



CP 25 OCT 1825

We have this week to detail the particulars of an occurrence strongly illustrative of the system which the all-wise Mr. Hume has the honour of having introduced amongst a large majority of our mechanic and artisans.

It is well known to every one resident in this vicinity, that Messrs. Brocklebank are very extensive shipbuilders in Whitehaven; and their numerous workmen and apprentices, from the oldest to the youngest, would say, if they spoke the truth, that they have uniformly proved themselves not merely just and kind masters, but masters public-spirited and liberal in a degree which has but few parallels.

For example, they never erected upon the system of doing all or the greater part of their work with apprentices, but kept upon their establishment a fair and proper proportion of journeymen, even in the worst of times. When work was slack, they refused to recede to the proposals made to them, by some masters—that of lowering wages to 15s. per week, and continued to pay 18s. to their own manifest loss, from an impression that those employed by them could not otherwise properly sustain themselves and families. Moreover, in the periods of the greatest depression of the shipping interest, when many vessels were laid up for want of freight, and consequently there was no demand for new ones, Messrs. Brocklebank still kept their hands in full activity, launching vessel after vessel, without any prospect of sale, and if not disposed of, why they manned them and ran them themselves, at no small risk, and often in the nature of things, to their own pecuniary injury. Finally, when the ship carpenters of Whitehaven recently turned out for an advance of their wages to 22s. per week, Messrs. Brocklebank were among the foremost to comply with the demand. If any one, therefore, were entitled to respect and attachment from those employed under them, the gentlemen of whom we have been speaking surely might have put in their claim to such an indulgence. But no. Cratitude, it seems, no longer forms part of our "operative" vocabulary. "Union" and "Combination" have usurped its place, and are now-a-days held to be the first of virtues, as well as duties by the hopeful professors of the great Mr. Hume's new philosophy.

For sometime past, the workmen in this yard, as well as others, and even the boys, have exhibited pretty strong symptoms of the spirit with which they are imbued. Insolence to the masters and overseers is the order of the day; and these men who do not belong to the "Union" are annoyed on every possible occasion. This "Union" they are pleased to call a "Benefit Society"; but it is any thing rather than that either to themselves, their masters, or the public. They are connected with the shipwrights of Liverpool and other ports; and should any disagreement take place with their employers as to wages, regulations, or the engagement of men not belonging to the confederacy, any one branch of men not from the others such assistance as shall enable them, (in their own phraseology) to "bring the masters to terms." Thus the servant is become a dictator; nothing must be done without his concurrence: he is to decide what are the rights of property; what is most suitable for the

interests of the master, and who is or is not a proper person to be admitted to the employer's confidence.

In this way have the masters been treated from about midsummer; and Messrs. Brocklebank at length formed a determination no longer to submit to it. In our last paper, they advertised for men at 24s. per week, on this condition, that they were unconnected with any "union." This, however, could not have led to what took place on Tuesday morning, for the plan of that proceeding had been laid on the Monday, some hours before the advertisement alluded to went forth to the public.

It appears that Messrs. Brocklebank had engaged a man at the recommendation of Mr. Pelle, of Harington. This man went to work on Tuesday morning, at the usual hour; and on his entering the yard, the apprentices flocked round him, and intimated what he might expect if he dared to make a beginning. The threats of these fellows had the desired effect; and the new hand determined to stand idle till Mr. Brocklebank came to the yard. Meanwhile, however, the apprentices, about forty in number, and several of them stout young men, seized the obnoxious stranger, mounted him upon a tree, and carried him through the town to the Patent Ship, and from thence to a public-house at the bottom of Queen's-street, and subsequently, around the Market-house, where they let him go. Having performed this feat, without any very great regard to delicacy, they went to their breakfasts, and afterwards again repaired to their work, highly pleased with what they chose to call their triumph. In a short time they behought themselves of another freak. A marked man—one who did not belong to the "Union," and had not conformed, we presume, to their regulations, was picked out by them as a *scab*—he, too, was hoisted upon a pole, shoulder high, and they were hoisterously proceeding with him into the town, when they were met at the foot of Duke-street by Mr. Brocklebank, who endeavoured to prevail upon them to liberate the man, but in vain—a scuffle ensued, Mr. B. pressed in among them, and was either knocked or thrown down by one of his own apprentices; and he did not rise again without soiled apparel, and a bloody face!

Justly incensed, Mr. Brocklebank immediately proceeded to his yard, and dismissed every man and boy employed in it, and shut it up. He afterwards applied to the Magistrates, and subsequently set off for the Sessions where he obtained a warrant against the offenders, and on Thursday, a great many of them were had up at the public office here, and the Magistrates sent eight of them to the House of Correction. The affair will most likely be heard of before another tribunal, for we may rest assured that Messrs. Brocklebank will act with their wonted energy in the due punishment of the refractory.

Oscensibly, the journeymen took no part in this affair but no one is silly enough not to know that they were at the bottom of it,—that they planned the whole proceeding, and instigated the actors. The punishment will in the end probably fall on the right heads.

The shipwrights of Messrs. Kelsick Wood and Sons, of Maryport, are also off work for a somewhat similar reason—because the Messrs. Wood refuse to surrender their wills, and the entire management of their property. Ten of these men have found employment in Whitehaven, by a person who must submit to all their whims—for masters of small capital cannot contend against these potent unions, and must humbly submit, while the law enables the employed to tyrannize over the employer.

But it is not only the ship-carpenters who thus act—almost all the mechanics entertain the same views and principles, especially the joiners, cabinet-makers, &c.—say but a word to them—find fault with any thing they may please to do, and off's the word!

The universal diffusion of this spirit is now become a national evil of serious magnitude; trade of all kinds has suffered to an enormous extent, and will still farther suffer unless Parliament takes the earliest opportunity of abridging that power which the workmen exercise with such fatal indiscretion.

Since writing the above we have been informed that the apprentices who were sent to the House of Correction were liberated on Saturday on bail, and in the course of that day had an interview with Mr. Brocklebank: we did not hear the result, but the yard has been opened again this morning, and several, both men and boys, have been admitted to work.