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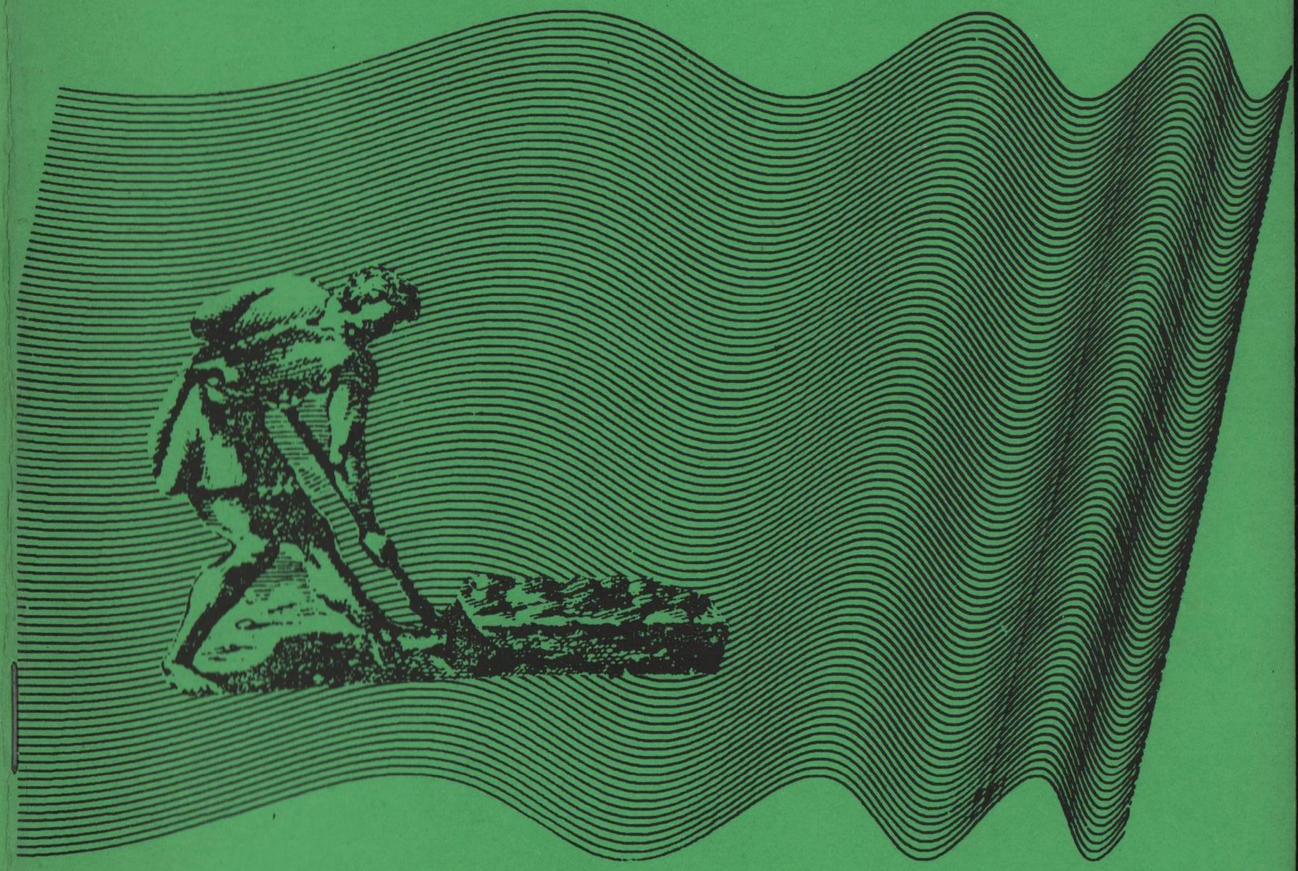

Aporia Press

Digger Tracts, 1649 - 50

edited and introduced by Andrew Hopton

A Mite Cast Into The Common Treasury
A Letter to Lord Fairfax
The Diggers Mirth
The Diggers Song
A Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons (Wellinborrow)
A Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons (Iver)

Aporia Press 1989

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INTRODUCTION

(i)

Active in the years 1649-50, the Digger movement is nowadays best known for the writings of Gerrard Winstanley (1609-76). Since the publication of a collected edition of his works in 1941,[1] modern scholarship has paid considerable attention to Winstanley and his writings and he is now acknowledged to be a figure of major importance in the history of English political thought.[2] However, Winstanley was not the only Digger whose writings were published and it is with the intention of making the works of other participants in the Digger movement more widely available and better known that this publication has been issued.

The Digger community, which was founded on April Fool's Day 1649 at St. George's Hill near Cobham in Surrey by Winstanley and William Everard, was also the source of Robert Coster's *A Mite Cast Into The Common Treasury*. Nothing is known of Coster's background or of his career subsequent to the failure of the Digger experiment and although he, together with many other members of the St. George's Hill community, was a signatory of several of Winstanley's tracts, *A Mite* is the only publication for which Coster's authorship is certain.[3] A letter addressed to Lord Fairfax and the Council of War by members of the Surrey community, including Coster (but not Winstanley), is also reprinted here.

The Surrey Diggers were also responsible for the publication of the songs *The Diggers Mirth* and *The Diggers Song*. The authorship of these songs is uncertain. C.H. Firth, who edited *The Clarke Papers*, in which *The Diggers Song* first appeared, suggests that Winstanley was its author, a suggestion which has been repeated by many later commentators on Winstanley's writings. However, there does not appear to be any firm evidence to support this claim, or L.H. Berens' suggestion that Robert Coster was author of the first part of *The Digger's Mirth* and Winstanley author of the second part.[4]

Although the Surrey community is the most famous example of the Digger movement, it is now acknowledged that there were other colonies at Wellingborough, in Northamptonshire; Iver, in Buckinghamshire; Cox Hall, in Kent; Barnet, in Hertfordshire; Enfield, in Middlesex; Bosworth, in Leicestershire; Dunstable, in Bedfordshire; and possibly also in Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire.[5] Of these communities, those at Wellingborough and at Iver issued the manifestos included in this collection.

