

The Times, Thursday 19th August, 1819. Report of John Tyas.

DISPERSAL OF THE REFORM-MEETING AT MANCHESTER BY A MILITARY FORCE.

This meeting, which has caused such universal anxiety and trepidation throughout the whole of the country, took place on Monday last at Manchester.

The place appointed for the meeting was a large vacant piece of ground on the north side of St. Peter's Church, which is well known in Manchester by the name of St. Peter's-place. At half past 10 o'clock about 250 idle individuals might be collected within it. About half-past 11 the first body of Reformers arrived on the ground, bearing two banners, each of which was surmounted by a cap of liberty. The first bore upon a white ground the inscription of Annual Parliaments, and Universal Suffrage on the reverse side, "No Corn Laws". The other bore upon a blue ground the same inscription, with the addition of "Vote by Ballot" After these flags had been paraded over the field for some time, it was thought fit by the leaders of the party which had brought them, that they should remain stationary. A post was accordingly assigned to the bearers of them, to which shortly afterwards a dung-cart was brought, into which the standard bearers were ordered to mount, and from which all the standards arriving afterwards were most appropriately displayed. Numerous large bodies of Reformers continued to arrive from this time to 1 o'clock, from the different towns in the neighbourhood of Manchester, all with flags, and many of them drawn up five deep, and in regular marching order. A club of female Reformers amounting in number, according to our calculation, to 156, came from Oldham; and another, not quite so numerous, from Royton. The first bore a white silk banner, by far the most elegant displayed during the day, inscribed "*Major Cartwright's Bill, Annual Parliaments, Universal Suffrage, and Vote by Ballot*" In one compartment of it was Justice, holding the scales in one hand, and a sword in the other; in another, a large eye, which we suppose was impiously intended to represent the eye of Providence. On the reverse of this flag was another inscription; but in the hurry of the day we found it impossible to decipher what it was, and can only say that there were upon it two hands, both decorated in *shirt ruffles*, clasped in each other and underneath them an inscription, "*Oldham Union*" The latter (i.e. the females of Royton) bore two red flags, the one inscribed, "*Let us (i.e. women) die like men., and not be sold like slaves;*" the other, "*Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage*" The Radicals of Saddleworth brought with them a black flag to the field, on one side of which was inscribed, "*Taxation without representation is unjust and tyrannical; equal representation or death*"; on the other side, "*Union is Strength – Unite and be free. Saddleworth and Mosley Union*". The Reformers from Rochdale and Middleton marched to the sound of the bugle, and in very regular time, closing and expanding their ranks, and marching in ordinary and double quick time, according as it pleased the fancy of their leaders to direct them. They had two green banners, between which they had hoisted on a red pole a cap of liberty, crowned with leaves of laurel, and bearing the inscription, "*Hunt and Liberty.*" Another band bore a banner, in which Britannia was represented with her trident, leaning on a shield, upon which was inscribed the motto borne by Sir William Wallace, "*God armeth the Patriot*"

In this manner the business of the day proceeded till 1 o'clock, by which time we should suppose that 80,000 people were assembled on the ground. During this period we found it impossible to approach the waggon, though very desirous to do so, as a young lad, not more than 17 or 18, was addressing the meeting with great vehemence of action and gesture, and with great effect, if we may judge from the cheers which he every now and then extracted from his audience, who were now beginning to be impatient for the arrival of Hunt, and the other orators who were to follow in his train, like the satellites which attend on some mighty planet

The Reformers who had up to this time arrived in the field demeaned themselves becomingly, though a posse of 300 or 400 constables, with the Boroughreeve at their head, had marched in a body into the field about 12 o'clock, unsupported by any military body to all outward appearance. Not the slightest insult was offered to them. The people did indeed rush to behold them; but this was probably occasioned by an idea that they were another body of Reformers. As soon as they saw who they were, they turned away from them with a smile; and, attracted by a crowd which was advancing from another corner of the area, went to meet it, crying, "Let us keep peace and order, and go and welcome this body, which is one of ours".

