I desire to mencion their names, least yow should thinke wee were enemies; for truely it is our desire to conquer them with love, though they

¹ John Platt became rector of West Horsley in 1643 when the incumbent was ejected by the Presbyterians. He was a member, in 1647, of the Guildford Classis and a "trier" for Surrey. He was ejected from the living by the Act of Conformity in 1662, and died at Westbrook in 1670. As Winstanley says, he was lord of the manor at Cobham "by marriage"; i.e., to Margaret, the daughter of Sir Humphrey Lynde. There is a biographical note on Platt in *Calamy Revised*, by A. G. Matthews (1934), p. 391.

much abuse us that have alwayes bin your friends, as the enemy themselves, if they were face to face, can say not otherwise.

Now Sir, the end of our digging and ploughing upon the common land is this, that wee and all the impoverisht poore in the land may gett a comfortable livelihood by our righteous labours thereupon; which wee conceive wee have a right unto, (I speake in the name of all the poore commoners) by vertue of the conquest over the King, for while hee was in power hee was the successour over [i. e., of] William the Conquerour, and held the land as a conquerour from us, and all Lords of Mannours held tytle to the common Lands from him; but seeing the common people of England by ioynt consent of person and purse, have caste out Charles our Norman oppressour, wee have by this victory recovered ourselves from under his Norman yoake, and the lande now is to returne into the ioynt hands of those who have conquered, that is the commonours, and the land is to be held noe longer from the use of them by the hand of anye who<se those> will uphold the Norman and Kingly power still; and if soe, then wee that are impoverished by sticking to the Parliament and you, shall loose the benefitt of all our taxes, free quarter, and blood, and remayne slaves still to the kingly power in the hands of Lords of Mannours, which wee have cast out of the hands of Charles.

Therefore wee poore oppressed Commoners claime freedome in the common land, by virtue of the Parliaments promises and ingagement, and of the armies actinge; for wee did beleive and rely thereupon, being as wee conceive it a firme bargaine between you and us; for you and the Parliament in effect said to us, 'Give us your taxes, free quarter, excise, and adventure your lives with us to cast out the oppressour Charles, and wee will make yow a free people', therefore by the law of contract as wee expected was firmly made and confirmed on our part by performance, wee claime this freedome to enioy the common land for our livelihood, for wee have bought it by our bloud and money.

Secondly, wee claime this freedome by equality in the conquest over the Kinge, for the Parliament told us what they did they did it for the safety and peace of the whole nation, the army told us they fought not for themselves, but for the safety and peace of the whole Nation, and yow and wee ioynd our forces together to procure our freedome, and have obteyned it; therefore if there bee a spoyle of the

common land to be gathered, as there is, it is to bee equally devided betweene yow that went to warr, and wee that stay'd at home and paid you, that is, as the Gentry have their inclosure free to themselves, soe wee the poore impoverisht commoners claime freedome in the common land by vertue of this conquest over the Kinge, which is gotten by our ioynt consent.

Thirdly, wee know that England cannot bee a free Commonwealth, unless all the poore commoners have a free use and benefitt of the land; for if this freedome bee not granted, wee that are the poore commoners are in a worse case then we were in the King's dayes, for then wee had some estate about us, though we were under oppression, but now our estates are spent to purchase freedome, and wee are under oppression still of Lords of Mannours tyranny; therefore [unless] wee that are poore commoners have some part of the land to live upon freely, as well as the Gentry it cannott bee a common wealth, neither can the kingly power bee removed soe longe as this kingly power in the hands of Lords of Mannours rules over us.

Now Sir, if you and the Counsell will quietly grant us this freedome, which is our owne right, and sett us free from the kingly power of Lords of Mannours, that violently now as in the Kings dayes holde the commons from us, (as if wee had obteyned noe conquest at all over the kingly power), then the poore that ly under the great burden of poverty, and are alwayes complayning for want, and their miseries increased because they see noe meanes of releife found out, and therefore cry out continually to you and the Parliament for releife and to make good your promises, wilbe quietted.

Wee desire noe more of yow then freedome to worke, and to enioy the benefitt of our labours—for here is wast land enough and to spare to supply all our wants—but if yow deny this freedome, then in righteousness wee must raise collections for the poore out of the estates, and a mass of money will not supply their wants; because many are in want that are ashamed to take collection money, and therefore they are desperate, and will rather robb and steale, and disturb the land, and others that are ashamed to beg would doe any worke for to live, as it is the case of many of our diggers that have bin good housekeepers; but if this freedome were granted to improve the common lands then there would bee a supply to answer everyones inquire, and the murmurings of the people against yow and the

Parliament would cease, and within a few yeares wee should have noe beggers nor idle persons in the land.

Secondly, hereby England would bee enriched with all commodity with in it selfe which they each would afford; and truely this is a stayne to Christian religion in England, that wee have soe much land ly wast, and soe many starve for want; and further, if this freedome bee granted, the whole land wilbee united in love and strength, that if a forraigne enemy like an army of ratts and mice come to take our inheritance from us, wee shall all rise as one man to defend it.

Then lastly, if you will grant the poore commoners this quiett freedome to improve the common land for our livelyhood, wee shall reioyce in yow and the army in protecting our worke, and wee and our worke wilbee ready to secure that, and wee hope there will not bee any kingly power over us, to rule at will and wee to bee slaves, as the power has bin, but that you will rule in love as Moses and Joshua did the Children of Israell before any kingly power came in, and that the Parliament wilbee as the Elders of Israell, chosen freely by the people to advise for and assist both yow and us.

And thus in the name of the rest of these called Diggers and Commonours through the land, I have in short declared our mynde and cause to you in the light of righteousness, which will prove all these reports made against us to bee false and destructive to the uniteing of England into peace.

Per me Gerrard Winstanley for my selfe and in the behalfe of my Fellow Commoners.

December the 8th, 1649.