

Chapter Seventeen

Trade Union Outrages

Under the shade of the yew trees, on the eastern side of the churchyard of St. Mary's Ecclesall, lies a large red polished stone. It is plain except the words "Joshua Tyzack of Abbeydale".

Joshua was the son of William Tyzack and Sarah Osborne. He was born on 15th March 1818. He comes to our notice because in 1867 he gave evidence to the Royal Commission on the Sheffield Trade Union Outrages Inquiry. Joshua gave most of his evidence on Thursday, 27th June 1867, in the Council Hall Sheffield.

One member of the inquiry team, Mr Barstow asked "Early in this year, I believe you received a threatening letter?" Joshua replied, "Yes. The threatening letter is of a recent date; it is in connection with the union, and occurred immediately after the men were united to the union to advance the prices."

This is the letter, "Sir, You say you will not pay the price asked for, but you will have to pay and glad you can. Mr Charles Bagshaw (the secretary of the Patent Scythemakers Union) says we can make you pay any price we have a mind to ask for. Mr Bagshaw says you are robbing your men of their rites for not letting them ave their own apprentices; he says you are ruining the Trade for aving so many lads in your firm instead of your men having them, and men also working at the trade that don't work in harmony with us for thay don't pay to the trade. But Mr Bagshaw says we must stop it and very quick, he as sugested a plan which i think will suckceed very well, that is to fire your place at Abbeydale insted of Blowing up the place with gunpowder so as it cannot be detected as a trade outrage. He says every man out to have two pounds ten shillings that as a union if not it is there own fault. He says yow out to give your men a price that will earn that amount and live in smaller mansions than you do, the Bargain is made to fire your place if you don't give the price and get shut of the Boys and men that Bore and lap up; i tell you the money is paid and the job will be done by the same man that took your bands and threw them in the dam. Mr Bagshaw says he got the fork grinders their price which they are now having and he says he can get us ours if we stick to him, and do as he tells us; we are sure to win the victory; i think Mr Bagshaw is worthy of great prase for what he has done in Sheffield for the working men that belong to a union; i hope this will be sufficient warning to you to comply with the trade and save your place from being burnt down."

There followed a discussion between Joshua and Mr Barstow about the letter. Joshua reported the Scythe grinders' union as the most difficult. He reported that he had

taken over Abbeydale from Mr Dyson who had his Wheel blown up ten years earlier. Dyson had to sell up because he never recovered from the cost of the damage done by the union.

Barstow asked "Do you ever sleep with firearms loaded?"---"Always."

How do you generally go home? --- I formerly used to ride on horseback, afterwards I took a gig, and since then I have gone in the phaeton.

What time did you usually return? --- About half past eight.

What occurred when you were shot at? How far had you got from Sheffield? --- About three quarters of a mile.

That was just beyond Broadfield Bar, in a small plantation? What happened? --- I heard a shot fired.

What followed? --- Another shot immediately. I looked in the direction they came from; the moment I turned I saw a flash of a third shot.

Was it from a man in the road or in the field? --- From under a broken down fence near Mr Cockayne's residence.

Did anything follow? ---Immediately I saw the flash, a bullet went through the brim of my hat and knocked a piece out the size of half-a-crown.

What happened then? ---I was thoroughly unconscious for the moment.

Did you continue standing as you were? ---No, I dropped down from the excitement of the passing of the shot through the hair and hat.

Were you knocked down? ---No, it was excitement, momentary excitement; I dropped down into the bottom of the gig.

Could you tell what the shot was from? --- I think it was a revolver.

Is that from the fact of there being several shots, or from the noise? --- From the number of shots that were sent.

Do you know how long you were at the bottom of the gig? --- It would be difficult to say, perhaps thirty or forty seconds.

Then you recovered yourself? --- My impulse dictated that I should go.

What did you do? --- I struck the horse a violent blow.

And what else happened? --- There were two other shots as quickly upon each other as possible as soon as the horse got into action.

(Chairman) To what do you attribute the attack upon you? --- I was not aware at the time of anything but that I had anxiously enquired for Needham.

(Mr Barstow) I believe you never saw Needham after this? --- I never saw Needham after I left him in prison.

Do you know where he is? --- He is in America.

You told us you were very anxious to see Needham, why was that? --- Because was desirous of taking law proceedings against a person implicated in the blowing up.

What blowing up? --- The blowing up at Dronfield, for which Needham was convicted.

Had Needham made any communication to you with regard to that person? Did he give you his name? --- Yes.

Who was it? --- Michael Thompson.

What did he say of him? --- He said that Michael Thompson had paid him several sums of money to blow me up.

Who was Michael Thompson? - The secretary of the scythe grinders union.

We do not want to go into detail, tell us altogether what he gave him? --- After he gave him the £3 he blew up the shop.

Now I am going into rattening; in 1857 you were rattened? --- Yes.

Just say shortly what happened? --- The saw grinders' bands were taken.

From where? --- From Abbey Dale works.

