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The English Souldiers Standard

to repair to, for Wisdom and Understanding
in these doleful backsliding times.
To be read by every honest Officer
to his Souldiers,
and by the Souldiers one to another.

IT WAS most worthily said of you, in your Declaration of the 14 of June 1647, page 6, That you were not a meer mercenary Army, hired to serve any arbitrary power of a State; but were called forth, and conjured by the severall Declarations of Parliament, to the defence of your own and the peoples just Rights and Liberties: and so you took up Arms in judgment and conscience, to those ends.

Which expressions of yours, and the like, gave so great content and satisfaction to all sorts of well-minded people, that the meanest private Souldier amongst you was more honourable in their esteem, then the most glorious out-side man in the world: you had been their guard by day, and their defence by night; you delivered them from the Bear, and from the Lion; and when the Parliament began to turn Tyrants themselves, and would have broken you in pieces by dividing of you, and sending a part of you for Ireland, that so they might without obstacle have trampled upon the peoples Liberties, you resolved, as became an Army whom the Lord had blessed, to deliver the people also from those uncircumcised Philistims.

And when they would have terrified you from so doing, with urging, that you resisted Authority; you spared not to tell them (and that truly) That it is no resisting of Magistracy, to side with the just principles and Law of Nature and Nations: And that the Souldiery may lawfully hold the hands of the Generall who will turn his Canon (meaning his strength, power and authority) against his Army, on purpose to destroy (or enslave) them: And such (you say) were the proceedings of our Ancestours of famous memorie, to the purchasing of such Rights and Liberties as they have enjoyed through the price of their blood; and we both by that, and the later blood of our dear friends and fellow-souldiers (with the hazard of our own) do now lay claim to.

And truly friends, it will be necessary for you to look quickly about you, and that to purpose, and to be like unto our Ancestors, or like unto your selves in what you then declared: and to enquire, whether you and the rest of the people of this Nation are yet restored to those their Rights and Liberties: and accordingly to be satisfied in your Judgments and Consciences.

You have been many of you Country-men and know well what a miserable burthen Tythes and Free-quarter are: many of you have been Trades-men and laborious people, and can be sensible how intolerable the burthen of Excise, and Customs, and Monopolies in Trade are, Officers and Usurers running away with that which should pay you, and the poor labour for; to the ruine of Trade. You cannot but know what it is to live continually in prison, in penury and beggery, hearing and seeing the misery of such poor people in all places.

You know, we live under unknown Laws, written in canting French, vexed and molested with a whole drove of corrupt Judges, Lawyers, Jaylors, and the like Caterpillers of the Common-wealth.

Your great Officers indeed have reduced the Supreme Authority into one Jurisdiction: but what are we or you the better, when it is used to set up new ways of tryals for our Lives and Libertics, new Courts of Justice, denying both you and us (when they please) the benefits of tryals by twelve sworn men: when already they have punish'd for matters of Religion, as other corrupt Parliaments use to do: and when they have erected a Councill of State that already examines men upon Interrogatories against themselves in criminall Cases: when they stop the Presse, that no information shall be given to you or the people, and imploy worse beagles to hunt after books, than the High-Commission or Star-Chamber ever did?

Nay Friends, where are you and our Liberties, when your Generall Council of Officers make it so hainous a crime for Souldiers to petition Parliaments, without licence of their Officers. - It is but few years since that in London the Aldermen of the City endeavoured that no Citizens should petition the Parliament, but first they should passe the Common Council.

But it was when those great men intended to grasp into their hands all power both of Parliament and people; as appeared soon after by their pernicious Remonstrances, and desperate Engagements; which we beleeve had done much more mischief, if honest and resolved Citizens had not made bold with their Greatships, and frequently visited the House with Petitions, which would as soon have past the fire, as the Common Councill.

