

TS11-1056-Hunt-Johnson

Transcribed by Sylvia Kölling

Copy

Manchester July 3rd 1819.

To Henry Hunt Esqr.

I have just received what I certainly never could have expected from my neglect but which has given me great pleasure in receiving it being to be so great a proof that although I may neglect you yet you cannot forget me. This letter I must consider an act of great friendship to me and be well assured my dear Sir that I shall attend to its contents.

I am very glad you have written to the Chairman of the Leeds meeting cautioning them against spies; I certainly had no great opinion of Mr. Petre which opinion I expressed to Mr Knight and I hope my dear Sir you will do your utmost to find out his character and if bad expose him.

You will perceive from [the] "Manchester Observer" we have had a most excellent meeting in Stockport, the largest ever held there; we only wanted you to complete the thing. Sir Charles Wolseley was there and was well received but what a difference between the Manchester and the Stockport Chairmen. Excuse me just observing that I did not quite forget you on that occasion.

I have been terribly plagued by the Tyrants here; lately they have done all they could to ruin my Trade, and a "Brother in Law" to whom I had lent several hundred Pounds stopped payment last week, and won't I believe pay 1/6 in the pound; in fact trade here is not worth following, every thing is almost at a stand, nothing but ruin and starvation stare one in the face, the state of this district is truly dreadful and I believe nothing but the greatest exertion can prevent and insurrection. Oh that you in London was prepared for it.

The Manchester Patriotic Union Society have requested me to inform you that it is their intention to call a Public Meeting in this Town next Monday four weeks.* They at the same time particularly request your attendance and if the time does not suit your convenience they will alter it to your wish. I trust therefore you will not deny us your company nor deny me the pleasure of lodging you.

Your request as to Messrs Harvey's shall be attended to.

I am my dear Sir

Yours sincerely

Joseph Johnson

Please to write
by next post.

*[August 2 – added in pencil above].

[Wrapper marked 'Manchester July 3rd 1819. Copy of a Letter from Mr Johnson to Henry Hunt Esq, Received July 5th 1819.']

Copy

Middleton Cottage July 6 1819

Transcribed by Sylvia Kölling and Peter Castree

[Added note]. 'Dropped into a Gen[era]l Post Receiv[in]g House in London – 7 July. The Seal (Wax) a Pen with the Motto "Truth"]

My dear Friend,

I have this day received your favour & I am delighted to see the report of the Stockport Meeting & I am also very happy to perceive that Sir Charles Wolseley conducted himself so well. Really he is now fairly in with us, in the cause of the People, and altho' he is not the most brilliant Man in the world, nor the boldest perhaps, yet I believe him now to be honestly & sincerely with us, therefore we must cherish him. As for the Title I think nothing of it yet it may go a great way with the Multitude & it must be a cursed Eyesore to our aristocratical opponents. I feel highly flattered with the Compliment paid me at the Dinner & very sensible of the kindness of him who proposed it. Really my good fellow, there is nothing on Earth I would like better than to visit the Reformers of Manchester again, and in fact to pass a Day with you would be a sufficient Inducement for my taking such a Journey if it were not for the Expense.

I was in great hopes of receiving a visit from you long before this. However if you think that I can render any Service to the cause of Real Reform by my coming to a Public Meeting at Manchester, you may command me & I will make any Sacrifice to obey your call, even if I were to walk.

I am not ashamed altho' I am sorry to inform you that the Tyrants have, by means of their Agents, the Harpies of the Law, harassed me so as to strip me of every Shilling of ready rino to meet the Demands of the Villains. They have several suits now hanging over my head, that I scarcely know how I shall raise sufficient money to ward off the Blow that is aimed at me. I think if you have another Meeting at Manchester you should make it very Public as early as Possible, & make it rather a Meeting of the County of Lancashire, than of Manchester alone. The best way to do all this will be to send me a short public invitation which I will briefly answer. You can get this correspondence into the Observer & we will get it into the London Papers, what say you to this? You can advertise the Meeting in the next Observer & say that you have sent an Invitation to me to take the Chair. This will raise a public feeling, & a desire to know whether I accept it, or not. Nay I think by management the Largest assemblage may be procured at Manchester the 2nd of August that ever was seen in this Country.

