

PARLIAMENTARY OUTRAGES

Colonel William Ball (c. 1601–1647)

to Sir William Lenthall (1591–1662), Speaker of the House of Commons (1640–1655, 1659–1660)

Reading (Berkshire), 1 March 1645/1646 [OS]

I have been ten days at Reading upon the command of the House for the ordering of the recruits for the army, and find the employment very troublesome; yet the service succeeding indifferently well answers my pains and expectations.

But that which exceedingly affects me is the continual clamour of the soldiers at Newbury and country people thereabout, the soldiers having almost starved the people where they quarter, and are half-starved themselves for want of pay, and are become very desperate, raging about the country, breaking and robbing houses and passengers, and driving away sheep and other cattle before the owners' faces. Every day brings more instances of these outrages; I shall mention only two amongst others the country people are now relating unto me.

Some of the soldiers were driving away the sheep of Andrew Pottinger, of Woolhampton, a freeholder of £60 per annum, a very considerable man for the Parliament, having a wife and six young children, who endeavouring to secure his sheep, the soldiers struck him on the head so that he became presently speechless and dead within four hours, to the great grief and sorrow of the neighbourhood.

Another party of nine soldiers, armed with muskets, came yesterday to the house of Mr. Illsley, of Beenham, and broke open his door, to the great affright of his wife. He being absent and hearing of it, got together his neighbours and so beat the soldiers that they were all wounded and not able to return to their quarters.

I will give many more instances were it necessary, but this I thought fit to discover unto you, that the soldiers and country people are all grown desperate and continue one against the other that we are like to have little other than killing and robbery if there be not a speedy supply of money for the soldiers. I beseech you to take the opportunity to acquaint the House with the condition of these parts, which under the most terrible time of the enemy was nothing so bad.

I am sorry I have such a bad subject, and shall therefore conclude.

Walter Money, *The First and Second Battles of Newbury* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, and Company, 1881):170. [modernized]