And you had best look unto your selves, and to your and our Liberties, when as your Officers (many of them) begin to combine together, and punish men for petitioning; assure your selves, if they go on, your Liberties and ours are not long-lived; nay, are they not at last gasp, when they are grown so raging mad, as to importune for a Law to have power in themselves, to hang and put to death any person, though not of the Army, as shall hold any discourse with Souldiers about their own and the peoples just Rights and Liberties? - Pray friends, were these men any part of the Army when you published to the world, that you took up Arms in Judgment and Conscience, for the peoples just Rights and Liberties? or have those your Officers forgot themselves, and utterly lost their consciences, and all sense of their then promises, Declarations, and Remonstrances? if so, you shall do well to remember them, as you did those Officers of yours that made scruple to engage with you for your right of petitioning, and for the peoples Liberties at New-market.

Or are these Officers usurpers, and not properly the Councill that was then chosen by the Army? pray look to it, for your Declarations and their works differ exceedingly; the one tending to freedom, but the latter to such a bondage as all true English Souldiers will abhor; and if you find that you have not chosen them to deal with you in those affairs of the Common-wealth, which concern every private Souldier, as the greatest Commander: What have you then to do, but chuse out from amongst your selves, such faithfull men, whether Officers or Souldiers, as in these doubtfull staggering times, have stood firm to their first principles, and do evidence by their humility and resolution, that they took up arms in judgement and Conscience, for their own and the peoples just Rights, and Liberties: and such as rather then the Nation should be deprived thereof, being purchased with so vast expence of blood, durst hold the hands of the Generall, and all the Generall Officers, if they shall persist to turn their Cannons, their strength, power, and authority to the enslaving of the Common-wealth.

For what else is become of that judgment and Conscience, in which you took up armes? certainly your Consciencs cannot be satisfied that your Generall, and Generall Officers, no nor the new Generall Councill of Officers, (which seldom exceeds three-score persons) shall after all your tedious strivings, and struglings for liberty, against all other parties, make both you and us, slaves to themselves in a Counsell of State, or their own packt Parliament? certainly Tyranny, Cruelty and continuance of oppression, is not the lesse because your Officers are now the Authors and continuers of it: but should rather be esteemed the greater and more abominable, by how much their promises have exceeded others. It cannot stand either with sound judgment, or good Conscience, that now you should be so far respecters of persons, as to beare with that wickedness and treachery in your pretended friends and Commanders which you have by many years war laboured to destroy and root out, in two great and powerfull parties.

You are seriously to consider that you have an alseeing God to give an account unto, and are not to please your Commanders in fulfilling their wils; but to be sure that you give satisfaction to your Conscience in the well pleasing of Almighty God.

And it will be no satisfaction at all to his justice, when he shall call you to an account for the killing and slaying of men, for you to say that you did it in obedience to the Commands of your Generall and Officers; for you must note that it is those just ends, the rights and liberties of the people, that only can acquit you from being murtherers in all you have done, so that you may at once highly please your commanders in killing and slaying of men, to make way for their greatness, wealth, and domination; and more highly displease God in being murtherers in so doing: nor can you escape his heavy Judgments, except you persevere and go on to those just ends, unto which you have made your way as through a Sea of Blood, and to be no respecters of persons, but to take whomsoever for an enemy that shall oppose you therein.

It is observed that you are very strict against your own fellow Souldiers, in case they offend, though in small matters, inflicting very severe punishments for particular offences; and why then look you not after and consider the ways of your Commanders, but let them pass with all their delusions of the Army, abusing the faith and credit thereof, with all sorts of people breaking your Counsell of Agitators, corrupting and terrifying both Officers and Souldiers, to mould them to their own vile and unworthy ends: and are now in a ready way to make themselves, and their creatures in Parliament and elsewhere absolute Masters over the Common-wealth? Nay, do you not help them in it for want of consideration? for why else are you so ready to execute their cruell sentences upon honest and faithfull Souldiers, as your shooting the man to death at Ware, and imprisoning of divers about the agreement of the people? And now also of late your forcing of five worthy Souldiers to ride the Horse, with their faces to the Horse tails, and breaking their swords over their heads, for standing to their and your Right in petitioning, and for presenting a letter to your cruell Counsell in justification thereof?

