

NOTE ON SOURCES AND CITATION

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The bulk of Luddite documents are to be found in the Home Office Papers in the Public Records Office at Kew. During the Luddite risings, the Home Office collected documents from its correspondents in the North and the Midlands; these documents are catalogued primarily in the two series designated for materials on disturbances, 40 and 42, although a few related items are found in series 43. Groups of documents within each series have additional numeric designations, but individual documents do not have their own item number. In this book, citation will follow the form established in the Home Office Papers and followed by most historians: Home Office Papers are cited as H. O., followed by the series number, a slash, and any additional designators. Individual items are distinguished by date and writer, when possible.

Another useful source for Luddite letters is the manuscript collection of Sir Joseph Radcliffe, the Huddersfield magistrate most visible in the official efforts to put down the Luddite risings. (Upon the recommendation of Lord-Lieutenant Wentworth Fitzwilliam, Radcliffe was knighted shortly after the risings were suppressed.) I cite documents from Radcliffe's collection as the Radcliffe Papers, or simply Radcliffe. The papers are available in the Leeds Municipal Archives; microform reproductions, though extremely difficult to read, are distributed as The Luddite Papers of Sir Joseph Radcliffe (Wakefield: Micro Methods, 1970). The conventional method of citing these papers, followed herein, is to note the group number, usually 126, followed by a slash and a number designating the item, although I include the date and the correspondents when possible.

Other archives containing Luddite texts include the extensive newspaper collections in the British Library, the East Midlands Special Collections in the Hallward Library at the University of Nottingham and the Hallward Library's own Nottingham newspaper collections, the Derby Public Library Broad-sides Collection, the Manchester Central Reference Library's collection of pamphlets and songs, the Sheffield City Library's Wentworth Fitzwilliam Manuscript Collection, and similar collections throughout Britain.

Complete and, more typically, abbreviated versions of several of the Luddite writings occasionally can be found in histories of the period; however, when they incorporate primary Luddite texts, most historians of Luddism think it proper to edit the Luddites' actual language. I have chosen to reproduce the Luddites' own language, including any clarifications (necessitated by orthography, illegibility, lacunae, or unusual grammar) in footnotes or in brackets within the text. I have also attempted to include cross-references to the works of several of the historians and other scholars who cite, quote, or discuss the Luddite texts reproduced herein. The cross-references are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather merely suggestive and ancillary.

SONGS AND VERSES

Within their unique contexts, Luddite songs and poems performed special functions, most of which are evident in the works themselves. Some are celebratory and self-congratulatory. Others are inspirational, the literary equivalents of a fortifying pint of ale quaffed before a raid or a meeting in the forest or on the moor. Still others lament hardship. Often, the functions are combined, as, for example, when the self-congratulation

one would expect to find in a text celebrating a success factory raid appears in verses sung before a subsequent raid. In few instances do the verses operate outside of predictable rhetorical forms not unique to Luddite culture, but, frequently, the songs reveal much about the values and strategies of Luddism.

The appearances in the poems of the singular "General Ludd," his various lieutenants and secretaries, and the plural croppers in "The Croppers' Song," for example, constitute an important step in the formation of a variable but collective Luddite "identity." The formation of a collective identity was a problem for workers from diverse trades, in diverse locations, working in small shops employing only a few artisans. Both Thompson and Calhoun have attempted to address the matter by placing Luddite activity, in different ways, within a progressive pattern of development of a class consciousness. I shall not attempt such an explanation. Instead, I would prefer to analyze the rhetorical strategies and contexts of these works--the verses and songs--in order to understand their significance to Luddism as a whole and within the particular circumstances giving rise to each work (since Luddism was not a monolithic, uniform movement across all of the textile-producing regions).

"General Ludd's Triumph"

Frequently referred to as the Luddite anthem, "General Ludd's Triumph" condenses almost all of the features of Luddite rhetoric into a few stanzas. Thomis includes the song as the first document in his collection of Nottingham texts, Luddism in Nottinghamshire. Thomis, Thompson, Hammond and Hammond, and Sale feature it prominently in their historical treatments of Luddism. Given such scholarly attention to the song, it is especially appropriate to begin an examination of Luddite balladry with the "Triumph."

"General Ludd's Triumph" is a Nottinghamshire ballad, evidently composed in late 1811 during the period of intense Midlands ludding, and reflecting the ideals of the framework knitters who broke wide stocking frames. The specific mention of personal property (the wide frame) as a target for the General's wrath suggests an effort by the writer to distance Nottinghamshire Luddism from ordinary constitutional or franchise politics. Constitutional reformers had tried to intervene in (or perhaps appropriate the momentum of) Midlands Luddism; one such attempt can be found in Major John Cartwright's 27 December 1811 letter to the Nottingham Review (Chapter Four, footnote to Melbourne Knitters' Letter). The attempt to distinguish action against property from political action also can be seen in another Nottinghamshire document, "Declaration; Extraordinary Justice Death, or Revenge" (Chapter Four).

The focused, apolitical intentions of the writer of "General Ludd's Triumph" can also be understood in contrast to the intentions of Luddite writers in the west of Yorkshire. West Riding Luddism seems to have embraced some measure of political consciousness early in its development (see the 1 May 1812 letter "To General Ludd Juner," George Mellor's prison letter to Thomas Ellis, and the "Constitution" found in a packet left after the Luddite attack on Foster's mill at Horbury, all in Chapter Three). Additionally, Yorkshire Luddites selected as targets for direct action not only personal property (shearing frames) but the bodies and homes of authorities and factory owners to whom they attributed responsibility for the oppressive system. Midlands Luddism saw only one attempt at personal violence.

