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The Account of Joseph Healey of Lees

On the 16th of August, I went to the Manchester meeting with my friends, and ascended the hustings, and continued thereon, till the butchers had cut the next man to me down; and seeing I was the next to be cut, and not liking the process, (ungrateful fellow, not like to be bloodied gratis!) I made a spring from the platform. On reaching the ground, six constables (*brave fellows!*) fell to bruising me all over my body with their massive truncheons, till the blows brought me down to the ground, amongst the dyeing and the dead. At that instant, the cavalry came right upon the mass who *were down*, (*brave fellows again!*) when I received the point of a sword against the back-bone. I remained in this dreadful situation (*quite a trifle says the Courier!*) till the attention of the butchers was drawn another way, when I escaped in great agony, and with difficulty got home. Before I arrived at the place of my abode, a magistrate, his clerk, and a government tool, with about fifty butchers, had been enquiring for me; and on the Friday night following, or rather the Thursday morning, twelve soldiers, with Capt. Glover, and seven runners, broke open my next door neighbours house with great violence. Finding their mistake, they came to my door and knocked violently. I answered I was coming, and opened the door. Several voices instantly exclaimed – “Damn him! fire, if he makes any resistance!” (*good fellows*) I asked by whose authority they came, and was answered “*in his majesties!*” I desired them to come up stairs, while I dressed, and they accordingly followed up, the soldiers with fixed bayonets, their pieces charged with ball; the Captain with a pistol in his hand; and the police officers with blunderbusses, in a firing attitude. On opening a box for clean linen, one of the police pulled all the things out, seized various papers, books, account books, and *trash publications*, (a pleasant mode of robbery and burglary, this!) When ready for my journey, on taking a glass of wine, I said, “Gentlemen, with your leave, I’ll give you a toast – “May the cause of distress be soon banished from the British empire!”” This seemed to please the Captain; and I offered him the glass, which he refusing, I gave then another toast to the following effect – “May tyrants and despots be banished from the face of the earth, as with the besum of destruction; and may the tree of liberty spread its branches to the up-most boundaries of the habitable globe.” “I then observed, I was ready to go, when they handcuffed me. I took leave of my son, saying, “*be a good boy, and tread in your fathers steps!*” which seemed to hurt my conductors a great deal. At the door I said to my neighbours, “stand firm to the cause, for I will never desert it!” On which the police officers cried out – “Damn him, blow his brains out, if he says another word!” I arrived at Manchester New Bailey about 5 in the morning, after having lost a silk handkerchief, which one of my conductors probably stole. About 12 I was brought up to be examined, when a police runner swore, he saw me upon the hustings previous to Mr Hunt’s arrival, waving my hat, and saying something, but he could not tell what. I admitted I was on the stage, and observed, that I thought it an honour to be there; on which the magistrates said “enough! enough! take him to a solitary cell – let no one see him – nor let him have communication with any one – let the letters from his family be opened and inspected.” On reaching my cell, which was about three yards by two and a half, with two filthy beds in it – the light came in at the top of the shutter, which opened about 5 inches, there was neither stool, chair, or form, to sit upon, my sustenance was oatmeal and water boiled, and coarse bread, morning and night, served up in a wood piggin and neither spoon nor any thing to eat it with, except my fingers. In this situation I was kept from Saturday to the Friday following, at which time I was set of to Lancaster, escorted by the military, when the treatment, if possible, was still worse; but the rout[e] back amply compensated for all the difficulties I underwent. I was received with rapture by my friends, and carried in a chair to my own dwelling for nearly two miles. Such is the *liberty of the subject* in

England – and such are the treatment that an Englishman receives, if he dare to assert the right of thinking for himself, and speaking for himself.

JOSEPH HEALEY, *Surgeon, Lees.*

P.S. I have something to say about the “*black flag*,” that dreaded *ensign of rebellion*, which has created so much alarm. This flag was intended to be lettered on both sides; and it was necessary it should be of some *dark* colour, to prevent the letters or words appearing confused, which was the case with all the other flags. The managers were divided as to the colour, but *black* was finally preferred, that the flag might appear in mourning for the expiring liberties of our country. The inscriptions were, “Taxation without representation is unjust and tyrannical.” “Saddleworth, Lees, and Mosley Union.” On the right hand corner was the figure of a hand holding a pair of scales, over which was the seditious word “justice.” On the reverse “no boroughmongering.” “Unite and be free.” “Equal representation or death.” On the left hand corner were two hands clasped together, over which was the word “love.”