It seems it is a very true proverbe, that honors change manners, and is fully verified in your great Commanders, who in the fore recited Declaration of the 14 of June 1647, earnestly desired that the right and freedom of the people to present petitions to the Parliament might be cleared and vindicated, having made it before hainous crime in Hollis, and Stapleton, to hinder the Souldiers from petitioning; and yet now being in honor and power, judge, and sentence honest faithfull Souldiers, to base unworthy punishments, for but resolving to petition.

But truely friends, suffer this and suffer any thing; experience saith, he that takes one box on the ear invites another; and when Souldiers that should be men in all things, stand still and suffer their fellow Souldiers to be thus abused by a pack of Officers, no marvell if these officers turn Tyrants, and presume to do any thing to any man.

What right hath a Generall, Generall Officers, or a Counsell of Officers, to petition more then the meanest private Souldier? surely, to be a Generall is not to be above Law, except he make himself a Tyrant; is he or any Officer any other but a person under authority and accomptable for discharge of their trusts? nor is a private Souldier a slave because he is a private Souldier: but to have as full benefit of the Law, as clear a use of his liberty in petitioning, or otherwayes as his Generall, or Officers; and there is no surer mark to know a Tyrant by, or such as would be so, then for any to argue otherwise: And it will be good to mark such with a black coale.

Pray consider it, and lay it to heart: Is it not a shame that your fellow-souldiers should undergo so slavish, so severe and painfull punishment, as to ride the wooden horse, or run the gauntlet, and be whipt for small particular offences, and that you should suffer in the mean time your Officers and Commanders to turn Tyrants and never punish them at all for it? Is this to take up Arms in Judgment and Conscience, when one man being your Commander, may (as the proverb saith) steal a horse, and you will hang a private souldier for but looking over the hedge? for what comparison is there between a private souldiers offence, and an Officers turning a Bear, a Wolf, a Tyrant?

Beleeve it, if you look not to it speedily, your Officers are in a ready way to make you and the Common-wealth absolute slaves; for they mould and fashion the Army even how they please; preferring none to commands but flatterers and servile men, and catch at all advantages to turn all such out of command as are anyway sensible of the rights of the people; and have taken so absolute a power therein so long, that they have done very much of their work:

And do beleive all is formed to their own bent, and that's the reason they presume now to propose the sending of many of you for Ireland, pretending extraordinary necessity, and that that Nation otherwise will be utterly lost: - but surely all parties are not so soon agreed; 'twill not be amiss to make two words to such a bargain.

This you know is not the first fetch for Ireland; and you must note 'tis neither Ireland, nor Scotland, nor any other forces they fear, but the sting of their own consciences perpetually tels them they have demost perfideously, and Tyrannously with the Army, and Common-wealth; and they perceive by the many motions of Souldiers, and others, that the Army is likely to draw out Adjutators once more, whose morning they know will be the evening of their domination, and the next day they fear will prove their dooms day:

To avoid which, in all post haste they must be divided, and sent some one way, and some another; but if you be wise, stay a little, or you may perhaps never meet again. Certainly, before you go, it will be good for you to see those Rights and Liberties of the people, for which you took up Arms in judgment and conscience, cleared and secured, by a full and clear Agreement of the people; and not to leave them at the meer arbitrary mercy of a Council of State, or a pack'd Parliament: for since they have dared to gull and cheat you to your faces, and whilst you are hereabouts, and together; what inhumane cruelties may they not do in your absence? especially, since they incline to raise more forces of a mercenary and servile nature, that shall make no questions for conscience sake about their Commands, as you have been used to do; and then farewell the English Liberties for ever.