For the most part, the "Triumph" is celebratory, fitting the rhetorical form of the eulogy (see Chapter One), but the form is certainly not pure. Whereas the eulogy typically employs humility tropes and "all sing his praises" topoi, "General Ludd's Triumph" is distinguished

by its legitimation strategies. Attempts at legitimation are clearly indicated by the discourse of law and "old prices"--simultaneously legal, economic, and moral codes, the violations of which by large hosiers have caused suffering. Legitimation is connected to character, too. Ludd's characteristic restraint and faith in the proper action and effects of the laws to mitigate suffering must be set aside in the face of repeated and unrelieved abuses, punctuated by the use of temporal-conditional markers such as "Till" and "Then." Legitimation is also tied to popular, though not entirely democratic, sanction ("unanimous vote of the Trade").

By its tie to popular "Trade" sanction, the strategy of legitimation has not only an externally persuasive function but a rhetorically centripetal function as well. Through a vote (that is, through the collective and concentrating action of the diverse individuals working in separate shops but nevertheless constituting a "Trade"), a necessary univocality is achieved and is described in the "Triumph" in terms which the people of the textile-producing region around Nottingham can comprehend--an ancient "Trade" chartered by King Charles II. The appeal is simultaneously antiquarian (with a Jacobite slant) and popular, thereby differing little from the arguments of the writers involved in the county associations during the 1770's and 1780's. (Those writers had appealed to "Alfred" and to what they understood to be the more popular systems of governance--juries, hundreds, and tithings.) The Luddite appeal to Robin Hood, too, recalls the outlaw's purpose of defending both the people and the legal monarch.

The source of "General Ludd's Triumph" is H. O. 42/119 f722, where it follows, in what appears to be Nottingham Town Clerk George Coldham's handwriting, a 27 January 1812 letter from Coldham to John Stevenson, Mayor of Leicester. As is the case with most Luddite ballads, ascertaining a date of composition is difficult. The date of record in the Home Office Papers is given as 27 January 1812; however, that is the date on which Coldham and the special magistrates, Conant and Baker, posted the "Statement of Outrages" to London.⁽¹⁾

The "Triumph" is reproduced in various abridged or emended forms in Palmer's Touch on the Times (286-88), Darvall's Popular Disturbances (171), Thompson's Making (534), Liversidge's Luddites (vi), Thomis' Luddism in Nottinghamshire (1) and Hammond and Hammond's The Skilled Labourer (259-60). The tune, "Poor Jack," was composed by "the ultra-patriotic Charles Dibdin" and was borrowed, "cheekily," by the Luddite writer (Palmer, Sound 104). The tune, "Poor Jack," can be found in Palmer's Touch (286-88). (In the original document, each stanza is numbered, 1 to 6).

General Ludd's

Triumph

Tune "Poor Jack"

Chant no more your old rhymes about bold Robin Hood,⁽²⁾

His feats I but little admire

I will sing the Atchievements of General Ludd

Now the Hero of Nottinghamshire
Brave Ludd was to measures of violence unused
Till his sufferings became so severe
That at last to defend his own Interest he rous'd⁽³⁾
And for the great work did prepare⁽⁴⁾

Now by force unsubdued, and by threats undismay'd
Death itself can't his ardour repress
The presence of Armies can't make him afraid
Nor impede his career of success
Whilst the news of his conquests is spread far and near
How his Enemies take the alarm
His courage, his fortitude, strikes them with fear
For they dread his Omnipotent Arm!

The guilty may fear, but no vengeance he aims⁽⁵⁾
At [[^]the] honest man's life or Estate
His wrath is entirely confined to wide frames
And to those that old prices abate
These Engines of mischief were sentenced to die
By unanimous vote of the Trade
And Ludd who can all opposition defy
Was the grand Executioner made⁽⁶⁾

And when in the work of destruction employed
He himself to no method confines
By fire and by water he gets them destroyed
For the Elements aid his designs

Whether guarded by Soldiers along the Highway
Or closely secured in the room
He shivers them up both by night and by day
And nothing can soften their doom

He may censure great Ludd's disrespect for the Laws
Who ne'er for a moment reflects
That foul Imposition alone was the cause
Which produced these unhappy effects
Let the haughty no longer the humble oppress
Then shall Ludd sheath his conquering Sword
His grievances instantly meet with redress
Then peace will be quickly restored

Let the wise and the great lend their aid and advice
Nor e'er their assistance withdraw
Till full fashioned work at the old fashioned price⁽⁷⁾
Is established by Custom and Law
Then the Trade when this arduous contest is o'er
Shall raise in full splendor it's head
And colting and cutting and squaring no more⁽⁸⁾
Shall deprive honest workmen of bread.

"The Hand-loom Weavers' Lament"

The recurrent theme of "old prices" in "General Ludd's Triumph" and other Luddite writings does not originate solely with the risings of 1811 but can be traced back to at least two sources. It was inherited from previous textile workers and it developed just prior to Nottinghamshire Luddism among the weavers of Lancashire, who earlier, in 1792, had taken violent action against the new Cartwright steam-looms in Manchester. In the face of increasing mechanization, wages (following prices) fell; in Bolton, average weekly earnings declined from twenty-five shillings in 1800 to fourteen in 1811

(Palmer, Sound 100).⁽⁹⁾ Such circumstances gave rise to the "Lament" and its wishing after "old prices."

