

Speech given by Judge Bayley at Nottingham Assizes, 16 March 1812

Gentlemen, nothing could give me greater satisfaction, amidst the troubled state to which this important county has been reduced, by a number of misguided individuals, than to see such a respectable jury assemble, as a barrier between guilt and innocence and a safeguard to property, to our liberties, and to our lives.

The calendar laid before me does much credit to the moral state of the country, with the exception of one crime, which swells the awful list. It is not for me to inquire, whether the persons who have thus involved themselves in trouble, have any just cause of complaint; because if grievances do really exist, the proper and indeed the only way to get them redressed is to apply to the legislature of the country.

But this should likewise be particularly remembered that while the complainants continue in a state of open violation to the law, even the Legislative will not attend to their prayers.

And to add to their sufferings, partly brought about by their own misconduct, the law will be too strong for them – many of them will fall victims to their own daring folly; for the law must and shall be obeyed. The violent proceedings, if persevered in much longer, may have the effect of driving the lace manufacture from Nottingham; for why cannot it be carried on in other places as well as this?

It is true, that this appears to be the native seat of this branch of the British lace manufacture, and no doubt it will be grateful as long as it is treated with indulgence and care; but when that ceases to be the case, it may leave those who have been fed by its bounty in a state of deep repentance for having exercised their own folly and violence – the length of time these outrages have been carried on, might make it a matter of inquiry whether the magistrates of the county have done their duty: but the highly respectable assemblage of noblemen and gentlemen this morning, renders such an inquiry unnecessary; for non can doubt but that their duty has been done.”