The Wellingborough community appears to have been active in the early part of 1650. The copy of their declaration in the Thomason Collection is dated 12 March 1650. Of their activities before this date we know nothing, though we do know something of what subsequently befell this colony. A contemporary newsheet for April 1-8, 1650 gives an account of how emissaries from the Surrey Digger colony were apprehended at Wellingborough in possession of a letter and reports that they were 'going about to incite people to digging, and under

that pretence gathered many of the Wel-affected for their assistance'.[6] It would thus appear that there were definite links between the Wellingborough Diggers and those from Surrey.[7] This incident would appear to have been the cause for action taken against the colony, for the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series* for 1650 gives the following report on April 15:

> Council of State to Mr. Pentlow, justice of peace for county Northampton. We approve of your proceedings with the Levellers in those parts, and doubt not but you are sensible of the mischief those designs tend to, and of necessity to proceed effectually against them. If the laws in force against those that intrude upon other men's properties, and that forbid and direct the punishing of all riotous assemblies and seditious and tumultuous meetings, be put in execution, there will not want means to preserve the public peace against the attempts of this sort of people. Let those men be effectually proceeded against at the next sessions, and if any that ought to be instrumental to bring them to punishment fail in their duty, signify the same to us.[8]

After this, all we know of the fate of the Wellingborough Diggers is what is reported by the Iver Diggers in their declaration of May 1 1650, which again provides evidence of links between the various colonies:

> We wright this, because we have 9. especiall friends that were at work in their own ground as they conceived, and were taken from their righteous Labour, and carried from *Wellingborough* to *Northampton* Goale, and at Sessions last, being the 16. & 17. of *April* last; they could prove nothing against them, and yet would not set them free by Proclamation according to Law; but we hope our honest Army will not passe by there, till they have freed them: the Generalls own Cornet *Spinege* was on the bench, and saw that they could prove nothing against them, we hope he will release them.

This is the last we hear of the Wellingborough Diggers, so it is to be supposed that the colony did not recover from these arrests.

The colony at Iver in Buckinghamshire is only known from the copy of their declaration which survives in London's Guildhall Library. Buckinghamshire had been the location for a group of radical Levellers who had issued three pamphlets which had agitated for equality of property.[9] The third of these *A Declaration of the Wel-affected in the County of Buckinghamshire*, issued almost exactly a year before the declaration of the Iver Diggers, contains the following passage which appears to offer support to the actions of the Diggers:

> 7. And likewise will further and help the said poor to manure, dig, &c. the said Commons, and to fell those woods growing thereon to help them to a stock, &c.
>
> 8. All wel-affected persons that joyn in community in Gods way, as those [in] *Acts* 2, and desire to manure, dig, and plant in the waste grounds and Commons, shall not be troubled or molested by any of us, but rather furthered therein.[10]

Whether this refers to the Diggers active in Iver is unclear. The fate of this colony is also unknown, although the lack of positive evidence suggests that it must

have dispersed soon after their declaration was published. Keith Thomas has shown that the signatories to the declaration were all locals who, as far as it is known from local records, remained in the area after the colony presumably disbanded. Other than this, however, no evidence has come to light to inform us of their fate.[11]

(ii)

Economic conditions in England in 1649 were dire. The 1648 harvest had failed, poor people were starving. Matters had been made worse by the economic disruption caused by the Civil War, demobilised soldiers added to unemployment and heavy taxation increased the financial burden of the common people.[12] The desperate plight of the poor is recounted by the Wellingborough Diggers:

> We are in Wellinborrow in one Parish 1169 persons that receive Alms, as the Officers have made it appear at the Quarter Sessions last: we have made our Case known to the Justices, the Justices have given Order that the Town should raise a Stock to let us work, and that the Hundred should be enjoyned to assist them; but as yet we see nothing is done, nor any man that goeth about it; we have spent all we have, our trading is decayed, our wives and children cry for bread, our lives are a burden to us, divers of us having 5.6.7.8.9. in Family, and we cannot get bread for one of them by our labor; rich mens hearts are hardened, they will not give us if we beg at their doors; if we steal, the Law will end our lives, divers of the poor are starved to death already, and it were better for us that are living to dye by the Sword then by the Famine:

For the Diggers the solution lay in the communal cultivation of the commons and waste land. Squatters had for long resorted to living in these areas and, indeed, the Digger movement has been described as the 'culmination of a century of unauthorized encroachment upon the forests and wastes by squatters and local commoners, pushed on by land shortage and the pressure of population'.[13]

The idea of communally cultivating the commons had been announced by Winstanley in his pamphlet *The New Law of Righteousness* in January 1649. Winstanley, who in his earlier theological works had always insisted on freedom for the poor, announced that he had received a divine command that the people should 'work together; eat bread together'.[14] For Winstanley, 'the meaning of freedom lies in the unrestricted right to use the earth'.[15] Before the Fall there had been no private property. The earth had been created for all mankind to enjoy, therefore it should be made a 'common treasury' in which all men had a birthright to participate; and the way to realise this was to undertake the communal cultivation of the commons.

This divine justification of the Diggers' actions is repeatedly emphasised in their writings. The Iver declaration describes how the Diggers there were 'urged to go forth and Act in this righteous work', while Robert Coster argues that 'the great Creator of all things, ordained that the earth, with the fulness thereof should be a common Treasury of Livelihood for all, and that none should Lord over his own kind'.

For the Diggers ownership of private property (appropriated by the rich at the expense of the poor) was the basis for inequality. Robert Coster, in *A Mite Cast Into the Common Treasury*, argued that it was 'ushered into the Creation, by those two grand disturbers of our Peace, Murther and Theft' and that the communal cultivation of the commons would bring about greater equality, as it would create less demand for rented land: landlords would thus be deprived of the means to make money that way:

> 3. If the Lords of Mannors, and other Gentlemen, had not those great bagges of money brought into them. Then down would fall the Lordliness of their spirits, and then poor men might speak to them; then there might be an acknowledging of one another to be fellow Creatures.

The lack of demand for rented land would also bring about a fall in the price of land.

Another major cause of inequality which the pamphlets constantly refer to was the 'Norman Yoke'.[16] According to the theory, private property had been introduced at the time of the Norman Conquest when William had rewarded his followers by sharing out the lands of the free-born Saxons. His followers had then set themselves up as the Lords of Manors whose descendants were still oppressing the poor, as *The Diggers Mirth* relates:

19.

When he this Land had gain'd,
He presently Ordain'd,
That his chief Souldiers should
This Land by parcels hold,
Owning him to be the Supream,
In paying tribute unto him.

20.

From hence came Lords of Mannors,
With Fines, quit-Rents and Heriots,
And all such cursed things,
Which are payed to these Kings:
And thus the people be broughtdown [sic]
By Lords of Mannors who wear the Crown.

Furthermore, Charles I had been the 'Norman Successor' against whom the people had fought together with Parliament, in order to secure their freedom. Now that Charles had been not only defeated, but executed (on January 30, 1649), the Norman Yoke had at last been cast off. The people should, as a consequence, be restored to freedom by being allowed to cultivate the commons. It was now considered the responsibility of Parliament to grant that freedom:

> ...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 makeing 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'.

