

Charlotte Powell Powell's letters - 3

Letter to Charles Deare, Esq'r, Harcourt Buildings, Temple, London
Items in square brackets [....] are the archivist's additions

Quex Park
Dec. 10th 1830

My Dear Sir

Yours of the 7th inst, I hasten to reply to, assuring you that Mr Dancer's acceptance of the Garden Ground (late Plaws) at £6 6s per acre, is to me most welcome, a vast relief to my mind, considering as times go, very good interest for our new purchase, which, if we keep in our hands, will, I know, be a heavy loss and source of trouble, for I have plenty to look after, and without superintending in Person - I know from Experience is a sad Losing Game. Pray order Dancer to have made by Falkner, a Cart Entrance into Muddy Lane if there he wishes it - as also a doorway must be broken thro the wall which runs in a line with the Wooden Fence, at the bottom of Park House Kitchen garden. In fact the only separation between that and Dancer's Lane, whom I shall be much obliged by taking the Crops, but at a reduced Price to what we gave to the Old Plan. He was cunning - and is a perfect old Jew.

But we have got the Lane and I should prefer, now Dancer's having it to any other Tenant, as his Land surrounds us West and North, so it may as well also to the south - and his people early and late in the Gardens, are a safeguard to us - and prevent those Irish from pilfering [that] which is in our hands. They inevitably would do, perhaps all the crops - I really wish no more of the Land for our use to attach to Park House, than to the extent of the late Fishmonger's Wall, to make a square, and the line to continue straight to meet the Wall that now separates our Wood Yard from Plaws - thus having room for Drying Ground and Pig sty, Wood, Rubbish etc.- round which will build a wall so Dancer may plant trees outside it and we inside. Thus Dancer may stack crops, & do what ever he likes now with all the other land, as it is time it was attended to, dug, manured and cropped.

After taking away this small part with some of the trees from the general quantity, Dancer must have deductions. We had prepared being in Town last week, but now find it impossible to get up to do much in this Vicinity and the distribution rests with me, my object being to do it without partiality. Next week we kill a bullock, and on Christmas Eve give all our Workmen and Labourers in proportion to their families, also to Old Widows and thus with the usual gifts of the Farmers of beef to their own Labourers, may affirm that every family on Christmas Day has a Hot Dinner of Capital Beef. I am now giving Cloathes away to the most needy of my school, 300 in number, who have been most attentive to their church, and come most regular and clean, and have not been to the Methodist Chapel - so I am not idle.¹

After doing all this, I have done my Duty, and a most pleasurable one. Powell has now 30 men to pay every Saturday night, married and single, 2/6 per Day, consequently we neither get injury nor insult - the reverse - not a night I say to grieve Past Week, from this House a Fire has been seen - one near Canterbury - Saturday and on Tuesday a large Stack of Faggots containing many Thousands, which two poor men had been making at the cruel pay of only 1d per day. They asked civilly for an increase of and remonstrated, that with a wife + 5, and the other, 4 children, it was impossible to live on

¹ This would appear to be a Sunday school, rather than a Day School, as the Crispe Charity School held about 24 children at this date and the Sunday School must have met in the church each Sunday, the only place that could hold that many.

6d a week. They received only a harsh reply and the following night the said stack was consumed to ashes. Not a day passes but some of the people about here on suspicion of Breaking Machines are taken up (arrested).

The Magistrates are sitting now on Special Sessions at Canterbury to clear the Maidstone Gaol before the Assizes next Tuesday. I fear the worst is not over and think the times alarming. And greater sacrifices all ranks will have to make, especially the rich, supine Clergy who want (lack) any form of feeling for their Poor Curates². Margate and Ramsgate New Churches are still threatened to be Burnt - they having brought such heavy Rates on the small Tradesmen, poor people and all ranks indeed, who were satisfied with their old large Church, for Margate is a Dislocated Town all the winter months, and an extra service at the fine old church would have satisfied the Inhabitants. We have luckily no concern with it. There is a most threatening letter to Mr Harrison, who lives at the large Farm called Alland Grange, in sight of this house, saying in 3 weeks from that Day dated we hear 3rd inst, he will have his stacks fired and also his house shall be attacked - signed '*Swing*'.

Of course, he is much alarmed and agitated, but Hope, Please God, such a calamity will be averted as they have burnt his Sanfoine Stack³, and since that, Broke all his Machines. I am sorry to say he grinds down the poor and together with being an arbitrary Magistrate and never laying anything out with his neighbours, and actually having everything from London, has made Harrison, I fear, a marked man. In these fearful times we employ specially our Village Shop Keepers and in this I deal entirely with the tradesmen in Thanet.

These horrid People are now poisoning the cattle, we hear - at this Rate we are bringing Famine to the land. Bread, I am sorry to say, is rising. Much better for Brewer only to have money and to pay everything, then I can tally all his Bills. Then I settle with him, as he writes well and is a good Accountant. The Weather is Gloomy and damp, but severe frost and snow keeps off - shall be thankful indeed and pray for a mild winter.

Between ourselves: I hear from one of the Old Officers that Richmond goes too often to Town on leave for 24 hours and stays 48. At this time no officer is allowed off his Station, the Blockade being ordered now to assist the Civil Powers, both Night and Day.

With our United Kind regards, am Dear Sir,
Yours very sincerely

SIGNED: *C. Powell*
(Charlotte, wife of John Powell Powell)

We are going to invite Richmond and his Brother Officers to Dine here on Christmas Day as there will be a moon and this house is in sight of all their stacks.

I allow [grant] Mr Dermott, when sober, [was] a good Gardener, but a man who drank as he did the last year⁴, could be neither honest nor trustworthy. He let the frost kill all my fine Dahlias last Winter, the 125 Trees (Forest ones) I ordered the Gardener to the home of Dancer.

² Many clergy held more than one living, paying a curate a pittance to manage the least profitable parish

³ See note in letter 2 and separate sheet about the Sainfoin crop grown for cattle feed.

⁴ Poor Mr Dermott had a terrible harridan of a wife - see comments by Charlotte in Letter 2