Palmer dates the "Lament" as nearly contemporary with "Jone o' Grinfield," although much of the decrease in wages came in the years of distress following 1807, especially on the heels the American Non-Intercourse Act and the expansion and collapse in trade with South America, suggesting a possibility that the song may have been composed in 1807 or after (Palmer, Sound 100; Darvall 7).⁽¹⁰⁾ If this date is accurate, it suggests that the song evolved through the period of the Luddite risings, eventually being emended after the exile and death of Napoleon (see stanza six). Such emendation and variation of songs was not at all unusual, as the "John o' Grinfield" series of songs bears witness, and such emendation explains the contradictory evidence for dating within the song itself ("When the wars are at an end," indicating a date before 1815, versus "Now Bonyparty's dead and gone," suggesting a date of 1821 or after).

The song is unusual in that it has an identified author, John Grimshaw. Sung to the tune of "A Hunting We Will Go," it remained a favorite among the factory-workers of the north through the years of Luddism, but more significant is the fact that its themes and phrases gave birth to new songs, among them the "Triumph."

The source for "The Hand-loom Weavers' Lament" is John Harland and T. T. Wilkinson's Ballads and Songs of Lancashire: Ancient and Modern, 3rd edition, 193-95. It also appears in part in Palmer's A Touch on the Times, and in whole in Vicinus' Industrial Muse.

You gentlemen and tradesmen, that ride about at will,
Look down on these poor people; it's enough to make you crill;
Look down on these poor people, as you ride up and down,
I think there is a God above will bring your pride quite down.

Chorus

You tyrants of England, your race may soon be run,
You may be brought unto account for what you've sorely done.

You pull down our wages, shamefully to tell;
You go into the markets, and say you cannot sell;
And when that we do ask you when these bad times will mend,
You quickly give an answer, "When the wars are at an end."

When we look on our poor children, it grieves our hearts full sore,

Their clothing it is worn to rags, while we can get no more,
With little in their bellies, they to work must go,
Whilst yours do dress as manky as monkeys in a show.

You go to church on Sundays, I'm sure it's nought but pride,
There can be no religion where humanity's thrown aside;
If there be a place in heaven, as there is in the Exchange,
Our poor souls must not come near there; like lost sheep they must range.

With the choicest of strong dainties your tables overspread,
With good ale and strong brandy, to make your faces red;
You call'd a set of visitors--it is your whole delight--
And you lay your heads together to make our faces white.

You say that Bonyparty he's been the spoil of all,
And that we have got reason to pray for his downfall;
Now Bonyparty's dead and gone, and it is plainly shown
That we have bigger tyrants in Boneys of our own.

And now, my lads, for to conclude, it's time to make an end;
Let's see if we can form a plan that these bad times may mend;
Then give us our old prices, as we have had before,
And we can live in happiness, and rub off the old score.

"The Miseries of the Framework Knitters"

The Luddites were aware of the need for good public relations, and like "The Handloom-Weaver's Lament" this Nottinghamshire song seems, much more than some other Luddite verses, to fulfill a propagandistic, externally persuasive function. The date of composition is uncertain, but evidently the song was written during the 1811-13 period of machine-wrecking, since little wrecking occurred in the area of Nottinghamshire around the village of Sutton except during those years.

Palmer, who has a wide familiarity with songs of the period as well as a keen insight into their purposes, believes that the song may have been sung as a fund-raiser, citing Cobbett's Rural Rides entry of 2 September 1826 describing the *distress ballads* sung as pleas for relief (Palmer, Touch 205). Although the Nottinghamshire stockingers experienced economic hardship from 1811 to 1813 and did solicit funds from both small and large masters (occasionally through letters of extortion), they were even more concerned with winning popular support (in contrast to some West Riding bands who simply availed themselves of already existing support). This song seems to ask for good wishes rather than alms.

The original text is a broadside, printed in Nottingham by one "Ordoyno," now in the Madden Collection, 20/72, at the Cambridge University Library; Palmer uses this manuscript as the source for his version in A Touch on the Times. For the tune, "Derry Down," Palmer points to W. Chappell, Popular Music of the Olden Time, p. 350.

Ye kind-hearted souls, pray attend to our song,
And hear this true story which shall not be long;
Framework knitters of Sutton, how ill they are used,
And by the bag-masters⁽¹¹⁾ how sorely abused.

Chorus

Derry down, down, down derry down

They've bated the wages so low for our work
That to gain half maintenance we slave like a Turk;
When we ask for our money comes paper and string,
Dear beef and bad mutton or some suchlike thing.

Chorus

Bad weights and bad measures are frequently used--
Oppressive extortion--thus sorely abused;
Insulted and robbed, too--we mention no names--
But pluck up our spirits and bowl in their frames.

Chorus

Good people, oh pity our terrible case,

Pray take no offence though we visit this place;

We crave your assistance and pray for our foes,

Oh may they find mercy when this life we lose.