Thus wrote Robert Coster and six of his fellow Surrey Diggers in their *Letter to Lord Fairfax*. The Diggers also thought that they were supported in this by two recent acts passed by Parliament, 'these two righteous Acts' as the Wellingborough declaration calls them. Winstanley relates how 'These Acts the People are much rejoyced with, as being words forerunning their freedome, and they wait for their accomplishment that their joy may be full'.[17] The Diggers argued that Parliament would have to free the land as a result of these acts, for as David Petegorsky has explained, the act abolishing the monarchy had 'meant that all charters and grants that had been held in the name of the King and by which the landlords and the priests justified their power were rendered null and void'; the Norman Yoke had been removed, therefore the common land should be returned to the common people; and the act which had declared England a free commonwealth, if it were to be effective, must 'establish those conditions under which alone freedom could be effectively guaranteed; and that, Winstanley [and his fellow Diggers] asserted, meant freedom of access to the land for every individual'.[18]

The gentry and Lords of Manors, as landlords and therefore oppressors of the poor, were constantly attacked by the Diggers. In the *Letter to Lord Fairfax* the Surrey Diggers refer to 'the Lords of Mannours, that as yet sitte in the Norman chaire, and upholde the tyranny as if the kingly power were in force still'. The Iver Diggers were particularly fierce in their criticisms, associating the 'great Landlords' with Cain:[19]

> ...the Lord hath set *Cains* mark upon you, because he will surely find you out, if you do not repent and give over, lye down therefore and submit (and why not) that your Iniquities may no more be in rememberance, and that the cry of your cruelty may be heard no more in the Land.

Landlords were not the only target for the Diggers: lawyers and priests were also seen as oppressors of the poor and as vestiges of the Kingly power which should have been swept away with the abolition of the monarchy. Priests were attacked for exacting tithes from the poor and lawyers for being loyal only to whoever paid the most:

13.

They neither plow nor sow,
Nor do they reap or mow,
Nor any seed do finde,
But Priests the people grinde:
The tenth of all things they do crave;
And thus each man is made a slave.

The Lawyers they are next,
By whom the poor are vext;
Their practice is most base,
For they will plead mens Case,
According to the length o'th' Purse,
And so the Lawyers prove a Curse.

Throughout these writings the Diggers stress the justifications of their cause and are quick to emphasise that they intend to go about their work peacefully and that they do not intend to interfere with the private property of others. The Wellingborough colony resolved 'not to dig up any mans property' and the Iver Diggers also resolved 'not to meddle with any mans propriety, but what is known to be common land'. Despite their announced peaceable intentions the Diggers must have been perceived as a threat, for as far as we know their colonies were quickly suppressed. By the end of 1650 there is no trace of any of the colonies; the Digger experiment had apparently failed. In 1652 Winstanley dedicated his utopian blueprint for a new society, *The Law of Freedom*, to Cromwell, realising that the only hope for its success lay with the Protector. It was not to be: the Diggers faded into obscurity until the end of the last century when interest in Winstanley was rekindled. Since then, despite their small number (the names of about one hundred individuals are known[20]) and the short-lived nature of their colonies, the Diggers - and Winstanley especially - have been increasingly recognised as having played a significant and inspiring role in the history of the English people.

Notes

1. *The Writings of Gerrard Winstanley*, edited by G.H. Sabine (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1941).
2. For Winstanley see: Christopher Hill, *Winstanley: 'The Law of Freedom' and other writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978); David W. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1940); G.E. Aylmer, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley' in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay eds., *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); J.C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954); Gerrard Winstanley, *Selected Writings* (London: Aporia Press, forthcoming June 1989).
3. Coster was not amongst the list of signatories of either of the first two Digger tracts, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* (April 20 1649) and *A Declaration from the Poor oppressed People of England* (June 1 1649), so it is possible that he did not join the Surrey colony until it was already established.
4. *The Clarke Papers* II, edited by C.H. Firth (London: Camden Society, 1894) pp. 221-4; L.H. Berens, *The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth*, (London: 1906) p. 129.
5. Keith Thomas, 'Another Digger Broadside' in *Past and Present*, No. 42, 1969, p. 59.
6. *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages and Proceedings Of, and in relation to the Armies in England and Ireland*, No. 17, April 1-8 1650, p. 179. This account reprints the letter which

was seized (it includes both Winstanley and Coster amongst its signatories) and also lists the places visited by the Surrey emissaries.
7. Keith Thomas has pointed out similarities between the Wellingborough and Iver declarations and *The True Levellers Standard Advanced*, the first tract issued by the Surrey Diggers. Thomas, p. 57.
8. *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, 1650* (London, 1876) p. 106.
9. *Light Shining in Buckingham-shire*, December 5 1648; *More Light shining in Buckingham-shire*, March 30 1649; *A Declaration of the Wel-affected in the County of Buckinghamshire*, May 10 1649.
10. Sabine, pp. 646-7.
11. Thomas, pp. 60-61.
12. See Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 107-8.
13. Thomas, p. 58.
14. Sabine, p. 12.
15. Zagorin, p.56.
16. For a full discussion of the Norman Yoke see Christopher Hill's essay 'The Norman Yoke' in *Puritanism and Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1986) pp. 58-126. In this essay Hill argues that 'the Diggers' was the most comprehensive and drastic restatement of the Norman Yoke theory' (p.89).
17. Gerrard Winstanley, *A New-yeers Gift For The Parliament And Armie*, (London: 1650), p. 1.
18. Petegorsky, p. 203.
19. Hill has pointed out that Winstanley often made allegorical use 'of the stories of Cain and Abel, of Esau and Jacob: the younger brother being the "poor oppressed", the elder brother the rich freeholders' (Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 145-6). It is interesting to note that the author of the second part of *The Diggers Mirth* makes extensive allegorical use of the Esau and Jacob story: this is perhaps why Berens attributes the work to Winstanley.
20. Thomas, p. 60.

A note on the text:
The works reproduced in this edition follow as faithfully as possible the original publications. A few alterations have been made in the case of obvious typographical errors, otherwise the original spelling and punctuation have been preserved throughout. The layout of the original pamphlets and broadsheets has also been followed, though this has been rationalised to fit the format of the present edition. In all instances our aim has been to make the texts as accurate and readable as possible.

The following texts form part of the Thomason Collection in the British Library. The catalogue references and Thomason's date of acquisition are as follows: *A Mite Cast Into The Common Treasury*, E.585 (4), December 18, 1649, *The Diggers Mirth*, E.1365 (3), April 4, 1650, *A Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons why we the Poor Inhabitants of the Town of* Wellinborrow..., 669.f.15 (21), March 12, 1650. *The Diggers Song* and *The Letter to Lord Fairfax* were originally published in *The Clarke Papers*, II, edited by C.H. Firth (London: Camden Society, 1894) pp. 215-17, 221-24. *A Declaration of the grounds and Reasons, why we the poor Inhabitants of the Parrish of* Iver *in* Buckinghamshire..., May 1 1650, is in the Guildhall Library, London. This text was originally identified as a Digger work by Keith Thomas and is reprinted in his article, 'Another Digger Broadside' in *Past and Present*, No. 42, 1969.

