

ALC/D/007

**NORTHAMPTON MERCURY - 4th December
1830**

**Captain Swing Movement:
Destruction of machinery in Huntingdon.**

STATE OF THE COUNTRY.

Should the burning of agricultural produce continue, we may expect to see scarcity and enormous prices of the first necessity of life added to other calamities.

Capture of forty seven Machine Breakers.

Huntingdon Sunday evening - On Wednesday evening a party of from 40 to 50 men assembled in the village of Sawtry, in this county, and proceeded to demolish two thrashing machines without molestation. On the following evening a more formidable party, from the villages of Upton, Alconbury, &c. uniting with the above, commenced their work of destruction on other machines in the neighbourhood; and, amongst the rest, destroyed a very valuable one on the farm of Als, Sturton, Alconbury Hill; another at Mr. Denn's at Stukeley Lodge; and another at Mr. Wright's at Monk's Wood House. The party at this time was between 200 and 300 strong; and, after accomplishing their object they very cool went to the farm houses and required refreshment, and generally succeeded in extorting money in lieu of it. Having finished their work here they proceeded on to Buckworth, where they arrived between two and three o'clock in the morning, their numbers having a little diminished by the way, and immediately sawed and broke to pieces two thrashing machines used on the farms of Mr. Gray and Mr. Bowler. Proceeding to the clergyman's house, they succeeded in the usual way of obtaining food and drink; and then separated in different parties, some retiring to their work, and some pursuing their lawless occupation. At Hamerton a party of them were were addressed by the Rev.

Mr. ash, who earnestly exhorted them to desist from their illegal purposes; but without avail, as they quickly destroyed the only thrashing machine in the parish. Intelligence of these proceedings spreading in all directions excited no little degree of harm in the minds of most men, especially as the parties insisted that all the labourers in the different villages through which they passed, should join them, and where they were reluctant to do so, the doors of windows of their cottages paid the penalty of their refusal; exclusive of this circumstance, which tended so greatly to augment their numbers, their custom of levying contributions by the way, and even on the high road, whilst no attempt was made to put a stop to them, gave a fearful indication that their outrages would not stop here, and many of the misguided men were of the opinion that no punishment could be awarded to them. Information having been given that it was the intention of some of those to proceed through Huntingdon, on their way to Godmanchester, on Friday evening, for the purpose of destroying machines, the mayor of the borough, with a praiseworthy zeal, called upon the inhabitants to support him in his determination to prevent their entrance into the town, and steps were immediately and willingly taken for that purpose; but the rioters were too tired and jaded to make the attempt on that night, and the next morning found several of them under the strong arm of the law. On Saturday morning a party of about 60 commenced operations in the neighbourhood of Stilton, and the Rev. Mr. Gordon, having placed himself at the head of several gentlemen, farmers, and others, resolved to oppose them, and after a severe skirmish, in which one of the rioters had his arm broken, succeeded in capturing 18 of the ringleaders, who were immediately sent under a safe escort to Huntingdon goal. Meantime the assistance of an active officer from Union hall having been obtained (one gentleman having left for town immediately after the destruction of his property on Thursday night), a number of special constables were sworn in at Huntingdon, and

started about five o'clock to the villages where the offences had been committed, and where several of the labourers were known to reside – the under sheriff and an active magistrate being stationed in the neighbourhood. In the course of the night 25 of the gang were sent in safe custody to the county prison, together with three poachers, who were apprehended at their nightly avocations, making a capture of 50 in one night; many of whom were drawn from their beds in the dead of night, when they little expected such a removal.

A party of agricultural labourers, in number 300, after breaking a machine at Sawtrey, in Huntingdonshire, on Thursday night, marched, with loud shouts to the house of Mr. Sturton, of Alconbury, who has a thrashing machine of his own. He was apprised of their coming by a friend, who took horse on their appearance; resistance was considered dangerous, as it was very easy at that time, between nine and ten at night to fire his stacks. They marched to the house with great boldness, huzzaing and hallooing, so that they might be heard for miles around, and breaking as they passed through the village the windows of the men's houses who worked for Mr. Sturton. The machine, a very valuable one, was speedily demolished, amid the cheers of the mob, the greater part of whom were looking on; the most active were idle, disorderly men, who won't work. One of Mr. Sturton's men was knocked down, and he himself received two severe blows with an iron bar, as he mixed up with the men, in order to recognise them. After destroying his machine they marched off to Stukeley, to do a similar outrage on a Mr. Dance's machinery.

The Duke of Buckingham's yacht arrived on Monday at the Isle of Wight, after a cruise of 13 months in the Mediterranean. His Grace is in excellent health, but continues for some months longer on the Continent.