As we stood counting the members of the Oldham Female Reform Club in their procession by us, and whilst we were internally pitying the delusion which had led them to a scene so ill-suited to their usual habits, a group of the women of Manchester, attracted by the crowd, came to the corner of the street where we had taken our post. They viewed these Female Reformers for some time with a look in which compassion and disgust were equally blended; and at last burst out into an indignant exclamation— "Go home to your families, and leave *sike-like matters as these* to your husbands and sons, who better understand them." The women who thus addressed them were of the lower order in life.

We had waited up to one o'clock on the field of action for the arrival of Mr. Hunt; but as he had not then made his appearance, we determined to go and meet the procession, which it was said was to attend the orator. We met it just by the Exchange, where the people were cheering most loudly, and Hunt and Johnson joining in the cheers. They were seated in an open landau, along with Carlisle, Knight, and others, and had moved in grand procession from Smedley-cottage, past New-cross, and Shude-hill, preceded by a large body of male, and followed by a scarcely less numerous body, of female Manchester Reformers. Before them were carried two boards, 'on which were inscribed, "*Order, order,*" these were followed by two flags for annual Parliaments and universal suffrage, and also by Hunt's old flag and cap of liberty, of Westminster notoriety, "Hunt, and universal suffrage." This latter was held by a female Reformer, seated on the *dicky* of the landau, which had the honour of carrying the illustrious band of patriots whose name we have just mentioned. It was now to be exhibited in the last of its fields.

It was just opposite to the Exchange, as was before mentioned, that the individual who furnishes this report met the procession in full march: from the numbers whom he had already seen collected on the field, and those whom he then saw proceeding to increase them, he felt convinced of the impossibility of getting into any position in which he could hear the proceedings of the day, unless he received some personal accommodation from Mr. Hunt himself. He had never previously spoken to that individual, nor would he have thought of addressing him upon this occasion, had he not known that every gentleman connected with the London press had gladly availed himself of similar assistance at the Smithfield meeting. As to espousing the political principles, or advocating the wild doctrines of radical reform, supported by Mr. Hunt, it is the very last thing, if he knows himself, that he should ever be induced to do; he holds them in as utter abhorrence as the most loyal subject of his Majesty possibly can hold them, and will always be ready to express that disgust in the warmest and most indignant terms. Mr. Hunt, on this individual's asking to be admitted, if possible, on to the hustings, immediately acceded to his request. He desired him to stand as close as possible to the landau in which he was riding, and promised to take care that every accommodation in his power should be paid to his convenience. He followed in the train of the Orator till he arrived in the field of action.

The enthusiasm excited among the crowd by the presence of the Orator was certainly beyond any thing which we ever before witnessed; and the cheers with which he was hailed were loud and lasting. When he had taken his stand upon the hustings, which were formed of two carts lashed together, and boards spread over them, he expressed considerable disapprobation of the manner in which they were formed, and of the place in which they were situated. This will not excite surprise, when we state, that it was so arranged that the speaker had to talk against the wind; and also, that on Mr. Hunt's last appearance at Manchester, the hustings were so slightly built as to yield to the pressure of the super incumbent crowd, though fortunately no accident happened from their giving way. After the different persons who intended to address the multitude had taken their position upon them and silence had been obtained, Johnson came forward and proposed that Henry Hunt be appointed their Chairman. Here a short pause ensued, as if Johnson had expected that some person would have come forward to second his proposition. No person, however, doing so Johnson proceeded to call upon them to carry the question by acclamation. The meeting did so, and Henry Hunt was declared Chairman, amid cheers of 3 times 3. The noise continuing longer than usual, Hunt found it requisite to entreat his friends to preserve tranquillity. He commenced his address by calling the assembly "gentlemen," but afterwards changed the term to "fellow countrymen." He had occasion, he said, to entreat their indulgence. (*Noise continued.*) Every man wishing to hear, must himself keep silence. (*Laughter but no silence.*) "Will you," said he, addressing himself to the mob, be so obliging as not to call silence while the business of the day is proceeding?" (*Silence was then obtained.*) He hoped