Unless the People are prepared to come from almost all Parts within 20 Miles around I think we had better let the matter rest a while. What say you? Pray write to me fully your opinion. You see I use candour to you in the greatest Confidence. We shall have a Meeting in London, as I have heard before that Time. Write, but be careful to say nothing that can even by implication [be] taken hold of by the Villains. Address me 5 Wych Street London. God bless you.

Yours most sincerely

(Signed) H Hunt

Remember me kindly to Whitworth, Knight, Wroe & all Friends.

[Note: 'Smedley Cottage July 10 1819. Copy of a letter from Mr Johnson to Mr Hunt. Received July 13th 1819.']

Smedley Cottage July 10th 1819.

To Henry Hunt Esqr.

My dear Sir,

I am happy to find from your kind letter this day received that you intend to honour Manchester again by visiting us, and again presiding at a public Meeting. I received this day a letter from Sir C. Wolseley stating the Intention of himself and Major Cartwright likewise to attend it. This arose from a conversation at my house, where I gave Sir Charles to understand that we should have one, but intending to consult your convenience first, I of course did not say where: I shall therefore now write an invitation to him, the Major, and Wooler, if there be any other Gentlemen you would wish to be invited have the goodness to let me know and it shall be done. Sir C. Wolseley thinks the Major should be Chairman, I am inclined to have him who filled it with so much honour and ability at our last meeting: as no other person knows either of Sir Charles' wish or this letter. I trust you will say that which accords the most with your own feelings. I am extremely sorry to find that the Villains have still hold of you, when will it be possible for honest and independent men to obtain Justice? I have no doubt from the disposition of the people at present, but we shall have a very large Meeting, the Reformers of Stockport, Ashton under Lyne &c. mean to come in bodies preceded but Music and the Cap of Liberty. If you have time I should wish you to prepare the declaration of Rights and an appeal to the people; let them be strong, pointed and every way fitting such and important meeting; have the goodness to let me know your will on this and if you prepare them please send them to me as soon as completed. I see from the papers and an Invitation I have received you are requested to attend and take the Chair at a Meeting at Smithfield, I intend if my affairs will permit me, to write an address to that Meeting, which I shall send to you, with a desire to alter what you shall see amiss; I certainly would have done myself the pleasure of attending but for the failure of the person I mentioned to you in my last. I have been and shall be for some time employed in looking into his affairs. If I should fail to write tell the Reformers of London that if my body is not with them yet my whole soul is. Excuse these hasty lines and be assured that I am yours sincerely.

Joseph Johnson.

To Henry Hunt Esqr.

Sir,

Impressed with a lively sense of the inestimable Services you rendered to our public Meeting in January last, and convinced from past events of your uniform readiness to sacrifice your private concerns to promote the public Good: I with pleasure inform you that we have determined to hold another public Meeting on Monday 2nd of August for the purpose of accelerating the accomplishment of radical reformation of the house of Commons on the principles of Universal Suffrage, annual Parliaments and Election by Ballot: and by the Committee appointed to manage the said meeting I am requested particularly to solicit you to favour us with your Company and incalculably valuable aid on that occasion.

I am Dear Sir

Your Obedient Servant

Joseph Johnson

Make any alteration in this Invitation you please only send a copy of the alteration if any with your answer. Write by the first post, your letter was two days longer on the way that it ought to have been.

[Note added: 'The latter letter was afterwards published with an alteration of the day to the 9th of August.']

[Note added: 'Copy 2 Letters
Mr J Johnson to Mr Hunt
18 July 1819.']

Smedley Cottage July 18th 1819

My dear Sir,

Enclosed I send you an address which I shall feel greatly obliged to you to correct & read at the Meeting at which you are to preside. I have written it hastily having to go into Cheshire this Afternoon which is fine, the morning past being very wet to which Circumstance you may impute this address, if it be worthy the Name; for had it been even a tolerable Day, I should have been off early this Morning.

If you think it worthy get it printed with the report of the Meeting & have the Goodness to send me one. I sent you some hasty scrawl yesterday, by a Friend of Mr Wroe's who is going to London.

Write me as soon as possible.

I am Dear Sir

Your Sincerely

Joseph Johnson

PS: You will perceive by the Prints Sir C. Wolsely has been arrested. I have a L[ette]r from him & the Major this morning. What think you of the Birmingham Meeting? If you like the Plan, get it adopted, if possible, at your Meeting. Do write me back on the Subject. Direct 17 Shude Hill.