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A

M I T E

CAST INTO THE

Common Treasury:

OR,

Queries propounded (for all men to consider of) by him who desireth to advance the work of publick Community.

ROBERT COSTER.

1. WHether all men (by the grant of God) are not alike free, and all to enjoy the Earth with the fulness thereof alike, (*Geneses* 1. from the 26. verse, to the end of the Chapter, and the 9. Chap. from the 1. to the 18. verse,) untill they sell their Birth-right and Inheritance, for a proud idle life: the 2. of the *Thessalonians*, and the 3. Chapter, from the 6. to the 13. verse?

2. Whether the Scriptures in many places, do not complain of mans Lording over his own kind, (as in *Isiah* 3. 15. *Luke* 22.24.25. and 26. verses. *Mat*. 23. chap. from the first to the 13. verse,) Calling such men for their nature and cruelty, *Lyons*, *Wolves*, *Foxes*, *Doggs*, (*Isiah* 56.10.11. *Ezek*. 22.27. The men call some of them, Lords of Mannors, Ministers, and Lawyers?)

3. Whether particular propriety, was not brought into the roome of publick Community, by Murther and Theft; and accordingly have been upheld and maintained? In which Acts of cruelty, whether those devouring Creatures before mentioned, have not been chief, and whether such naked shameless doings do not lie lurking under fig-leave Clothing, such as Sabboth, Fasting, and Thanksgiving dayes, Doctrines, Formes, and Worships?

4. Whether the Lords of Mannors, do not hold their Right and Title to the Commons, meerly from the Kings Will, (which Will proving a Burthen to the Nation, caused the King to loose his head) and whether the strongest point in their Law for the keeping up their Title, be not, *Take him Jaylor*?

5. Whether the Common People of *England* may not seize upon the Land, which is called after their own name, to wit, the Commons, for to dresse and improve it for their best advantage; for these Reasons following, without paying fines, Quit-rents, Heriots, or swearing Fealty, (or any other cursed and diabolicall payments whatsoever) to any Tyrant soever?

First, Because the great Creator of all things, ordained that the earth, with the fulness thereof should be a common Treasury of Livelihood for all, and that none should Lord over his own kind; but that all should love as Brethren, and so glorifie the Creator in the work of his hands.

Secondly. Because the Common People of *England*, have (these six or seven hundred years) been shut out from having any benefit of the Earth, except that which they have bought by their slavish payments. And all this by & through the meanes of that illegitimate Lord and Master propriety, which was ushered into the Creation, by those two grand disturbers of our Peace, Murther and Theft; and therefore now it is high time for them (the Common People) to lay hold upon the wast land, that so they may receive some benefit freely, and may no longer live in a starving condition: and this cannot with reason be denyed by the Gentry and Clergy, if they consider what cruelty they have acted towards their fellow-Creatures these many years, who have a priviledg to the Earth equall with themselves.

Thirdly. Because there is no Statute-Law in the Nation that doth hinder the common people from seizing upon their own Land, (but onely the mercinary wills of men,) and therefore where there is no Law, there is no transgression.

Fourthly. Because oppression and cruelty doth bear so much sway in the Nation, that poor men will be necessitated to make a breach of the Lawes of the Nation, if they are not suffered to labour the Earth for their maintenance.

Whether it would prove an Inlet to Liberty and Freedom, if poor men which want Imployment, and others which work for little wages, would go to digging and manuring the Commons, and most places of the Earth; considering effects that this would produce?

As 1. If men would do as aforesaid, rather then to go with Cap in hand, and bended knee, to Gentlemen Farmers, begging and intreating to work with them for 8d. or 10d. a day, which doth give them an occasion to tyrannize over poor people, (which are their fellow-Creatures,) if poor men would not go in such a slavish posture, but do so as aforesaid then rich Farmers would be weary of renting so much Land of the Lords of Mannors.

2. If the Lords of Mannors, and other Gentlemen who covet after so much Land, could not let it out by percells, but must be constrained to keep it in their own hands, then would they want those great baggs of money, (which do maintain pride, Idleness, and fulness of bread, which are carried into them by their Tenants, who go in as slavish a posture as may be; namely, with Cap in hand, and bended knee, crouching and creeping from corner to corner, while his Lord (rather ther Tyrant) walkes up and down the Roome with his proud lookes, and with great swelling words, questions him about his holding.

3. If the Lords of Mannors, and other Gentlemen, had not those great bagges of mony brought into them. Then down would fall the Lordliness of their spirits, and then poor men might speak to them; then there might be an acknowledging of one another to be fellow-Creatures.

For, what is the Reason that great Gentlemen covet after so much Land, is it not because Farmers and others creep to them in a slavish manner, proffering them great summes of money for such and such percells of it, which doth give them an occasion to tyrannize over their fellow Creatures which they call their Inferiours.

Secondly. And what is the Reason that Farmers and others are so greedy to rent Land of the Lords of Mannors: Is it not because they expect great gaines, and because poor men are so foolish and slavish as to creep to them for imployment, although they will not give them wages enough to maintain them and their Families comfortably: All which do give them an occasion to tyrannize over their fellow-Creatures, which they call their Inferiors.

All which considered, if poore men which want Imployment and others which work for little wages, would go to dresse and improve the common and wast Lands, whether it would not bring down the prizes of Land, which doth principally cause all manner of things to be deare?

Whether a Livelihood be not the right and propriety of every man; Looke in the first Query.

Whether this be not intruded into by those which do impoverish their fellow-Creatures by their buying and selling, and by their inclosng and appropriating the Earth, with the fruits thereof unto themselves (purposely to uphold their Lordly spirits) as most men do; and so (in plain *English*) rob and steale from their fellow Creatures, their proper right and Inheritance?

Whether those Scriptures which say, Love thy Neighbour as thy selfe; and do unto all men as you would they should do unto you: and He that hath this Worlds goods, and seeth his Brother in want, and yet shutteth up the bowells of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? *Matt*. 7.12, *John* the first Chapt. the 3. verse the 17.

And many such Scriptures; Whether they are not least spoken of, and lesse practised among men now a dayes, although in them is contained the whole Law and Prophets?

The Nation is in such a state as this,
to honour rich men because they are rich.
And poor men, because poor most do them hate,
O, but this is a very cursed State.
But those which act from love which is sincere,
Will honour truth where ever it doth appear.
And no repecting of persons will be with such,
but Tyranny they will abhorre in poor or rich.
And in this state is he whose name is here,
your very loving friend, Robert Costeer.