that they would now exercise the all powerful right of the people, and if any person would not be quiet, that they would put him down and keep him quiet. (*We will.*) For the honour which they hail just conferred upon him, he returned them his most sincere thanks: and for any services which he either had or might render them, all that he asked was, that they would indulge him with a calm and patient attention. It was impossible for him to think that with the utmost silence he could make himself heard by every member of the numerous and tremendous meeting which he saw assembled before him. If those, however, who were near him were not silent, how could it be expected that those who were at a distance could hear what he should say? A dead silence now pervaded the multitude. It was useless for him to recall to their recollection the proceedings of the last 10 days in their town; they were all of them acquainted with the cause of the late meeting being postponed; and it would be therefore superfluous in him to say any thing about it, except, indeed, it were this — that those who had attempted to put them down by the most malignant exertions had occasioned them to meet that day in more than twofold numbers. (*Hear.*) Knight here whispered something into Mr. Hunt's ear, which caused him to turn round with some degree of asperity to Knight, and to say, "Sir, I will not be interrupted: when you speak yourself, you will not like to experience such interruption." They would have perceived, that since the old meeting had been put off, and the present one had been called — though their enemies flattered themselves with having obtained a victory, they showed by their conduct that they had sustained a defeat. (Long and loud applause.) In the interval between the two meetings, two placards had been circulated, to which the names of two obscure individuals were attached: the first was signed by Tom Long or Jack Short, a printer in the town whom nobody knew.

At this stage of the business the Yeomanry Cavalry were seen advancing in a rapid trot to the area: their ranks were in disorder, and on arriving within it, they halted to breathe their horses, and to recover their ranks. A panic seemed to strike the persons at the outskirts of the meeting, who immediately began to scamper in every direction. After a moment's pause, the cavalry drew their swords, and brandished them fiercely in the air: upon which Hunt and Johnson desired the multitude to give three cheers, to show the military that they were not to be daunted in the discharge of their duty by their unwelcome presence. This they did, upon which Mr. Hunt again proceeded. This was a mere trick to interrupt the proceedings of the meeting: but he trusted that they would all stand firm. He had scarcely said these words, before the Manchester Yeomanry cavalry rode into the mob, which gave way before them, and directed their course to the cart from which Hunt was speaking. Not a brickbat was thrown at them — not a pistol was fired during this period: all was quiet and orderly, as if the cavalry had been the friends of the multitude, and had marched as such into the midst of them. A bugle-man went at their head, then an officer, and then came the whole troop. They wheeled round the waggons till they came in front of them, the people drawing back in every direction on their approach. After they had surrounded them in such a manner as to prevent all escape, the *officer* who commanded the detachment went up to Mr. Hunt, and said, brandishing his sword, "Sir, I have a warrant against you, and arrest you as my prisoner." Hunt, after exhorting the people to tranquillity in a few words, turned round to the officer, and said, "I willingly surrender myself to any civil officer who will show me his warrant" Mr. Nadin, the chief police officer at Manchester, then came forward and said, "I will arrest you; I have got informations upon oath against you," or something to that effect. The military officer then proceeded to say, that he had a warrant against Johnson. Johnson also asked for a civil-officer, upon which a Mr. Andrew came forward, and Hunt and Johnson then leaped from off the waggon, and surrendered themselves to the civil power. Search was then made for Moorhouse and Knight, against whom warrants had also been issued. In the hurry of this transaction, they had by some means or other contrived to make their escape. As soon as Hunt and Johnson had jumped from the waggon, a cry was made by the cavalry, "Have at their flags." In consequence they immediately dashed not only at the flags which were in the waggon, but those which were posted among the crowd, cutting most indiscriminately to the right and to the left in order to get at them. This set the people running in all directions, and it was not till this act had been committed that any brick-bats were hurled at the military. From that moment the Manchester Yeomanry Cavalry lost all command of temper. A person of the name of Saxton, who is, we believe, the editor of the *Manchester Observer* was standing in the cart. Two privates rode up to him. "There," said one of them, "is that villain, Saxton; do you run him through the body." "No," replied the other, "I had rather not — I leave it to you." The man immediately made a lunge at Saxton, and it was only by slipping aside that the