After this there is a discussion about other cases of rattening at the Abbey Dale works. In 1858, someone destroyed three pairs of bellows. The reason was the non-payment of natty money by the scythe finishers. In 1859 the Union took fourteen scythe grinders away from their situations to compel Tyzack & Sons to give the machine knives entirely to the scythe grinders. The company took out no summonses against these men because the Union sent them out of the country.

Joshua wrote to the union to ask what had been done wrongly and why the union had not spoken to the company about the problem first. In response he and his brother went to a meeting at the `Waggon and Horses' Mill houses.

Joshua described the meeting. " *My brother and I drove there expecting to meet the secretary and one or two of our men. There were about thirty people there mostly strangers. After a good deal of discourse without much business being effected, they brought out a list of claims. The first demand was that we were to discontinue giving machine knives to grind to any except the scythe grinders; secondly, that we immediately and without notice were to discharge Eccles and others working at Ward's wheel at Dronfield that was blown up; thirdly that we took no more apprentices; fourthly that we changed our mode of management in the manufacture of scythes; fifthly that we made a promise to retake all the men back to their old situations without taking any law proceedings against them for breaking their engagements by the union having withdrawn them and sent ten or twelve of them out of the country for several weeks; we were to take them back without holding any threat over them, and to take them back quietly; sixthly that we should allow the union men from other rival manufacturers to come in and inspect our works and mode of working when they thought fit; and seventhly, that we should pay the expenses of those men while they were away from work in their homes.*"

Did you submit to all those conditions? --- Most of them were compromised. I may say first that the meeting had to be adjourned till we could get the appetite to take the medicine.

The enquiry asked why he hadn't reported the shooting to the police.

You never communicated it to the police although you had been shot at five times? --- No, I had good reason. I had only recently married, and my wife was a stranger here, and she was unsettled and unhappy.

So you wished to keep it concealed from her? --- Yes.

Did she know that you were shot at? --- Not till about a month after, when I gradually broke the matter to her.

That seems a very poor reason for not communicating it to the police; did you not think it your duty to come forward and try to find out the offender? --- I do not see what advantage that could give anyone.

Do you think that you behaved in a manner consistent with your duty in not prosecuting the affair? --- I saw no chance of redress.

You took no means to find out? --- I thought further investigation would be fatal to me.

Did you think that a manly course to be deterred by fear from doing what you were bound to do? --- That was the course I took, and a straightforward course too.

It was a straightforward course one way but it was a straightforward course backwards. When the men had left without notice, had you taken out a summons against them?---

No, because we are thoroughly cowed by the operation that is practised towards us. I did not for the same reason that I spoke about in the shooting case.

Does not it strike you that if the perpetrators of these outrages had known that you would prosecute them vigorously, they might have been thoroughly cowed? --- I believe that out of the number of cases occurring in Sheffield in reference to trade disputes there is not one in fifty that goes to our bench, for they are perfectly powerless in the matter.

Are you a magistrate? --- I am.

The outcome of the inquiry was a damp squib. It summarised with the following comments:-

'We have now given an outline of all the cases of importance which were submitted to us for investigation. Mr Thomas Thorpe, acting for the Petty Sessional Division and borough of Sheffield, prepared for us a list of cases connected with trade unions, and brought before the justices within the last ten years; it comprised, in addition to the outrages mentioned in this report, 166 cases of rattening and 21 cases of sending threatening letters. A very small proportion, however, of the persons rattened give information either to the police or to the justices.'

Joshua's wife Jane was the daughter of John Swale Manby. She died on 2nd December 1899 of paralysis ischaemia, paralysis induced by a deficiency of blood. At the time she lived at Wood Lodge Abbeydale, Ecclesall. Her son, also a Joshua, reported the death.

Joshua died in 1887 aged sixty-eight years in Ecclesall. He purchased many properties in Sheffield and his name appears often in the Wakefield Index of Deeds. Transactions include: -

Sheffield		1852
Ecclesall		1854
Ecclesall Sheffield & W R		1854
Upper Hallam (Rand Moor)	P Sheffield	1865
Attercliffe	P Sheffield	1860
Ecclesall (Rockingham Street)	P Sheffield	1862

Joshua and Jane had four children:-

Lucy Jane, who in 1875 married Douglas, son of George Parbury, Deputy Lieutenant and J.P. for Middlesex,
Adeline Sophia, who in 1891 married Alfred Hudd F.S.A. of Clifton Bristol,
Florence Mary
Joshua, County Councillor of Derbyshire and a JP for Eckington.

In 1891, Joshua junior acquired or bought, Totley Forge, Old Hay, from the company. He demolished the wheelhouse and tilt and built Avenue Farm. There then follows a

strange tale. Jessie Fisher worked for Joshua junior at Avenue Farm. Her photograph showed her dressed as a farmer, in men's working clothes with a tie. She lived at the farm. When Joshua died on 17th April 1930, his family arrived at Avenue Farm presumably to take possession but Jessie showed them her marriage lines. These certified a marriage, until then a secret, between Jessie and Joshua about 1920. The local newspapers had a field day. Joshua had been well known in Sheffield and a figure of some importance. According to friends of Jessie, the only night spent together by the couple under the same roof, was the night of their wedding, in Scarborough.