What-ever they may tell you, or however they may flatter you, there is no less danger lies at the bottom of this business for Ireland, and therefore it behoves every one of you to lay it to heart: and before you resolve upon a new Engagement, first see a new Representative of the Army established, by the free Election of every Regiment; and refer your selves to their Counsel and advice in all things, to be disposed of as they shall see cause; and neither admit of disbandings, nor of new listings, nor of any undertaking for Ireland, or any other service, but as that Councell shall advise.

For consider, as things now stand, to what end you should hazard your lives against the Irish: have you not been fighting these seven years in England for Rights and Liberties, that you are yet deluded of? and that too, when as none can hinder you of them but your own Officers, under whom you have fought? and will you go on stil to kil, slay and murther men, to make them as absolute Lords and Masters over Ireland as you have made them over England? or is it your ambition to reduce the Irish to the happinesse of Tythes upon trebble dammages, to Excise, Customs and Monopolies in Trades? or to fill their prisons with poor disabled prisoners, to fill their Land with swarms of beggers; to enrich their Parliament-men, and impoverish their people; to take down Monarchical Tyranny, and set up an Aristocratical Tyranny; or to over-spread that Nation as this yet is, with such Wasps and Hornets as our Lawyers and their Confederates? Or if you intend not this, or would be sorry to see no better effects of your undertakings, it certainly concerns you in the first place, and before you go, to see those evils reformed here; that when occasion shall justly invite you thither, you may carry a good platform in your hands, such a one as possibly they will never fight against: And it would be much more to be wished, that you might overcome them by just and equall offers, then by strength and force. And except you begin and proceed thus, how you will satisfie your consciences, is not discernable.

Therefore look to it, and be not surprised neither with the suddenness nor the plausibleness that may be put upon it by your General, or General Councils; the killing and slaying of men, or the making of a War, being a thing that every particular man of you must give a strict account to God for; in whose sight your Commanders are of as smal weight, when they come to be put into his just balance, as the meanest of you; and at whose great day, these will be found infallible truths, though now they will be called dividing doctrines.

But you must be stedfast to truths, and not be startled from your principles, nor from your promises and engagements, by the revilings of men: these being properly to be called Dividers, that forsake the society of honest men, because they stick close to their principles: it being also certainly good and justifiable to divide for good, rather then to unite for evill.

Labour by all means every man of you to preserve the love of the people toward you, and upon all occasions make it evident that it is for their good you continue in Arms, be courteous and gentle towards all you meet, whether in the streets, or upon the Roads; give them kind language and civil respects, without justling, or brushing, or bustling for the way; a thing which some proud Officers have cherish'd too much in some rude persons: and at your Quarters exercise your selves in harmless refreshments, without noise or lavish expence and give the preeminence to the Master and Mistris of the Family, whether rich or poor; and so you have food and raiment, be therewith content, without regard of bravery or delicateness; eat not but for hunger, which makes all things sweet; and cloath not but for health; and your happiness will not be far to seek.

Beware of entertaining il thoughts of any man, or of any condition of men without good proof; try and examine all things which shall be proposed unto you to act upon; and act or not act as you find the things good or evil; and be not diverted from your own understandings, by your respect to mens persons, nor terrified by aspersions cast upon the proposers, which from our Saviours time to this day hath ever been the obstrucder of all good endeavours: and if you mind the present proceedings, you will find it was never more practised then now; and it wil never go wel with the Publick, till you mark all aspersers as men that labour to deceive; and know what they have to alledge against the matter proposed, without reflection upon the persons that propose it, or you will never go on with any thing of worth.