THough we have been sad
yet now we are glad
To see such a joyfull time,
Our miseries they,
Are passing away,
And truth beginneth to clime.
We shall
be freed from the thrall
When Righteousnesse reigneth as King,
The Glory so bright
Shall darken the light
Which comes from the Man of sinne.

Though men do us hate,
yet we in this state
Do suffer joyfully,
Though stripes we receive,
We do them forgive,
Which acts such cruelty.
For we
with them must agree,
Who seeketh our blood to spill,
And thus we may
Their cruelty slay,
Yea thus we shall envy kill.

The Poore long
have suffered wrong,
By the Gentry of this Nation,
The Clergy they
Have bore a great sway
By their base insultation.
But they shall
Lye levell with all
They have corrupted our Fountaine;
And then we shall see
Brave Community,
When Vallies lye levell with Mountaines.

Tyranny have
made many a slave
Within this Land of ours,
But he must packe
For his Power doth cracke
And the day will be ours.
The Priests ball,
and after him call

Saying, you must with us abide,
For if you do goe
Then cometh our woe,
And we shall have no more Tythe.

The Gentry are
Fil'd with the like care,
How they shall their Power maintaine,
For they know
If Tyranny go,
They must packe to France *or to* Spaine.
Therefore they
will this gallant stay,
And hide him undet a backe Gowne,
Or else in a Coach
Will keepe him very close,
Fearing he should be found.

The time indeed
that this cursed seed
Doth as closely in all men;
But chiefly in those
Who are Englands *foes,*
And we do very well know them.
But the light
that shineth so bright
Reveileth this wickednesse,
And it must go
I very well know
To a Land of Forgetfullnesse.

The time is nigh
that this mystery
Shall be no more obscure,
And then we shall see
Such community
As shall always indure,
The Rich and Poore
shall love each other
Respecting of Persons shall fall,
The Father alone
That sits in his Throne
Shall honoured be of all.

The glorious State
which I do relate
Unspeakable comfort shall bring,

The Corne will be greene
And the Flowers seene
Our store-houses they will be fill'd
The Birds will rejoyce
with a merry voice
All things shall yield sweet increase
Then all let us sing
And joy to our King,
Which causes all sorrowes to cease.

FINIS.

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 cannott 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 makeing 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 dearly 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 freedome; 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 loveing, 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 threatening 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 Cavaleer all our tyme of warrs, and cast 2 or 3 old people out who lived in those houses to lye in an open feild this cold weather, (an action more becomeing 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 sett the souldyers on are enemyes to you, for some of the chiefe had hands in the Kentish riseing 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 wuld 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.

The DIGGERS

MIRTH,

OR,

Certain Verses composed and fitted to Tunes, for the delight and recreation of all those who Dig, or own that Work, in the Commonwealth of *England*.

Wherein is shewed how the Kingly power doth still Reign in severall sorts of MEN.

With a hint of that Freedom which shall come,
When the Father shall reign alone in his Son.

Set forth by those who were the original of that so righteous a Work, and continue still successfull therein at *Cobham* in

SURREY.

LONDON,
Printed in the Year, 1650.

The Diggers Christmas-Caroll.

This for a Christmasse-Caroll was invented,
Which here unto your view is now presented;
'Twas writ at that time which you Christmasse call
And had come forth then; but this is all
The reason why it came not forth before,
Becuse we thought for to have added more.
Accept of this therefore with all thy heart,
Thou maist hereafter see a Second part.

To the Tune of the *Spanish Gypsie*.

1.

YOu people which be wise,
Will Freedom highly prise;
For experience you have
What 'tis to be a slave:
This have you ben all your life long,
But chiefly since the Wars begun.

2.

When great Men disagree
About Supremacy,
Then doe they warn poor men
To aid and assist them
In setting up their self-will power,
And thus they doe the poor devour.

(3)

Yet they cunningly pretend
They have no other end
But to set the poor Free
From all their slavery:
And thus they do the poor deceive,
In making them such things believe.

(4)

Their blinde Guides will not spare,
These things for to declare;
Ye they aloud will cry,
Stand for your liberty;
The Gospel that lyes at the stake;
Rise therefore 'tis time to awake.

(5)

The Priests very sensible be,
If the Poor their Liberty see;
Their Tythe-plundering trade will fall,
And then farewell Tythes all.
Then would they not be finely fed,
But they must work for their own bread.

6.

The King an Army did gain,
His power for to maintain;
That Army did pretend
For to be *England*'s friend,
In saving of their Libertie
Which lay at stake and like to die.

7.

Another Army then
Was raised by mighty Men,
That Army to oppose,
Looking on them as Foes:
Likewise these powers did agree
To make the English Nation free.

8.

A Covenant they did take,
And promises they did make
All burthens to remove,
And to unite in love;
Yet we cannot see that good hour,
The taking down of Kingly power.

9.

The Nation willingly
Did maintain this Army,
Their Freedom for to gain;
But as yet all in vain:
For still a Kingly power doth stand
In many persons of this Land.

10.

A Kingly power I say
Doth in most men bare sway,
But chiefly in Lords of Mannors,
And in the Priests and Lawyers:
This Kingly power is their Self-will,
Which in this manner they do fulfill.

11.

The Priests they tyrannize,
By taking of the Tythes;
The poor they much oppresse
By their pride and idlenesse:
No Scripture warrant they can show,
Why any of these things they do.

12.

Therefore I pray consider,
And lay your heads together;
For you will never thrive,
Whilst Priests do gain the Tythe.
But let them work as well as you,
For Reason bids them so to do.

13.

They neither plow nor sow,
Nor do they reap or mow,
Nor any seed do finde,
But Priests the people grinde:
The tenth of all things they do crave;
And thus each man is made a slave.

14.

The Lawyers they are next,
By whom the poor are vext;
Their practice is most base,
For they will plead mens Case,
According to the length o'th Purse,
And so the Lawyers prove a Curse.

15.

Another trick they have,
The Nation to inslave;
Mens quarrels they'll maintain,
Their Moneys for to gain:
Therefore if Lawyers you uphold,
They'l cheat you of your silver & gold.

16.

Therefore my brethren dear,
The Lawyers quite Cashiere;
Go not to them for Law,
For they your sides will claw;
They'l tell you that your case is good,
When they doe mean to suck your blood.

17.

Therefore be rul'd by me,
And do not Lawyers Fee,
But end your suits at home,
Lest you be overthrown;
For if Lawyers gain your estate,
You may repent when 'tis too late.

18.

