



PUBLIC MEETING for the RELIEF of the WORKING CLASSES.

In consequence of the very general distress amongst the working classes in this town, to which we briefly adverted in our last, a public meeting was held on Tuesday, at noon. It was convened by hand-bills, of which the following is a copy:—

“A Public Meeting will be held this day, (Tuesday the 13th instant) at the Savings’ Bank, Whitehaven, at twelve o’clock at noon, to take into consideration the necessity of alleviating the Distress at present existing amongst the Working Classes of the Town, through the inclemency of the weather.—At the request of the Ministers of St. Nicholas’s and St. James’s.

“JOHN WERRERE, Warden of St. Nicholas’s.
“WILLIAM FITZSIMONS, Warden of St. James’s.
“Whitehaven, 13th February, 1838.”

The attendance was numerous, and highly respectable. On the motion of Mr. Dawson, surgeon, the Rev. Andrew Hudleston, D.D. was unanimously called to the chair.

Dr. HUDLESTON on taking the chair opened the business of the meeting by observing, that having been made acquainted with the impending, if not already existing, distress, in which, from a concurrence of causes, but chiefly from the more than usual severity of the season, the working classes of the district either were or must shortly be inevitably involved, unless adequate means of relief and redress were seasonably provided, and having also been at the same time applied to to give his assistance in that behalf, he thought it an indispensable and imperative duty, incumbent upon him even as a private gentleman, much more so as a clergyman and minister of the gospel, immediately, and upon the spur of the moment, and without any doubt or hesitation, to come forward, and to consent to take an active part—active at least to a certain extent, in the adoption of those public measures and proceedings, which the great pressure and exigency of the crisis might require. Influenced then by these motives and considerations, he had granted the sanction of his name, as far as that name really implied in itself any sanction at all, in conjunction with the name of his brother clergyman, the Rev. John Jenkins, to a placard or hand bill, informing the public of the intention of holding that meeting, and of the important object, whose accomplishment it had in view; he had also attended the meeting personally, and not declined, upon being invited, to accept the chair. Acting in that capacity he should be disposed to listen to every suggestion, which might be advanced, as to the best and most expeditious mode of administering the required relief, and also to give the mite of his own pecuniary contribution. He thought it right, however, candidly to inform the meeting, that he objected to have any thing to do with the actual collection of the money to be raised, and this not merely because he was conscious he could not be an active collector, but principally because he thought such an office, not so much derogatory to, as incompatible with, the situation of chairman, to which they had done him the honor to advance him. To the few observations he had made he had little or nothing to add; he considered the emergency of the occasion to be such, as to demand instant consultation and action, and consequently to preclude all attempts to gratify the pitifulness of a paltry self vanity by the indulgence of any vein of oratorical declamation. The Doctor concluded by thanking the company for the attention they had given to this short address. (Hear.)

The Rev. JOHN JENKINS stated that he had been called on to witness several extreme cases of destitution owing to the vessels being retarded in Dublin, and the inability of labourers, masons, and others, to work during the frost which had so long prevailed. He had noticed this in his discourse on Sunday, which had called forth a desire, on the part of several of his hearers, that a public meeting should be convened to adopt measures of relief for their suffering neighbours; and he might observe, that one of his hearers, Mr. George Dawson, had kindly sent him five guineas as a commencement in aid of the laudable object. He had taken steps accordingly, and they were then assembled to adopt measures to ascertain, first, if distress did exist to any great extent, and secondly, how that distress was to be relieved.

Mr. THOMPSON, surgeon, said he had professionally witnessed many cases of extreme distress, and he did not think the working classes had ever been in greater want than at the present time, or had ever borne their afflictions with more patience. The wives and children of many sailors were particularly oppressed, as were also most classes of labourers; and from what had passed under his own observation he was decidedly of opinion that some assistance from the more wealthy portion of the inhabitants to their poorer fellow-townsmen was never more needed than at the present moment.

Mr. JEFFERSON did not doubt that great distress existed amongst a certain portion of the inhabitants of that town, but was of opinion that it arose from two different causes—one being the long continuance of the frost, which had had the effect of throwing labourers generally out of employment; the other, the arrangement of a trade which kept so many vessels, and of course their crews also, in Dublin for many weeks together. He would prefer two subscriptions, one for the relief of those who suffered in consequence of the severity of the weather, and the other for the families of mariners, in whose behalf he thought the ship-owners ought to particularly interest themselves.

Mr. W. F. NICHOLSON and Mr. ARTHUR BELL both differed in opinion with Mr. Jefferson, and the latter gentleman remarked that the distress which existed amongst the families of seamen ought not all to be laid to the account of the detention of vessels in the Dublin market. The arrival of many Whitehaven vessels had been delayed for three weeks or a month by adverse winds, whilst others again had been obliged to seek shelter from the same cause in different ports whilst on their homeward voyage.

A desultory conversation of some length ensued, in the course of which several gentlemen expressed themselves in favour of Mr. Jefferson’s proposition.

Mr. JOSEPH CLEMENTSON said the soup-kitchen which had existed in the town for several weeks past had been productive of much good, and he would therefore move that a subscription be entered into in order that it might be continued.

The CHAIRMAN was averse to the money raised being applied in that manner, and he for one would certainly not lend his aid if the funds were to be thus appropriated.

After some further conversation Mr. PRYCE proposed that a subscription be entered into for the general relief of the poor of the townships of Whitehaven and Preston Quarter, which was seconded by the Rev. JOHN JENKINS.

Mr. JEFFERSON moved as an amendment that the relief to be given be limited to those who were suffering from the state of the weather.

This led to another lengthy conversation, but the amendment not finding a seconder, the original motion was put and carried.

Mr. PRYCE suggested for the meeting that the arrangement adopted in collecting for the infirmary might be usefully applied in obtaining subscriptions in the present instance. The infirmary arrangement was to divide the town into four districts: one comprised Duke Street and all on the East; the second, Duke Street and East to Lowther Street, and the third, the whole of that portion of the town to the West of Rover Street. He would also recommend the appointment of gentlemen resident in each district as collectors for that district.

This suggestion was adopted, and a resolution to the effect having been drawn up, it was unanimously agreed to.

Other resolutions were also passed, for which we beg to refer the reader to an advertisement in another column.

Thanks were then voted to Dr. Hudleston for his services in the chair, after which a very liberal subscription was entered into in the room. The meeting then broke up.