Chorus

"Hunting a Loaf"

In his History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufacturers, William Felkin speculates that the primary causes of Luddism were hunger and misery. He remarks that the winter of 1811-12 heard an incessant cry--"Give us work at any price--half a loaf is better than no bread" (Felkin 239). Correspondents from all parts of the Luddite regions writing regularly to the Home Office report a doubling or even a tripling in the prices of oatmeal and potatoes (Fletcher letter of 6 May 1812 in H. O. 40/1 and Maitland letter of the same date in H. O. 42/123;). A Derbyshire ballad of July 1812, "Hunting a Loaf" is the song which most explicitly links Luddism to the economic distress felt by Britons in general, rather than primarily to the clash between labor traditions and new technology. The song is also much more politically charged than most other Midlands documents written before late spring of 1812, placing blame for the distress squarely on the government. Even more remarkable (for a document originating in the Midlands) are the indications within the song of a self-conscious political discourse, one that is not only aware of boundaries of acceptable speech but also deliberate in its attempts to direct that speech along the paths of audiences' sympathies. It distinguishes between "sedition" and complaint, appealing more to the image of the (less objectionable) bread riot than to the more narrow (and therefore less sympathetic) notion of defending "the trade."

The source of the song is the Derby Broadside Collection, Item Number 8672, in the Derby Public Library. It has been reprinted with its tune in Palmer, Touch 289-90, and is discussed in Thompson, Making.

Good people I pray, now hear what I say,

And pray do not call it sedition;

For these great men of late they have cracked my poor pate:

I'm wounded, in a woeful condition.

Chorus

And sing fal lal the diddle i do,

Sing fal the diddle i do,

Sing fal the lal day.

For in Derby it's true and in Nottingham too,
Poor men to the jail they've been taking;
They say that Ned Ludd, as I understood,
A thousand wide frames has been breaking.

Now it is not bad there's no work to be had,
The poor to be starved in their station;
And if they do steal they're straight sent to jail,
And they're hanged by the laws of the nation.

Since this time last year I've been very queer,
And I've had a sad national cross;
I've been up and down from town to town,
With a shilling to buy a big loaf.

The first that I met was Sir Francis Burdett,
He told me he'd been in the Tower;
I told him my mind a big loaf was to find,
He said, "You must ask them in power."

Then I thought it was time to speak to the Prime,
For Perceval would take my part;
But a Liverpool man soon ended the plan:
With a pistol he shot through his heart.

Then I thought he'd a chance on a rope for to dance,
Some people wold think very pretty;
But he lost all his fun, through the country he'd run,

And he found it in fair London city.

Now ending my song I'll sit down with my ale,

And I'll drink a good health to the poor;

With a glass of good ale I have told you my tale,

And I'll look for a big loaf no more.

"The Cropper's Song"

Whereas Nottinghamshire Luddism comprised primarily workers in the hose and lace trades, West Riding machine-breaking was organized around the croppers, the skilled laborers who cut finished cloth using handheld shears, four feet in length and weighing from forty to fifty pounds. The croppers were held in high regard, not only by themselves, but also by the working families in the textile communities. The following song in praise of the croppers is attributed by Peel to John Walker, who sang it at a meeting of Huddersfield workers at the Shears Inn, Hightown, in February 1812, right before Huddersfield and Liversedge croppers sallied out to Hartshead Moor, where they conducted an attack on wagons transporting shearing frames to Cartwright's factory (Peel 51).⁽¹²⁾

One statistic tells much about the difficulties the croppers faced. Perhaps, in conjunction with descriptions of pride in the cropping trade, the statistic explains the intensity of the cropper reaction to the introduction of machinery: "By 1817, out of 3,625 croppers, only 860 had full employment" (Reid 275).

The song is remarkably apolitical (regarding national politics) for West Riding Luddism. Its apolitical nature reflects, I believe, the primarily local concern of the various Luddite movements in their very early phases, a cross-cultural phenomenon which has been analyzed by E. J. Hobsbawm in Primitive Rebels as "social banditry" or "Robin-Hoodism" (Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels, Chapter Two, especially 23-24).

The only primary source for "The Cropper's Song" is Peel, Risings 47-48. It has been reproduced by Palmer, with his typical small variations in punctuation as well as the splicing of lines which Peel left apart (Palmer, Sound 105-06).⁽¹³⁾ The tune, "The Gallant Poachers," is provided by Palmer in Sound (105). (Incidentally, Peel provides no mention of a tune.) For more on the tune, consult Roy Palmer, "George Dunn: Twenty-one Songs and Fragments," Folk Music Journal 2.4 (1973): 276.

"The Cropper's Song"

Come, cropper lads of high renown,

Who love to drink good ale that's brown,

And strike each haughty tyrant down,

With hatchet, pike, and gun!

Oh, the cropper lads for me,

The gallant lads for me,

Who with lusty stroke,

The shear frames broke,

The cropper lads for me!

What though the specials⁽¹⁴⁾ still advance,

And soldiers nightly round us prance;

The croppers lads still lead the dance,

With hatchet, pike, and gun!

Oh, the cropper lads for me,

The gallant lads for me,

Who with lusty stroke

The shear frames broke,

The cropper lads for me!

And night by⁽¹⁵⁾ night when all is still

And the moon is hid behind the hill,

We forward march to do our will

With hatchet, pike, and gun!

Oh, the cropper lads for me,

The gallant lads for me,

Who with lusty stroke

The shear frames broke,

The cropper lads for me!

Great Enoch still shall lead the van.

Stop him who dare! stop him who can!

Press forward every gallant man

With hatchet, pike, and gun!

Oh, the cropper lads for me,

The gallant lads for me,

Who with lusty stroke

The shear frames broke,

The cropper lads for me!