Besides the Priests and Lawyers,
There be the Lords of Mannors,
Who lay claim to waste Land,
Which by blood-shed was gain'd;
For Duke *William* the *Norman* King,
By much bloodshed this land did win.

19.

When he this Land had gain'd,
He presently Ordain'd,
That his chief Souldiers should
This Land by parcels hold,
Owning him to be the Supream,
In paying tribute unto him.

20.

From hence came Lords of Mannors,
With Fines, quit-Rents and Heriots,
And all such cursed things,
Which are payed to these Kings:
And thus the people be broughtdown
By Lords of Mannors who wear the Crown.

21.

The Lords of Mannors, I say,
Do bear a mighty sway;
The Common Lands they hold,
Herein they are too bold:
They will not suffer men to till
The comon Lands, by their good wil.

22.

But Lords of Mannors must know,
Their title to Commons is low;
For why their title came in
By WILLIAM the Norman King.
But now the *Norman* successor is dead,
Their Royalty to th'Commons is fled.

23.

Therefore let me advise
All those which Freedom prise,
To Till each Heath and Plain,
For this will Freedom gain:
Heriots and Fines this will expell,
A bondage great men know full well.

24.

For we do plainly see,
The Sword will not set's free,
But bondage is increased;
Because our wealth is wasted
By paying Taxes and Free-quarter,
Expecting Freedom would com after.

25.

But Freedom is not wonn,
Neither by Sword nor Gunn:
Though we have eight years stay'd,
And have our Money's pay'd:
Then Clubs and Diamonds cast away,
For Harts & Spades must win the day.

A hint of that FREEDOM which shall come, When the Father shal Reign alone in his Son.

THe Father he is God alone,
nothing besides him is;
All things are folded in that one,
by him all things subsist.

He is our light, our life, our peace,
whereby we our being have;
From him all things have their increase,
the tyrant and the slave.

And when the Father seeth it good,
and his set time is come;
He takes away the tyrants food,
and gives it to the Son.

Then *Esau*'s potage shall be eat,
for which he sold his right;
The blessing *Jacob* shall obtain,
which *Esau* once did flight.

And *Jacob* he shall then arise
although he be but small
Which *Esau* once did much despise
And *Esau* down must fall.

For there must rise a root of *Jess*.
a righteous branch indeed;
Who setteth free him that's opprest
and *Esau* down must tread.

And *Esau* shall the blesing seek,
and with tears shall it crave;
Which he did set unto the meek,
which once he made a slave.

But sing, O *Jacob*, for thy time
of freedom now is come;
And thou thy self judg *Esau*,
the which hath done the wrong.

For to the Son the Father hath
all Judgment given now;
And *Esau* shall be justly judg'd,
which *Jacob*'s seed hath plow'd.

And thou that as a Lord hast Raign'd
over Gods Heritage;
Thy part thou hast already play'd,
therefore come off the Stage.

For when thou think'st thy self most safe
and riches thou hast got;
Then in the middest of thy peace,
torment shall be thy lot.

And of this long time thou hast been told,
but much thou didst it slight;
Therefore *Esau* we must be bold
now for to claim our right.

For now the Father's pointed time,
which he did fore-intend
To set up Freedom, and pull down
the Man which did offend.

The time, I say, it is now come,
in which the Lord will make
All Tyrants servants to the Son,
and he the power will take.

This worldly strength wherewith thou didst
all times thy self repose;
Shall prove but as a broken red,
for thou the field shalt lose.

For there shall rise a mighty Stone,
which without hands is cut;
Which shall the Kingly powers break
he shall be free from shot.

The first that which this Stone shall smite
shall be the head of Gold;
A mortal wound he shall them give
now minde thou hast been told.

FINIS.

THE DIGGERS SONG

You noble Diggers all, stand up now, stand up now,
You noble Diggers all, stand up now,
The wast land to maintain, seeing Cavaliers by name
Your digging does disdaine, and persons all defame
Stand up now, stand up now.

Your houses they pull down, stand up now, stand up now,
Your houses they pull down, stand up now.
Your houses they pull down to fright poor men in town,
But the gentry must come down, and the poor shall wear the crown.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

With spades and hoes and plowes, stand up now, stand up now,
With spades and hoes and plowes stand up now,
Your freedom to uphold, seeing Cavaliers are bold
To kill you if they could, and rights from you to hold.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

Theire self-will is theire law, stand up now, stand up now,
Theire self-will is theire law, stand up now.
Since tyranny came in they count it now no sin
To make a gaole a gin, to sterve poor men therein.
Stand up now, stand up now.

The gentrye are all round, stand up now, stand up now,
The gentrye are all round, stand up now.
The gentrye are all round, on each side they are found,
Theire wisdom's so profound, to cheat us of our ground.
Stand up now, stand up now.

The lawyers they conjoyne, stand up now, stand up now,
The lawyers they conjoyne, stand up now,

To arrest you they advise, such fury they devise,
The devill in them lies and hath blinded both their eyes.
Stand up now, stand up now.

The clergy they come in, stand up now, stand up now,
The clergy they come in, stand up now.
The clergy they come in, and say it is a sin
That we should now begin, our freedom for to win.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

The tithe they yet will have, stand up now, stand up now,
The tithes they yet will have, stand up now.
The tithes they yet will have, and lawyers their fees crave,
And this they say is brave, to make the poor their slave.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

'Gainst lawyers and gainst Priests, stand up now, stand up now,
Gainst lawyers and gainst Priests stand up now.
For tyrants they are both even flatt against their oath,
To grant us they are loath, free meat, and drink, and cloth
Stand up now, Diggers all.

The club is all their law, stand up now, stand up now,
The club is all their law, stand up now.
The club is all their law to keep men in awe,
But they no vision saw to maintain such a law.
Stand up now, Diggers all.

The Cavaleers are foes, stand up now, stand up now,
The Cavaleers are foes, stand up now;
The Cavaleers are foes, themselves they do disclose
By verses not in prose to please the singing boyes
Stand up now, Diggers all.

To conquer them by love, come in now, come in now,
To conquer them by love, come in now;
To conquer them by love, as itt does you behove,
For hee is King above, noe power is like to love.
Glory here Diggers all.

A Declaration of the Grounds and Reasons why we the

Poor Inhabitants of the Town of *Wellinborrow*, in the County of *Northampton*, have begun and give consent to dig up, manure and sow Corn upon the Common, and waste ground, called *Bareshanke* belonging to the Inhabitants of *Wellinborrow*, by those that have subscribed, and hundreds more that give Consent.

WEE find in the Word of God, that God made the Earth for the use and comfort of all Mankind, and set him in to till and dresse it, and said, That in the sweat of his brows he should eat his bread; and also we find, that God never gave it to any sort of people, that they should have it all to themselves, and shut out all the rest, but he saith, The Earth hath he given to the children of men, which is every man.