[Note added: This was read at the Smithfield Meeting]

Smedley Cottage July 18th 1819

To the Chairman of the Non-Represented People of London assembled at Smithfield – to take into Consideration the best Method of speedily obtaining a Constitutional reform of the House of Commons.

Friends & Fellow Citizens,

In acknowledging the receipt of your Circular inviting me to attend a “public Meeting of non Represented People” of the British Metropolis, to be held in “Smithfield Market Place” on Wednesday the 21st Inst; your inviting that brave and respected Patriot H. Hunt Esq to the Chair; your having invited such a band of excellent & enlightened Men to conduct your business; & a strong desire on my part to see the assembled Thousands of Radical Reformers in London meeting to assert their Rights as Men & Englishmen, all combine to urge me to make every possible personal Sacrifice to enjoy the Glorious & delightful Light of such a Meeting; but I am sorry to say a peculiar press of domestic Business precludes the possibility of my enjoying such a heart cheering Scene. However, Fellow Citizens, the Reformers of the North behold with Ecstasy your determination to cooperate with them in the attainment of what can alone save this Country from Total Ruin, viz , a Real Reform.

They are happy to see that there are Men who are as ready as themselves to shake off that arduous despotism which at present, disgraces those who suffer it to exist, whilst it crushes them to the Earth.

Let us then write & pledge ourselves never to cease our Exertions in the glorious Cause of Liberty, till nothing but Liberty is felt in the Land. Fellow Citizens! a reform in the House of Commons would give us this Liberty, by placing Men from our own Choice to legislate for us in that House we shall secure to ourselves that right which is in fact born with us. And as nothing but force or fraud could have taken it from us, so nothing but the united voice of Millions can ever regain it. Let the People so write & unitedly make such a demand; and the Pigmy Tyrants who now

oppress us, with the sportive Canning & the blood thirsty Castlereagh at their Head will shrink back without a Struggle, and call upon the Mountains & Hills to cover them from the just Vengeance of an insulted & deeply injured People.

Had not our Laws emanated from a Body of Men, influenced by a Peculiar Interest, the leading Features of those Laws would never have been so grossly partial as they at present are. I mean the landed Interests, which could alone have given rise to our Corn Laws & other similar Restrictions.

Did not our Rents & Taxes exceed the Rents & Taxes of other Nations, we could not have had any apparent Need of such Laws, for our own Corn etc could have been grown as cheap as in other Nations; and these Regulations which double the Price of our Provisions, practically, take away half the Wages of those Citizens & Manufacturers whose labour is sold in Foreign Markets, & whenever a Considerable Portion of any manufacture is sent to foreign Markets the fall of Price in those Markets produces a similar Reduction in the price at home. And thus the Manufacturing Labourers, firstly, lose a part of their Wages, & secondly, experience a Want of Employment. Dear Provisions & low Wages cause an Encrease [sic] of Exertion & thereby a Redundancy of manufactured Goods, until Employment cannot be obtained, & this is the way in which our Manufacturers & their Labourers are brought into their present deplorable condition. And this is natural & inevitable Result of excessive rents & Taxes, both of which have the same Effect upon the People. Another Evil resulting from Laws being made by men who know not of the real Value of Property, & who are not vested with legislative Power by those who do, is, that they are more subject to make extravagant Grants to Individuals either for serving or improving the Nation (if the latter be done in the Way they approve) than they otherwise would do. Those who are content to work diligently for £30 – 50 – 60 – 80 – or £100 a year, could never think of granting £5 10 20 or 30,000 a year for any services Man could perform. Much less would such Grants be made for doing nothing or worse than nothing. Besides, I strongly suspect that the giving to Individuals one or more thousands a Year has a great tendency to diminish if not destroy the usefulness of those Individuals however valuable they may have been before. Besides, every such Grant reduces the value of the poor Man's labour to himself; and it is much more essential to the well being of Society that the fruit of Labour should be preserved to him who performs it, than that it should be thrown lavishly either upon worthy or unworthy Individuals. These are some of the reasons which induce me to advocate the Principles of Universal Suffrage, & the probability of unworthy Men being elected to serve in Parliament, is my reason for advocating annual Elections, which prevent not those who have both the talent & Integrity from being re elected. And the great Influence, not to say absolute Power which some Individuals have over others, in the present state of excessive inequality of Property induces me to wish for Election by Ballot. Thus I have given you a brief Sketch not only of my political opinions but also the reasons on which they are founded. Wishing every possible success to crown our united Efforts in the Promotion of a radical reform of the House of Commons

I am

Fellow Citizens

Yours Truly

Joseph Johnson

[Note added: 'Wych St 20 July 1819. Hunt to J Johnson 17 Shude Hill Manchester']

Wych Street, Strand
20 July 1819.