"Forster's Mill"

Snatches of two other Yorkshire songs have also been preserved by Peel. The first fragment below is the closest approach to narrative in Luddite balladry, appealing to past accomplishments in order to hearten Ludds whose spirits may have been flagging in the wake of the failed attack on William Cartwright's mill at Rawfolds, 11 April 1812. ⁽¹⁶⁾ The event at "Forster's mill" probably refers to the attack on James Foster's house and mill at Horbury, seven miles from Huddersfield (Reid 100). Peel himself notes that the verse was "composed after the destruction of the [Foster] mill between Horbury and Ossett," an attack which drew Luddites from several West Riding communities (Peel, Risings 120). Peel's transcription of oral reports of the song may explain the confusion of "Forster" with "Foster."

The source for both songs is Peel, Risings 120.

Come all ye croppers stout and bold,

Let your faith grow stronger still,

Oh, the cropper lads in the county of York

Broke the shears at Forster's mill.

The wind it blew,

The sparks they flew,

Which alarmed the town full soon

And out of bed poor people did creep

And ran by the light of the moon;

Around and around they all did stand,
And solemnly did swear,
Neither bucket, nor kit nor any such thing⁽¹⁷⁾
Should be of assistance there.

"How Gloomy and Dark"

The second song fragment recorded by Peel was composed after the disastrous assault on Rawfolds. More than any other Luddite verse, it reflects the millenarian character of suffering workers whose efforts at self-help were coming to nought. The sole source for this song, too, is Peel, Risings 120.

How gloomy and dark is the day
When men have to fight for their bread;
Some judgment will sure clear the way,
And the poor shall to triumph be led.

Hammond and Hammond reproduce a variation, appearing to combine the Foster's Mill and Horsfall's Mill (see below) songs, attributed to Peel, which the acquitted Yorkshire Luddite, John Hirst sang when he would "rock his grandchildren to sleep with a Luddite ditty" (Hammond and Hammond, Skilled 330; citing Peel, Risings284):

Around and around we all will stand
And eternally swear we will,
We'll break the shears and windows too
And set fire to the tazdling mill.

"Horsfall's Mill"

A tune similar to "Forster's Mill" celebrates the successful destruction of the shearing frames at Horsfall's Mill. William Horsfall was among the most recalcitrant of mill owners in the vicinity of Huddersfield. He is perhaps most famous in his connection to one leader of the Huddersfield Luddites, George Mellor: Horsfall struck Mellor across the face with a riding whip as Mellor comforted a woman whose infant had starved; he later was shot to death less than a mile from Radcliffe's home, a crime for which Mellor and two others were found guilty and hanged.

The song appears in Peel's Spen Valley: Past and Present, pages 258-59, and Palmer's The Sound of History, page 5. Palmer notes that the song is recorded on Fine Old Yorkshire.

Come all you croppers, stout and bold,
Let your faith grow stronger still,
These cropping lads in the County of York,
Broke the shears at Horsfall's Mill.
The broke the shears and the windows too,
Set fire to the tazzling mill;
They formed themselves all in a line,
Like soldiers at the drill.

The wind it blew, and the sparks they flew,
And awoke the town full soon.
People got up in the middle of the night,
And they ran by the light of the moon;
When these lads around the mill did stand,
And they all did vow and swear,
Neither blanket nor can, nor any such thing,
Should be of service there.

"You Heroes of England"

Occasionally, Luddite songs can be found outside of the usual primary source collections. Such a song is preserved in the brief Rex v. C. Milnes & W. Blakeborough in the Treasury Solicitor's Papers 11.813.2673, housed in the Public Records Office at Kew, and reproduced in Thompson's "Introduction" to the fourth edition of Peel's Risings (xiv).

The song follows a form of direct address which appears in the roughly contemporary "Cropper's Song" as well as in an earlier song by Gerrard Winstanley, "You Noble Diggers" (see lyrics in Palmer, Sound 251).

You Heroes of England who wish to have a trade

Be true to each other and be not afraid
Though the Bayonet is fixed they can do no good
As long as we keep up the Rules of General Ludd.

As we have begun we are like to proceed
Till from all those Tyrants we do get freed
For this heavy yoke no longer can we bear
And those who have not felt it ought to have a share.

And then they can feel for another's woe
For he that never knew sorrow, sorrow doth not know
But there is Cartwright and Atkinson also
And to show them justice sorrow they shall know.

Though he does boast of the deeds he has done
Yet out of our presence like a thief he does run
It is the laws of England to stand in our defence
If he comes in our presence him we'll recompence.

"Welcome, Ned Ludd"

By mid-1812, even Nottinghamshire Luddism had assumed a militant political flavor and took serious interest in national political change. The following Nottinghamshire song reflects the new flavor in Midlands Luddism, which eventually concludes with the Pentrich rising and the execution of the leader, the former Luddite captain, Jeremiah Brandreth.

The source of the document is H. O. 42/123. It is reprinted in Thomis, Luddites 136 and Nottinghamshire 55-56.

This paper was posted up in Nottingham on Saturday Morning

May 9th 1812

Welcome Ned Ludd, your case is good,

Make Perceval your aim;
For by this Bill, 'tis understood
Its death to break a Frame--

With dexterous skill, the Hosier's kill
For they are quite as bad;
And die you must, by the late Bill-
Upon my bonny lad!--

You might as well be hung for death
As breaking a machine--
So now my Lad, your sword unsheath
And make it sharp and keen-

We are ready now your cause to join
Whenever you may call;
So make foul blood run clear & fine
Of Tyrants great and small!--

with Mr[?] Thomas PS.- Deface this who dare
[illegible] They shall have Tyrants fare
SWood Street For Ned is every where
And can see and hear

Samuel Bamford

Some verses which we might associate with Luddism were written by identifiable authors. At least one of these authors, Samuel Bamford, seems to have had some degree of involvement in and a great deal of sympathy for Lancashire Luddism. Bamford's Homely Rhymes, Poems, and Reminiscences (Rev. Ed. Manchester: A. Ireland and Co., 1864 [original edition 1843]), contains several poems written during the risings and still other pieces reflecting upon them.