2. We find, that no creature that ever God made was ever deprived of the benefit of the Earth, but Mankind; and that it is nothing but covetousnesse, pride, and hardnesse of heart, that hath caused man so far to degenerate.

3. We find in the Scriptures, that the Prophets and Apostles have left it upon Record, That in the last days the oppressor and proud man shall cease, and God will restore the waste places of the Earth to the use and comfort of Man, and that none shall hurt nor destroy in all his holy Mountain.

4. We have great Encouragement from these two righteous Acts, which the Parliament of England have set forth, the one against Kingly Power, the other to make England a Free Common-wealth.

5. We are necessitated from our present necessity to do this, and we hope that our Actions will justifie us in the gate when all men shall know the truth of our necessity: We are in Wellinborrow in one Parish 1169 persons that receive Alms, as the Officers have made it appear at the Quarter Sessions last: we have made our Case known to the Justices, the Justices have given Order that the Town should raise a Stock to set us on work, and that the Hundred should be enjoyned to assist them; but as yet we see nothing is done, nor any man that goeth about it; we have spent all we have, our trading is decayed, our wives and children cry for bread, our lives are a burden to us, divers of us having 5.6.7.8.9. in Family, and we cannot get bread for one of them by our labor; rich mens hearts are hardened, they will not give us if we beg at their doors; if we steal, the Law will end our lives, divers of the poor are starved to death already, and it were better for us that are living to dye by the Sword then by Famine: And now we consider that the Earth is our Mother, and that God hath given it

to the children of men, and that the common and waste Grounds belong to the poor, and that we have a right to the common ground both from the Law of the Land, Reason and Scriptures; and therefore we have begun to bestow our righteous labor upon it, and we shall trust the Spirit for a blessing upon our labor, resolving not to dig up any mans propriety, until they freely give us it; and truly we find great comfort already, through the goodnesse of our God, that some of those rich men amongst us, that have had the greatest profit upon the Common, have freely given us their share in it, as one Mr John Freeman, Thomas Nottingham and John Clendon, and *d*ivers others; and the Country Farmers have proffered divers of them to give us Seed to sow it, and so we find that God is perswading Japeth to dwell in the tents of Shem: and truly those that we find most against us are such as have been constant enemies to the Parliaments Cause from first to last.

Now at last our desire is, That some that approve of this work of Righteousnesse, would but spread this our Declaration before the great Councel of the Land, that so they may be pleased to give us more encouragement to go on, that so they may be found amongst the small number of those that considers the poor and needy, that so the Lord may deliver them in the time of their troubles, and then they will not be found amongst those that *Solomon* speaks of, which withhold the Corn (or the Land) from the Poor, which the people shall curse, but blessing shall be upon the heads of those Rulers that sell Corn, and that will let the poor labor upon the Earth to get them Corn, and our lines shall blesse them, so shall good men stand by them, and evil men shall be afraid of them, and they shall be counted the Repairers of our Breaches, and the Restorers of our Paths to dwell in. And thus we have declared the truth of our necessity; and whosoever will come in to us to labor with us, shall have part with us, and we with them, and we shall all of us endeavor to walk righteously and peaceably in the Land of our Nativity.

Richard Smith. John Avery. Thomas Fardin. Richard Pendred. James Pitman. Roger Tuis. Joseph Hichcock. John Pye. Edward Turner.

LONDON, Printed for *Giles Calvert*. 1650.

A Declaration of the grounds and Reasons, why we the poor Inhabitants of the

Parrish of *Iver* in *Buckinghamshire*, have begun to digge and mannure the common and wast Land belonging

to the aforesaid Inhabitants, and there are many more that gives consent.

The word of God hath witnessed unto us, that the Lord created the earth with all that is therein for whole Mankind, equall to one as to another, and for every one to live free upon to get an ample Livelihood therein, and therefore those who have by an unrighteous power made merchandize of the earth, giving all to some, and none to others, declares themselves tyranicall and usurping Lords over Gods heritage, and we affirm that they have no righteous power to sell or give away the earth, unlesse they could make the earth likewise, which none can do but God the eternall Spirit.

2. We are very sensible that although Mankind was by the will of his Maker, constituted in all his branches, a supream Lord over all Creatures of other kinds, yet we see that no creature is so much deprived of a Being and subsistance as mankind is; and though those who are become Lords and Masters over their fellow Creatures, do challenge a larger circuit of earth to be given of God, more particularly to them then to others; we say that this is false, unlesse they mean their God covetousnesse, the God of this world, who hath blinded their eyes, and hardned their hearts, and this God is an unequall and impartial divider, and therefore he must be destroyed.

We know that *Cain* is still alive in all the great Landlords, and such like Earthmongers who are continually crucifying their poor Brethren by oppression, cheating and robbery: therefore you Lords of Mannors especially, the Lord hath set *Cains* mark upon you, because he will surely find you out, if you do not repent and give over, lye down therefore and submit (and why not) that your Iniquities may be no more in remembrance, and that the cry of your cruelty may be heard no more in the Land.

3. Then thirdly, there is a promise in Scripture (which God hath made) to free us from that bondage wherein you have involved us, and that pride and oppression shall be heard of no more in the Land, and that the Lord will restore the whole Creation into the glorious liberty of the Sonnes of God, which is no other liberty then that which Christ himself by his spirit hath invested us withall, and that is equality, community and fellowship with our own kind; for the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, and he that sitteth, as he that serveth.

4. We are urged to go forth and Act in this righteous work, because of our present necessity, and want of the comfort which belongs to our Creation, that the earth being inclosed into the hands of a few, whereby time, custome and usurping Lawes have made particular Interests for some, and not for all: so that these great Taskmasters will allow us none of the earth whilst we are alive, but onely when we are dead, they will afford us just as much as will make the length of our graves, because they cannot then keep it from us, and that then

we should be equall with them; but why may we not whilst we are alive with them, have as much of the earth as themselves? yes truly, remove but covetousnesse, and kill that cursed power, and then those men would not keep all to themselves, but would willingly suffer their fellow Creatures to enjoy the Birthright of their creation; for whiles the great ones like Ratts and Mice drawe all the treasures and fruits of the earth into their nests and holes after them, resolving rather to spoile these good things, then to suffer the common sort to have part with: and therefore they have now got a custome to dyet the Markets, and make a dearth in time of plenty, and though the Lord be pleased to give us joyfull and fruitfull seasons, yet we see that this helpeth us nothing: we must be starved neverthelesse, and why? because the rich will have it so, no other reason can be rendred: Therefore you of the poorer sort, understand this, that nothing but the manuring of the common Land, will reduce you into a comfortable condition; and likewise we declare, that though we keep our selves close to our hard labours, breaking our due and necessary rest which should refresh us, whereby our lives are become a burthen to us, and yet our carefull and diligent labour, will afford us no other then a distracted, languishing and miserable life, for how can it be otherwise? seeing we cannot enjoy the benefit of our labors our selves but for the maintenance of idle persons, slow bellies who raigne and ride over the common people in every Parrish, as Gods and Kings: And therefore if this be that freedom which we have for these nine years striven for: then we pray you to exchange this freedom for our old bondage, and to set us down in that kennel where you did first lift us out.