Its come to a pretty pass with most of your great Officers: they would have you to obey their commands though to the killing and slaying of men, without asking a reason: and as the Church of Rome holds the poor ignorant Papists in blind obedience, who are taught to beleeve as the Church beleeves; so would they have it with you, to be led this way, or that way (as men lead horses) into Ireland, or Scotland, or any whither, and as horses shall be whipped, or hanged as mutiniers, if you but dispute the cause, or but petition to have the cause stated before you go, that your judgments and consciences may be fully satisfied (as becometh honest men and Christians) in the lawfulness of whatsoever you undertake. But as there is no Tyrants like those of Rome, through the sottish ignorance of the Papists; so there is nothing will make your Officers so perfect tyrants, as this kind of blind obedience in you: nor will any thing demonstrate that you took up arms in judgment and conscience, but that every one of you be satisfied in both, before you undertake or engage in any service: and that by sound consideration you wipe off that scandal which your great Officers have fixt upon you; that is, that if they but provide the Troopers good pay, they make no question but to command them any whither, and that they are then assured the Foot will follow the Horse whithersoever they go. T'is a sad storie, but it is frequent in their discourse, and no doubt you know it; and shews to what state they designe to bring you. On the other side, if any thing be proposed to you that is good in it self, and absolutely necessarie for the peace and freedom of the Common-wealth, how then do they bestir themselves, and even sweat with labor to perswade, that you see not to the bottom of it, that it is the most dangerous designe that ever was, that Jesuits at the least must be the authors of it, if not Levellers, who like Jack Cade, and Wat Tiler, and the Anabaptists of Munster, would have all things common, wives and all.

But if you rightly consider, this doth but manifest unto you, that all Tyrants are directed by one and the same means; this being but the very same measure which was measured to the whole Army, a little before you past through the City, by those your opposers that were then setting up other Tyrannie.

Your General and Gen. Officers being then Jack Cade and Wat Tiler, that would have all things common; who now setting up for themselves, have packt a Parliament and a Councell of State for their purpose, must bestow the same language upon them that oppose those, as was bestowed upon themselves, and whilst you live you may confidently build upon, that none but those that would be Tyrants, will by aspersions go about to terrifie men from relying upon their own understandings.

You have had very much experience: and if you do but any thing consider and resolve, you shall very hardly be deceived; but assure your selves the great work in hand is how to deceive or corrupt you, it being impossible otherwise for them to become Masters of the Common-wealth.

And if they can but get a considerable part of you for Ireland before you see the Councell of State abolished, and this Nation set upon such sure foundations of Freedom, as shall not be in the power of future Parliaments to subvert, their work's done: nay, if they cannot get you for Ireland as themselves much doubt thereof, and have cause enough considering the difficulties attending; yet if they can but get a good part of you in to Scotland before you see those Foundations of freedom settled firmly by an honest agreement of the people, nothing can hinder them of their designe.

Therefore be sure to see this Nation well settled first: keep together here and you may be confident none dare meddle with you from abroad, and when all things are to your mind at home, you may then safely cast your eys abroad, but not before, nor will it ever be good for you to meddle abroad but upon evident cause, upon good grounds, that you may engage upon sound judgement and good conscience; and not as most of the world doth through ambition, covetousness, and revenge, the fomenters of most of the wars that ever were; and tho religion, freedom, peace and prosperity of the people, have been ever in the tongue, yea though accompanied with fastings and prayings, and long preachings, yet your experiences cannot but tell you, ambition, covetousnesse, and revenge have ever been at the heart; and God is discovering it to the whole world.

And may every one of you, and your wel-minded Officers, be therein effectuall instruments to his glory, and in the accomplishment of the freedom, peace and happiness of this miserably abused Nation: And that you may be so, and neither be diverted nor terrified from settling yourselves thereunto, and that with all your might, cast your eys frequently on this your Standard, and be diligent in searching into your own Consciences, and swerve not from what you find to be your duty; prefer your Officers before others, if they inform your Judgements aright, and lead you to nothing but what is evidently just, obey them exactly after you are resolved of the Justnesse of the cause, but not before.

For he that runs to kill men meerly upon Authority, or others Judgments, or for money, is condemned of himself, in his Conscience, as a murtherer, be the cause what it will; and first or last shall not escape the Judgments of God.

F I N I S.



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