One of Bamford's earliest works, the following poem was written in 1813 upon Bamford's return to Middleton to take up the weaver's trade after having worked in calico in the Manchester shops of Messrs. Hole, Wilkinson, and Gartside. The poem appears in both the 1864 and 1843 editions.

LINES,

written upon leaving the employ of messrs. hole, wilkinson,
and gartside, manchester, january, 1813.

Tomorrow's sun beholds me free,
Come night, and I no more will own
A master's high authority,
Nor bend beneath his angry frown;
But to my native woods and plains
I'll haste to join the rustic swains.

Gay printed fancies, plates, and chintz, ⁽¹⁸⁾
No more with wonder shall I view,
Nor criticise the various tints
Of pink, or azure, green, or blue,
Save when I pluck the floweret sweet
That clasps my lonely wandering feet.

Bamford continued writing what he says in his introduction are verses whose themes are "Love, Honour, and Freedom" (Bamford, Rhymes 2). Among Bamford's early work is the following pre-Waterloo piece. The song, intended to be sung to the tune "God Save the King," appears in Homely Rhymes, pages 47-48.

"The Patriot's Hymn"

O Thou Great Power Divine,
Wisdom and might are thine,
And majesty.

Hear thou thy people's cry,
Behold their misery,
Groaning in slavery,
Let man be free.

Emperors, and lords, and kings,
Gandy and glittering things,
Unlov'd by thee.

If they but nod the head,
Armies are mustered,
Thousands to slaughter led,
For tyranny.

Gory is Europe's plain,
Whelmed beneath her slain,
Dreadful to see.

Bleeding promiscuously,
Victors and vanquish'd lie,
Mingled in butchery;
Let man be free.

See Britain's patriot band,
Guarding their native land,
From tyranny.

Rise, rise, thou God of might,
All her oppressors smite,
Sweep them to death and night.

Let man be free.

Blest be our native isle,

Heaven upon it smile,

Let it be free.

Sheath'd be the warrior's brand,

Love shall go hand in hand,

Triumphing o'er the land,

With liberty.

July, 1815

One of his later, reflective poems, "The Watch and Ward," gives some indication of popular attitudes toward the civil patrols, the Watch and Ward, which played a role in suppressing the risings. It would seem to be significant that, in the poem, the Watch, comprising members of the middle class, create their own enemy, which they have difficulty repulsing by their own actions, but which falls largely because of its antiquity. Ironically, in 1832, Bamford himself undertook the office of constable (Bamford, Rhymes 10).

The poem appears in Homely Rhymes, 1864 edition only, pages 161-68.

THE WATCH AND WARD*

scene-king street, middleton

Come, all ye votaries of fame,

And listen to the warlike theme,

Which to my rustic lyre I sing,

Of Watch and Warders battling.

CHORUS

O, the gallant Watch and Ward,

Sleepy England's wakeful guard,

With dreadful rattle, pike, and hook,

They'll drive Owd Ludd fro' every nook.

The waning moon hung o'er the hill,
And faintly gleam'd on Irk's sweet rill,
When Watch and Warders in array,
Up King-street took their dangerous way.

Tom led the van, with cleaver bright,
And gilded stick, "God and my right,"
Like summer posy painted gay,
To show his high authority.

Then came the Captain of the band,
A gleaming pike was in his hand;
With head erect and warrior stride,
He all the powers of Ludd defied.

Next stept the Doctor's "manly limb,"
A pestle huge was borne by him;
His heart as valiant forsooth,
As ever dar'd to draw a tooth.

Close at his heels "the gentry" came,
And I could mention many a name;
But prudence bind's [sic] Pegasus' wing,
Lest his rider he should fling.

With dandy gait all stiff as starch,
These guarders of the town did march;

Each mervin malkin quick did fly,
As warriors tramp'd the alleys by.

The rear, in awful silence still,
Trooped bravely up the hill,
Led on by manufacture Dick,
And George with umbrella stick.

Thus marched they on with hearts all stout
In quest of might's dark rabble-rout,
Which shrank dismayed, and further fled
Before the echo of their tread.

But scarce they gain'd the top o'th' hill,
When hark! a whistle loud and shrill,
Blown by some lurking Luddite's breath--
The Warders startled nigh to death.

The Captain spoke, "pray whot a yon?
It whistl't summut loike a mon;
It surely coom fro' th' pickit post
O' Gen'ral Ludd's approachin' host."

Then back the frightened Warders hied,
The Captain ran himself, but cried--
"Stop lads a little bit, au pray,
"An' dunno' let us run away."

With doubtful steps again they turn'd,

Each heart with shame and anger burn'd;
Some damned the breath, and some the lips,
That started them into the trip.

And now a leader of the van
Back to his waiting comrades ran,
Reporting that, "At top o'th' street,
A fearful object he did meet."