blow missed his life. As it was, it cut his coat and waistcoat, but fortunately did him no other injury. A man within five yards of us in another direction had his nose completely taken off by a blow of a sabre; whilst another was laid prostrate, but whether he was dead or had merely thrown himself down to obtain protection we cannot say. Seeing all this hideous work going on, we felt an alarm which any man may be forgiven for feeling in a similar situation: looking around us, we saw a constable at no great distance, and thinking that our only chance of safety rested in placing ourselves under his protection, we appealed to him for assistance. He immediately took us into custody, and on our saying that we merely attended to report the proceedings of the day, he replied, "Oh! oh! You then are one of their writers — you must go before the Magistrates." To this we made no objection; in consequence he took us to the house where they were sitting, and in our road thither, we saw a woman on the ground, insensible, to all outward appearance, and with two large gouts of blood on her left breast. Just as we came to the house, the constables were conducting Hunt into it, and were treating him in a manner in which they were neither justified by law nor humanity, striking him with then staves on the head. After he had been taken into the house, we were admitted also; and it is only justice to the man who apprehended us to state, that he did every thing in his power to protect us from all ill-usage, and showed us every civility consistent with his duty. In the room into which we were put, we found the Orator, Johnson, Saxton, and some other individuals of minor note, among whom was another woman in a fainting condition. Nadin the constable was also there. Hunt and Johnson both asked him to show them the warrants on which they had been apprehended. This he refused to do, saying that he had information upon oath against them, which was quite sufficient for him. Hunt then called upon the persons present to mark Nadin's refusal. Shortly after this transaction, Mr. Hay, the chairman of the magistrates, came into the apartment, and asked Hunt if he was afraid to go down to the New Bailey; if he was, he himself would accompany him, and look after his safety. Hunt, who we forgot to mention had received a slight sabre wound on one of his hands, said, that he should have no objection to the Magistrate's company; he certainly did not like either a cut from a sabre or a blow from a staff, both of which had been dealt out to him in no small quantity. Mr. Bay shortly afterwards went out, having first made a reply to Mr. Hunt, which, some riot out of doors prevented us from hearing. On casting our eyes at the place where the immense multitude had lately been assembled, we were surprised in the short space of ten minutes to see it cleared of all its former occupiers, and filled by various troops of military, both horse and foot. Shortly after this had occurred, a Magistrate came into the room, and bade the prisoners prepare to march off to the New Bailey. Hunt was consigned to the custody of Col. l'Estrange, of the 31st foot, and a detachment of the 15th Hussars; and under his care, he and all the other prisoners, who were each placed between two constables, reached the New Bailey in perfect safety. The staves of two of Hunt's banners were carried in mock procession before him.

After these individuals had been committed to the custody of the Governor, they were turned into one common yard, where the events of the day formed the subject of conversation. Knight and Morehouse, who had been taken a short time after them, were afterwards added to their company. About 5 o'clock the Magistrates directed the Governor of the prison to lock each of them up in a solitary cell, and to see that they had no communication with each other. This was accordingly done.

The writer of this article was one of the parties thus imprisoned. Except that it was imprisonment, he has no reason to complain of the treatment which he received. He was in custody from 2 o'clock on Monday, till 12 o'clock on Tuesday. As soon as the magistrates were acquainted with the circumstances under which his apprehension had taken place, they immediately ordered his release, and expressed in very polite terms their regret for the inconvenience to which he had been subjected. When we were once more allowed to enjoy that freedom of which we had been for a moment deprived, we took a walk through most of the principal streets of Manchester, and found that they were at that time (12 o'clock) completely under military disposal. Soldiers were posted at all the commanding positions of the town, and were to be seen extended at full length on the flags in various directions. At three o'clock, they had, however, all of them returned to their quarters, and the town was to all outward appearance once more in a state of tranquillity. At seven o'clock, when we quitted Manchester, all was quiet in the town. A report had, however, reached it that there was a serious riot at Oldham, and in consequence some troops of the Chester Yeomanry were sent to quell it.