My Dear Sir,

In consequence of my absence from home and some delay in the Post Office your favour of the 10th containing the flattering Invitation of the Committee to preside at the intended public Meeting to be held at Manchester on the 9th of August, did not reach me till Saturday last. If by my humble but unceasing Exertions to procure for the People of England their undoubted right to elect their own Representatives, I have secured the confidence of the brave reformers of Lancashire, that is an ample reward for my trouble, & it is most grateful to my feelings to know that in proportion to the vindictive [sic] hostility heaped upon me by the common Enemies of the human Race, I experience the esteem & protection of such Men as the Reformers of Manchester. Our Meeting takes place in Smithfield tomorrow, & you may easily conceive the agitated state of the tools of Corruption on this Occasion. The Lord Mayor Atkins who is as bussy⁺ a fool as your Boroughreeve is capering about like a "parched pea on a drum head," mustering all his turtle-fed forces, & would create a riot or do anything however ridiculous in order to be dubbed⁺ a Knight, if he were not restrained by orders from those at Head Quarters, who are too cunning & have too much at stake to run the risk of losing⁺ it to gratify the Vanity of such a contemptible Cockscomb. ⁺ He is supported by Horse, Foot & Artillery, ⁺ but the Boroughmongers tremble when they reflect that those wield the Sword & the Bayonet, as well as those who point the Cannon and apply the Torch are the Fathers, Brothers & Relations of the People of England, who are struggling as much to secure for them their rights, as they are to obtain Liberty & Justice for themselves. Notwithstanding all this dreadful note of Preparation, I have full confidence that we shall have an excellent and a peaceable meeting, & that I shall have the pleasure of meeting my friends, & the honor of presiding again at Manchester on the 9th of August.

From what I can learn of the disposition of the people in the Metropolis they are resolved to conduct themselves peaceably & orderly, but if assailed they are prepared & determined to resist the Acts of those who may first break the peace.

I am –

H Hunt

Joseph Johnson
17 Shude Hill
Manchester

⁺Sic in original.

[Note added: This was afterwards published.]

Copy

Middleton Cottage July 29th 1819

To Joseph Johnson Esqr.
Smedley Cottage, Manchester

I long to hear from you very much: pray write and tell me the particulars relating to Birch the Stockport Constable; there is no believing one word that appears in the rascally London Papers. If it be true that this man is shot his blood will be upon the head of the Miscreant the Lord Mayor. It was known that I had procured good Bail for him in London, and that we were coming to bail him with most responsible bail, when we was dragged away to make a show of him through the country, and to exhibit him in custody at Stockport. Pray tell me if this Birch is one of those monsters who behaved in so inhuman a way to the poor Blanketeers. If he is one of those wretches I am not surprized to hear of their vengeance being at length wreaked upon him. The accounts of the sufferings I hears from the mouths of those poor fellows was beyond human endurance. 200 of the crammed into a dungeon toll 60 of them fainted, and then marched off to Chester without allowing them to halt a moment even to obey the calls of nature. Do give me the particulars. I am very sorry for the act; it will give the villains of the Press such a handle – they will attribute it to the Reformers – altho' I am pleased that it did not happen at any Reform Meeting and no doubt but it was occasioned by Mr. Birch's own cruelty and officiousness. What occasion was there for dragging Sir Charles Wolsey to Chester? He must have been very ignorant of the Law, and so must have been the Old Major; if he had tendered Bail before a neighbouring magistrate that would have been sufficient, they dare not have detained him in custody one moment after. Oh, how the villains will rave about this! Bad enough it is certainly, but was it nothing to torture hundreds – was it nothing to drive Riley to Suicide – was it nothing to immure all those innocent men in dungeons?

A certain Royal _____ once killed a Stable boy with a Prong without any provocation – oh, this was hushed up presently. The brother of a Peer, Mr N. Fellowes, beat a Coachman's brains out about ten days ago without any provocation – but also he is one of the privileged orders. A Coroner's Jury has been got to bring it in Manslaughter and the Hon. Member of the Hon. House is admitted to Bail.

