

LETTER FROM DERBYSHIRE CONCERNING
LEAD-MINING, 1649.

Before the days of regular newspapers, news of a kind was circulated by means of 'newsletters,' often issued weekly, and usually having a political bias. The letter reprinted here appeared in a Commonwealth newsletter and filled the greater part of one number, so that the actual 'news' was of small amount. The titles of these letters were frequently as long as their contents were scanty. The particular one from which this Derbyshire letter was taken was entitled:—'A Modest Narrative of Intelligence: fitted for the Republique of England & Ireland. Aug. 25 to Sep. 1, 1649. Number 22.'

It appears from the opening sentence that this letter is an answer to one printed shortly before, of which, unfortunately, we have not got a copy. The charge here made against the miners is that of supporting the king as against Parliament and army, and there is a suggestion that miners were coming into Derbyshire from other parts of the country to search for ore, and becoming chargeable on the poor rate.

Sir,

I have seen a printed letter dated from Derby, Aug. 25, concerning the Myners in Derbyshire; certainly the same hand penned that, and that they call their serious representation: They are so like, its pity they should be parted so full of menaces and saucy language against the Parliament, Committee, Judges and Nation, as I must confess I never observed greater insolence: The suffering of this may prove of sad consequence, and let in all discontented persons, and those of desperate fortunes, to do the like on all occasions, as formerly we have seen in these times

in several places, though to their own ruin in the conclusion: But that which aggravates the offence is, That a conjunction of a few factious, Malignant, and Levelling persons, seven or eight at the most, should dare, in the name of a number of people most of which know not anything about it (nor will, I am confident, justifie their actions), thus violently prosecute the business, whenas, its well known, their design is merely their own private benefit (as will hereafter be made appear). But why do they still fall upon that person of honor the Earl of Rutland, who hath been ever so noble a neighbour, and reliever of the poorest of these Myners, their wives and children, and hath permitted them to get Lead Oar in all his lands in Derbyshire, excepting in his Demeasnes neer his house, which if digged up, would make it uninhabitable, utterly destroy the soil, and prove dangerous by reason of the pits? Neither is his Lordship onely concerned; For I dare affirm it, before whomsoever, that we, the Freeholders and Owners, are far more in number, than the Myners, who have ever appeared faithfully for the Parliament of England, and will, by God's blessing, with life and fortune, assist them in defence of the Laws, Liberties and Properties of every free-born subject, against whomsoever: If the Myners have a Right, let it be tryed in any court of Law: If there be any other way to take away our Right and Inheritance, and give it to strangers, then to what end served the Law? And give me leave to tell you, we cannot be terrified with their number, suppose they were 12,000 men, women and children (which under favour is a great abatement from 40,000 as in their last printed paper) as indeed they are not 4,000. Yet it is well known, when they were at the highest, and most enraged against the Parliament, and for the King, the Commander in chief of that county could at any time with 150 Horse, dissipate them and send them to their Groves. We are peaceable men, and by God's blessing,

and by the care and industry of the Parliament and Army, hope to enjoy our rightful Inheritance, which we are resolved to maintain; and not hereafter to suffer Myners to resort from all parts of England to this corner of our county, and there to plant themselves and Families, and growing numerous and poor, then expect relief out of our estates, and by force take away our children's bread. This at the sense and resolution of all the Freeholders and Owners of this county, that are concerned, I am bold to acquaint you with, and rather because you are our country man, and not a little interested herein. Take leave, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
T.C.