"Aw'm sure it has two blazin e'en,
"Its grinnin' fangs au've plainly seen;
"It looks as savage as a bear,
"An' it so horribly dus stare."

"It's sure some boggart," cries the Cap,
"For that's abeawt o'th' boggart shap;
"Just as I yerd meh gronny tell,
"An' hoo had boggarts seen hursel.

"Iv't be a boggart, God forbid
"At I to it a mischief did;
But iv it be some lurkin' Ludd,
Lorjus, heaw wot will be meh blood!"

The Captain form'd them rank and file,
Whilst some their nether clothing soil;
Some cough, whilst others loudly sneeze,
Some shake like leaves on aspen trees.

"Curridge, meh lads, ween goo an' see't,
"It isno' dark, for th' moon gi's leet;
"Iv't be a Ludd, ween at him smash,
"Iv boggart, aw'll some questions ash. [\(19\)](#)

Towards the object now they drew,
With rattle-rick an' loud halloo;
The Captain shook his curly head,
And slyly wished himself in bed.

Thrice he roll'd that noble eye,
Which looketh o'er his nose so sly;
As looks a magpie on a tree,
When coming shooter it doth see.

And now they drew the object near,
Behold! not blazing eyes were there,
But firmly standing 'gainst the wall,
An armed warrior stout and tall.

"Pray whot art theaw, 'at theer dus ston,"
Said Cap, "art divle, or a mon?
"Or art some sperrit comn agen,
"To fyer a set o' honest men?"

The doughty fellow held his tongue,
Nor budg'd he from the halbert long,
But proudly in defiance stood,

The picket-post of General Ludd.

Await we now the battle fray,
And mark the halberd's lightning play;
Behold on slipp'ry honour's strand,
Like "hope forlorn," the warrior band.

And now the brave commander spoke,
Each Warder did his weapon poke;
And now, with one united push,
They on the steadfast foe did rush.

Dire was the meeting, thunder crack,
Like tennis-balls they bounded back;
When strange amaze and wild dismay
Did looks of Warder-men display.

The Luddite foe did bravely stand,
Nor shrunk from blow, nor wielded brand,
Nor couched lance, nor fixed targe,
But fearless braved the sweeping charge.

As grafted rocks do meet the flood,
So fast, so firm the Luddite stood;
As floods oppos'd do backwards dash,
So back the Watch and Ward did crash.

O! that my lyre had ne'er been strung,
Or only to the wild winds sung,

Ere it had tun'd with wail and woe,
The gallant Warder's overthrow.

But now a dreadful cry and roar,
The slumbering echoes wak'd once more,
As many a Warder prostrate lay,
Or crept on hands and knees away.

A halberdier so fierce in fight
Made charge with all his gathered might,
When from the foe rebounding back
He tumbled over tailor Jack.

Then Jack arose with angry frown
And knock'd the gallant Doctor down;
The Doctor by old Galen swore,
He'd ne'er be Watch and Warder more.

Limping upon his bruised thigh,
Poor Collop-Joseph loud did cry;
And Whiffing-Johnny wish'd for light
That he could better see to fight.

Hard was the fate of Mister S----ls,
Beneath both B--tr--wth and W--- -ls;
Tom T-yl-r got a woeful squeeze
Beneath the paunch of bulky L--s.

Meanwhile at distance stood the chief,

With looks that spoke his inward grief,
To see his brave combatants fall
Before the warrior stout and tall.

For still the foe did bravely stand,
Nor warded blow, nor wielded brand,
Nor couched lance, nor fixed targe,
But steadfast brav'd the sweeping charge.

But ah! the brightest day must end,
To fate the bravest heroes bend;
And falling midst thy fallen foes,
Thy glory, gallant Ludd, must close.

The blacksmith pois'd his hammer high,
And swift as bolt from louring sky,
With Vulcan's force and fury swung,
Upon the Luddite's helm it rung.

Loud was the crash and wild the roar,
The mighty Ludd is now no more;
The broad hill trembled when he fell,
His fate the sighing breeze did tell.

But cloudless rode the moon on high,
Revealing to each Warder's eye
The dreaded foe, the mighty Ludd,
Was figure made from lumps of wood.

Some waggish youths a stump had drest
With buckler, halbert, helm, and crest,
And nailed firmly 'gainst the wall,
It seem'd a warrior stout and tall.

His helm an iron pot, his hand
Held Luddite pike for burnish'd brank,
A boiler-lid, both large and strong,
Before him as his buckler hung.

"To Gath let not the tidings do,
"In Askalon let no one know;"
Lest they should wake the merry string
Of Watch and Warder's shame to sing.

O, the gallant Watch and Ward,
Sleepy England's wakeful guard,
With larum, rattle, pike, and hook,
Owd Ludd at Cabbage Ho' they took.

Bamford's note, indicated by the asterisk at the title, reads,

The "Watch and Ward" was introduced into Middleton in the year 1812, shortly after the so-called Luddite attempt to destroy the steam power looms and other machinery of Messrs. Daniel Burton and Sons, at Middleton. They assembled at night, and perambulated the town and neighbourhood, paying special attention to certain streets and alleys in which "hush-shops" and disorderly private houses were suspected of harbouring desperate and incorrigible "Son of Old Ludd," foes of machinery. The gentle conservators of the place thus stood apart from the working-classes, and became the objects of ridicule, and of many a homely but severe piece of satire. The poem "Watch and Ward" was the offspring of many a hearty joke at the time. The characters mentioned, though chiefly industrious residents of the town, had incurred especial notice by their own overzealous hunting out of "Luddite." (Bamford's own note, 240n13)

Bamford's political sympathies take a special form in this following remembrance of the former leader of both Derbyshire Luddism and the Pentrich rebellion, Jeremiah Brandreth. The poem appears in Homely Rhymes, pages 94-95, 1864 edition; it appeared earlier in the 1843 edition.