However, say what they will, they cannot, and I hope they will not be able to excite the Reformers to any act of violence. We have nothing to do but concentrate public opinion, and if our enemies will not listen to the voice of a whole people they will listen to nothing, and may the effects of their folly and wickedness be upon their own heads. Let me know what you think of the Smithfield Meeting. Everything was done to irritate the people, but as I told you in the letter I wrote you the day before, we were all peace and quietness. I have an invitation to attend a Meeting at Wakefield – how far is it from Manchester? Will you go with me if they have it when I am down with you? Oh! How happy we all should be never to attend a public Meeting again, if the people had but their rights. What can those monsters think of themselves who fatten upon the earnings of the starving people. God bless you, and believe me

Ever yours sincerely

H. Hunt.

[Note added: 'Middleton Cottage July 29 1819.

Copy of a letter from Mr Henry Hunt to Joseph Johnson Esq.

Received: July 30 1819.']

Copy

[Note added: 'Smedley 1st Aug 1819.
Intercepted Letter from Johnson to Hunt.']

Smedley Aug 1 1819.

My dear Sir

I herewith hand you a posting Bill sent forth by our official Magistrates in consequence of an advertisement in the Manchester Observer calling a public Meeting on the 9th August. You will see the Knaves are alarmed & by trick mean if possible to prevent the meeting. Have the goodness to send me the best advice you can get from yourself & friends on this in my opinion ultra Illegal bill. You will see the advertisement in the Observer & you will see likewise how they are plaguing us with their infamous Indictments.

I am Dear Sir

Yours Truly

Joseph Johnson

Please to say when you will be at my house.

Copy

New Bailey Court House

Saturday 31 July 1819.

Whereas

It appears by an advertisement in the "Manchester Observer" Paper of this day, That a public & Illegal Meeting is convened For Monday the 9th day of August next to be held on the area near St Peters Church, in Manchester, we the undersigned Magistrates acting for the Counties Palatine of Lancaster & Cheshire, do hereby caution all Persons to abstain, at Their Peril from attending such Illegal Meeting.

Signed:

Wm Hulton

Jas Norris

John Entwistle

Thos W. Tatton

I Holme

R Marsh

Trafford Trafford

Ralph Fletcher

Copy

[Note added: 'Manchester 3rd Aug 1819.
Intercepted Letter Johnson to Hunt']

Manchester August 3rd 1819

My dear Sir,

Your favour I have this day received & hasten to answer its Contents. Mr Moorhouse, the Coach Proprietor of Stockport, I have seen this day, & he has told me that Birch's Father told him that he was not shot with Ball, but simply wadding; & a Person at Stockport had been to make Oath before a Magistrate that Lloyd the Younger had done it. You may rely upon this being said by Birch the Elder; but whether it is true I cannot say, there seems to be considerable mystery hanging over it.

You would receive this day, if the Post be regular, a Posting Bill issued by our Magistrates, endeavouring to prevent a Meeting by intimidating the People. Such conduct as [sic] lost its Effect in this neighbourhood, and instead of preventing it as [sic] instilled a new Life & vigour into them; and I believe, nay am sure it will tend to encrease [sic] the Number. Today they have posted a Proclamation from London in Consequence of which I shall later the Advertisement for the Meeting, and call one for the purpose of taking into consideration the Propriety of Petitioning the House of Commons, or something else. I have not made up my Mind on the Subject, but I shall do to day. I suppose it is the considering the propriety of electing a Member for Manchester that they call "illegal". We must therefore, alter it. The greatest Preparations are making here to break the Peace, I suppose. Horse, Foot, Flying Artillery & Foot artillery are marching into town; and the greatest of the Great, the boldest of the Bold, the Yeomanry Cavalry, are hiring Substitutes to prevent their own personal attendance from being necessary.

I had forgot to inform you that it is the said Birch along with his Father & the Lodys [sic: Lloyds?], that behaved in so infamous a manner to the Blanketeers. The People, therefore, ought not to forget them.

I understand the Stockport Union have written you an Invitation to sup & stay all Night with them. Let me know whether this be true & whether you accept it. Say when you will be at Smedley.

The Smithfield Meeting has gained you great applause. The Lancashire Reformers likewise begin to think the Londoners are in earnest. I wish you could bring Mr Sherwin with you. Mr Carlile has promised Mr Wroe in a Letter to him which I have seen, that he intends to be here. I believe it will be a noble meeting.

Adieu &c
(signed)
Joseph Johnson.