In our road to Stockport, our attention was forcibly struck by the numerous groups of idle men, who were congregated together along it. They appeared ready for any wicked or desperate purpose; and we have reason to believe that before the evening was concluded they were engaged in an attack upon the magistracy of Stockport. About a mile from that place some hundreds of them were assembled near a petty public house. A new hat, a tea-kettle, and some other articles of little value, were displayed at the window, as is customary to display the prizes given at wakes or feasts in this part of the country. This was to serve as a pretext for their meeting together; but that it was only a pretext we learned to a certainty during our stay at Macclesfield.

On our entry into that town about 10 at night, we were met by several women, who flung themselves in the way of our chaise and entreated us for God's sake not to enter it, as if murderous work was going on within it. This was not, to be sure, pleasing information; but on consulting with our driver, he said that there could be no harm in our proceeding on as far as the Royal Hotel, which lies nearly at the entrance of the town as you come from Manchester. On arriving there, our horses were seized by some special constables, and we were advised not to proceed further up the town, if we had any regard whatsoever for our lives. Of course we took their advice, and turned our horses into a yard, as they desired us. On inquiring into the cause of the anxiety which was depicted in all their faces, they informed us that the Reformers in their neighbourhood, irritated by the defeat which they had sustained at Manchester the day before, had assembled in a body of 2 or 3,000 men, and had been committing the most abominable acts of violence in different quarters of the town. In the market-place they had broken every window which looked into it, and in various other places had done similar acts of atrocity. They were emboldened in their villany by the knowledge that there were only a few military men in the town, and that in the custody of these men were 300 stand of arms, and several thousand rounds of ball cartridge. The circumstance of these arms being so loosely guarded, filled the minds of the peaceable inhabitants with the utmost dread, especially when they found, on going to the guard-house, that out of the six soldiers stationed in the town, two were dead drunk, and one of them the sergeant at the head of the detachment. They were all, however, persuaded to stand to their arms, and being aided by several respectable inhabitants of the town, assumed so formidable an appearance that the rioters thought it unwise to attack them. This disinclination on their part gave fresh courage to the friends of order and tranquillity; and in consequence they made an attack, on the rioters, and took several of them prisoners. In the meanwhile, an express was sent off to Stockport, dealing that one of the three companies of the 31st, which had marched from their quarters at Macclesfield to Stockport, might be sent back to the former place, or else a company of the Cheshire Yeomanry Cavalry, many of whom are inhabitants of the place, might be dispatched to the assistance of their townsmen. Whilst this scene was transacting in Macclesfield, it was said that bonfires had been lighted on all the hills which surround it, and it was surmised that these served as signals to the disaffected. The first lighted was on Blakeney-hill; this was answered by similar fires on all the hills, from thence up to Northern Laney there it stopped; but at another signal, fire-rockets were thrown up from it, Whether there was any meaning in these fires or not we are unable to say; but shortly after they appeared, the rioters resumed their attacks, having first taken the precaution to extinguish all the gas-lights in the town. This was attended by twofold advantage inasmuch as it did not leave them so open to detection, and therefore gave them a better opportunity of continuing their devastations. Still, with all these advantages, they never durst meet the small but resolute band of special constables; who, under the command of the Mayor, were everywhere ready to resist them. Some 8 or 9 gentlemen who had mounted themselves on horseback and armed themselves with swords, were of great utility in scouring the streets and bringing in prisoners, who were immediately placed in the custody of the soldiers of the 31st. We are happy to say, that in the struggles between the two parties, no serious personal injury was done to either of them. Some of the rioters got heavy blows from the staffs of the constables, and some of the constables awkward contusions from the brick-bats hurled at them by their opponents; but no lives were either lost or endangered. When we left the town, which was at 4 o'clock in the morning, tranquillity was perfectly re-established; 30 or 40 rioters were in custody, and the gentleman who had gone with the express to Stockport, had returned with the intelligence, that, though a battle between the military and the rioters was momentarily expected, a troop of infantry had started from Stockport, and were when he left them within an hour's march of Macclesfield. At Stockport the magistrates were assembled at the Warren Bulkeley Arms, before which the soldiery was drawn out,

as that was the first point against which the rioters had declared their intention of making an attack. Similar riots were expected at other places; almost all the military being stationed at Manchester.