

**A verbatim extract from the Fife Herald and Kinross, Strathearn and Clackmanan Advertiser of August 11, 1842 transcribed for clarity:**

**Reduction of Weavers' Wages – Factory System.** – Until these last few years the table-linen weavers of Dunfermline were perhaps the most comfortable and independent class of hand-loom weavers in the country. This arose from the nature of the trade requiring the weaver to possess a little capital. The cost of a damask loom of the lowest kind is about L 8—some of the highest description cost upwards of L 100—the average cost being about L 15 sterling. The looms almost exclusively belong to the operatives. If a journeyman wrought the loom, his share as wages was generally three-fourths of its produce; the other fourth went to the owner for keeping it in order, out-lay in capital and profit. If the loom was wrought by an apprentice, the other half to the master. In times of moderately good trade a young man, if industrious, soon got a loom of his own, and was able to save something considerable of his earnings. In a few years he got married, found a small piece of ground, built a house, “consisting of a room and kitchen, with attics, and four loom-shops, with garden behind.” and the happy couple had it in their power to rear a family in comfort and independence. Such is a faithful picture of the condition of a sober and industrious portion of our weaving population when work was plenty—and factories unknown; and, as might be expected, their morality and intelligence were in proportion. Great numbers of this class were enfranchised by the Reform Bill, and hence the liberality and independence of the electors of Dunfermline. But, alas, comfort and independence are rapidly disappearing from among our operatives, and misery and moral degradation appearing in their stead. The factory system (itself a consequence of bad trade) will soon finish the work, and leave not a solitary specimen of the respectable weaver proprietor of other days. Up to the year 1837, we believe only one weaving factory existed in Dunfermline; since then, want of profits has driven numbers of manufacturers to build factories and fill them with looms of their own, securing the profit derived from them. The journeymen were at first averse to work in the factories, and there was difficulty in obtaining respectable workmen for them; but the dullness of trade increasing, the manufacturers were compelled to pay off a number of looms, and to keep others idle for a time. Those who had factories of course gave full work, and kept the best jobs to their own looms. It thus became an object for the weaver to get into a factory, as there he was sure of constant work. Taking advantage of this state of things, some of the proprietors of factories have proposed to reduce the weavers' wages from 9d in the shilling to 8d. This has naturally created great dissatisfaction amongst the workmen, and they immediately resolved to resist the reduction. Meantime, those

manufacturers who have no factories very properly refuse to give out work until the matter is settled, as without a corresponding reduction in the price of weaving generally the proprietors of factories would be able to undersell them in the market. We are informed that Provost Birrell, who has the largest factory in town, has, much to his honour, refused to sanction the reduction.

*Reduction of Weavers' Wages—Factory System.*—Until within these few years the table-linen weavers of Dunfermline were perhaps the most comfortable and independent class of hand-loom weavers in the country. This arose from the nature of the trade requiring the weaver to possess a little capital. The cost of a damask loom of the lowest kind is about L.8—some of the highest description cost upwards of L.100—the average cost being about L.15 sterling. The looms almost exclusively belonged to operatives. If a journeyman wrought the loom, his share as wages was generally three-fourths of its produce; the other fourth went to the owner for keeping it in order, outlay of capital, and profit. If the loom was wrought by an apprentice, one-half went to the apprentice, the other half to the master. In times of moderately good trade a young man, if industrious, soon got a loom of his own, and was then able to save something considerable off his earnings. In a few years he got married, fenced a small piece of ground, built a house, “consisting of a room and kitchen, with attics, and four loom-shops, with garden behind,” and the happy couple had it in their power to rear a family in comfort and independence. Such is a faithful picture of the condition of the sober and industrious portion of our weaving population when work was plenty—and factories unknown; and, as might be expected, their morality and intelligence were in proportion. Great numbers of this class were enfranchised by the Reform Bill, and hence the liberality and independence of the electors of Dunfermline. But, alas, comfort and independence are rapidly disappearing from among our operatives, and misery and moral degradation appearing in their stead. The factory system (itself a consequence of bad trade) will soon finish the work, and leave not a solitary specimen of the respectable weaver proprietor of other days. Up to the year 1837, we believe only one weaving factory existed in Dunfermline; since then, want of profits has driven numbers of manufacturers to build factories, and fill them with looms of their own, securing the profit derived from them. The journeymen were at first averse to work in the factories, and there was a difficulty in obtaining respectable workmen for them; but the dullness of trade increasing, the manufacturers were compelled to pay off a number of looms, and to keep others idle for a time. Those who had factories of course gave full work, and kept the best jobs to their own looms. It thus became an object for the weaver to get into a factory, as there he was sure of constant work. Taking advantage of this state of things, some of the proprietors of factories have proposed to reduce the weavers' wages from 9d. in the shilling to 8d. This has naturally created general dissatisfaction amongst the workmen, and they immediately resolved to resist the reduction. Meantime, those manufacturers who have no factories very properly refuse to give out work until the matter is settled, as without a corresponding reduction in the price of weaving generally the proprietors of factories would be able to undersell them in the market. We are informed that Provost Birrell, who has the largest factory in town, has, much to his honour, refused to sanction the reduction.

**SERIOUS RIOTS IN DUNFERMLINE.**

Dunfermline, Tuesday morning.