Brandreth's Soliloquy in Prison⁽²⁰⁾

I must die--but not like a slave

To his tyrant in penitence bending;

I shall die like an Englishman brave,

I have liv'd so, and so be my ending!

I must--and my doom is my pride;

The death that awaits me is welcome;

The daemon's last pang is defied,

But a day of deep vengeance there shall come.

How shall my blood-shedders repent,

When the nation's hot wrath is out pouréd!

The freed world will hail the event,

And the pride of its despots be loweréd.

They shall howl like the yell of the storm;

They shall flee like the deer-herd affrighted;

They shall, weeping, lie down with the worm:

They shall pray, and their prayers shall be slighted:

Whilst vengeance, and guilt, and dismay,

Their blood-scented footsteps pursuing,

Shall chase ev'ry comfort away,

And leave but affliction and ruin!

Their children shall then be like mine,
No father's fond arm to protect them;
Their ladies in sorrow may pine,
For none will be found to respect them.

What wealth would they freely give then
For the grave that poor Brandreth will cover;
To hide from the hatred of men,
From the terrors which fearfully hover!

And what is the gem they would give
For that conscience this firm heart supporting;
That when they no longer could live,
They might die with a Brandreth's comports!

But conscience can never be bought,
Courage can never be sold:
The villain will die as he ought;
The good man may always be bold!

In September 1800, Coldham and a committee "selected for the purpose of purchasing foreign corn, for increasing the supply of the Nottingham market" judged the price "exorbitant." The Duke of Portland resented the judgment (H. O. 42/124 f551).

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1. The papers are labelled: "1812 Jany 27. Statement of Outrages & from Nottingham, NB. This Statement was made out by the Police Magistrates during their Stay at Nottingham with the assistance of Mr. Coldham the Town Clerk."

2. ⁰ In Palmer's "cleaned-up" version, he makes not only orthographic changes, but also some changes in word order, which make the piece sing less awkwardly but which sophisticate some of the flavor of Luddite song.

3. All versions except for Thomis have "roused."

4. All versions but Thomis have "fight."

5. Thomis has a comma after "fear."

6. Thomis has the "g" in "grand" and lowercase and the "E" in "Executioner" uppercase.
7. Thomis omits the hyphens.
8. Thomis has commas after "colting" and "cutting." The line describes aspects of the process by which stocking material manufactured on wide frames was made into hose. "Colting" refers to the practice of hiring workers, described as "colts" because of their lack of maturity and experience within the framework knitting trade, who had not completed apprenticeships. "Cutting" and "squaring" refer to the practice of using large pieces of wide-knit fabric and cutting them into smaller pieces, which were sewn into hose.
9. Compare the weekly wages (around ten shillings) of Midlands workers in plain silk, a grievance voiced in the open letter in the 20 December 1811 Nottingham Review by the Derby Committee of Plain Silk Hands (see Chapter Four).
10. ⁰ In fact, the Act did not go into effect until February 1811, although unsold cloth had been piling up in the Leeds Cloth Hall since 1810 (Thomis, Luddites 46).
11. ⁰ Bag-masters were masters or agents of large masters who delivered materials to the stockingers, later taking receipt of the finished product from the village out-laborers.
12. ⁰ Walker was one of the five Luddites hanged following the York Assizes. He was discovered despite an attempt to evade the law by enlisting in a company of Royal Artillery at Woolwich (Palmer, Sound 105).
13. ⁰ Palmer has found a poachers' song, "The Gallant Poachers," which resembles "The Cropper's Song." Palmer is not certain which song predates the other but acknowledges that he can find no version of the poaching song dated as early as 1812 (Palmer, Sound 105, 316n).
14. ⁰ "Specials" probably refers to special constables appointed by the Home Office to assist the Yorkshire magistrates in suppressing the machine-wrecking in the West Riding.
15. ⁰ Palmer has "night be night" (Sound 106).
16. ⁰ For a brief account of Cartwright's defensive preparations, see Reid 106-07, drawing upon the York Special Commission testimonies of Baines and Howell.
17. Palmer has "blanket" (Sound).
18. Terms by which printed calicoes of certain styles were distinguished. [Bamford's note.]
19. Bamford provides no closing quotation marks here.
20. "Jeremiah Brandreth, William Turner, and --- Ludlam, were executed at Derby, in November, 1817, after having been tried, with fifteen others, and found guilty of High Treason. The whole were victims of a plot proposed and matured by the villain Oliver, the paid and protected agent of the Sidmouth and Castlereagh administration. The conduct of Brandreth, both in prison and on the scaffold, was represented in the public prints as being such as would have done honour to any sufferer, and it required not any great exercise of the imagination to picture such a man, so circumstanced, as expressing all the sentiments

of the soliloquy. The Turners were most fortunate; Williams was executed, and his brother and nephew, a youth of nineteen years of age, were transported for life.

"There are some harrowing detail connected with the event. Their mother died shortly after, it is said, of a broken heart. The fifteen others were transported for life; five have since died, and it has been said the remaining ten have, through the interference of humane friends, each received a free pardon" (Bamford's note, 238n8).