5. And further we declare before God and the whole World, that the inhumane cruelty of our Taskmasters is, and hath ever been the just cause of all our miseries, and of the whole Nation into this sad condition, and that we see no hope, comfort, or redresse to be had from any that are in Authority in our Parrish, who say they will do nothing but what they are forc'd to do: therefore from their own words we may gather, that their full intent is to make us absolute slaves and vassalls to their wills.

6. We have great encouragement from this present *Parliament*, by making of those two excellent Lawes, the one to cast out *Kingly Power*, and the other to make us all a free people, which we understand, is to break the neck of the *Norman Power* which was brought in upon us by the *Norman Bastard*, continued and encreased ever since within this Nation, by every King who was his Successor.

7. This act of ours endeavouring to make the wast Land fruitfull, is an Act full of Honour, Righteousnesse, Justice and Peace, and consequently agreeing with the Law of God and the Law of reason; for the Scripture saith, *The meek shall inherite the earth*: this work therefore of ours is not to be carried on by force of Armes, it is a thing which we much abhorre, but in love onely and meeknesse, and this power onely shall at last conquer, and bring in the *Kings* and *Princes* of the earth: therefore all you that are prepared to act freedom and love, come forth and break your Swords into Plough shares, and leavie Warre no more.

8. There is a principle of Reason that teacheth every man to do as he would be done by, that is to live in love, and be at peace with all men, and to do as we would be done by, is to allow the same liberty to others, that we our selves

are willing to enjoy, which is food and rayment, freely without being a slave to any of our fellow Creatures: We desire all those that are free to act with us in this work, that they would come forth and set their hands to remove this bondage which we have lain under this 600. yeares: And further we desire, that those who cannot come forth as yet in person, that they would lend us their assistance and encouragement to supply our necessities whilst our labours lies buried in the earth untill the fruit comes up; our condition being but poor at the beginning, that so this righteous work may not fall off and perish, to give the Adversarie cause to perceive that we are again brought back into bondage.

10. And lastly, we do not intend to proceed upon this work in any other power, but that which is before exprest, which is the Lords own way, even peace and love, stedfastly resolving not to meddle with any mans propriety, but what is known to be common Land, and these are the essentiall grounds and reasons of us the poor Inhabitants of *Iver* in *Buckinghamshire*, whose names are hereunder written.

And we much desire the fishing Trade may presently be set up, for then we might have more fish for one shilling, then now we have for 4 *s.* which would be great comfort to us the poor, and no hurt to you therefore; and likewise that Potters List might be paid, which so long from them have been stayed.

And that Ingrosers and buyers of Corn might be lookt to, that we might have it at some reasonabler rate. And that there may be Commissioners granted, to call the Church-wardens and Overseers of the poor for the Countrey as well as for the City to an account.* We hear that they have begun mannuring the Commons in *Kent*, at *Willingborough*, and *Bosworth* old in *Northamptonshire* & in *Gloucestershire*, & in *Nottinghamshire*, and they intend to sowe roots til *July*, & then follow for winter corne, and then to build for the poorest in the Parishes, and if the rich will not let them alone, the poor will leave them their Children to keep, as they have done in *Surrey*.

And we pray release all Prisoners for debt, that cannot pay their debt, and let the Prisons be for work-houses for the poor to make things for the fishing Trade, what will poor mens bones do you good?

Some QUERIES.

1. *Whether there be any Statute or Law against breaking up, or manuring of the Common which was left out for us ever since the Conquest, onely for the poor by all old records, and now we intend to make use of our own, and if the rich will not let us provide for our Wives and Children truly, then they must, for we will not be such slaves as we have been formerly.* 2. *Whether there be any Statute or Law extant, or can be produest or showen to us by any Lord of Manner, to take honest poor men from their true and righteous labour, and put them into a Norman strong hold, and there to lye as long as corrupt Law, and unjust Justices wils please.* 3. *Whether the Parliament, Councell of State, High Court of Justice, and Councel of Warre, will uphold such Norman Lawes, seeing that the Successors head is cut of, we hope you will not maintain the same still, if you will, we fear you may want poor mens help when you*

*They are at work at *Barnet*, and at *Enfield*, and there they are resolved if they will not let them plant and build, they will leave them in *Barnet* 7. Children, and at *Enfield* nine Children.
They were better leave them then starve them, and themselves too; and they are at work at *Dunstable*, in *Buckinghamshire* also, and we hear they are going to build in many Countries, and are resolved to pay no more Rent, things are so deare they cannot.

stand in need of them. 4. Whether those words in your Acts against Kingly Power, and all that hold claiming under the King, do not take away all Lords of Mannors, and Tything Priest Power too likewise, seeing they came in all by the Normand Conqueror, and those words in the other Act, that you made England a free Commonwealth, doth not mean all the poor as well as you rich, and if it mean but onely the rich, then let the rich fight all the battels that are to be fought, for we will have some assurance of our true freedom, and what you mean by your words, and how we shall have our pay and our debentors; for we cannot live for or by fair words any longer, and they not performed neither.

5. Whether it be not fellony in or by any man to set fire on his house and burn it down, the Law saith it is; and if so, what will it be in any man to get some 30. or 40. or more together, and go and set fire on 6 or 7 very poor mens houses that had set them up in some wast places, and these People before mencioned, came and burned them down, and some of their goods too: now no question, and if the first be fellony, this is in a higher nature, more fellonies then the first: we desire it may be taken notice of by all rationall men in this whole free Common-wealth of *England* for ever hereafter, that no such fellony be committed again by any man whatsoever.

We wright this, because we have 9. especiall friends that were at work in their own ground as they conceived, and were taken from their righteous Labour, and carried from *Wellingborough* to *Northampton* Goale, and at Sessions last, being the 16. & 17. of *April* last; they could prove nothing against them, and yet would not set them free by Proclamation according to Law; but we hope our honest Army will not passe by there, till they have freed them: the Generalls own Cornet *Spinege* was on the bench, and saw that they could prove nothing against them, we hope he will help release them.

Henry Norman. Edw: Dun. Rob: Dun. Tho. Taylor. Wil. Saunders. Henry Slave. Tho. Beedle, younger. *Rich. Moseley. John Currant.*

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